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## The Wisdom in Questions

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## The Wisdom in Questions

### Abstract

This essay reflects an educational psychologist's thoughts on pursuing wisdom during a pandemic and multiple social and economic justice crises through their lived experiences. These experiences eventually place people, circumstances, and faith at the center of wisdom while embracing questioning over certainty and answers.

### Keywords

wisdom, virtue, questions, stories, ethics

## The Wisdom in Questions

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### Introduction

As I reflect on the chaos and calamity during the recent Covid pandemic, social justice crises, and financial turmoil, the same questions seem to proliferate in my circles: who is a good person? Which actions are right and wrong? They are usually followed by quick and definitive, albeit in my opinion, very shallow answers. I think about the ways in which virtues, and the wisdom that fosters them, can help us lead fuller lives of understanding; not only so that we might flourish during trying times but also to be better prepared when faced with these questions. The literature on wisdom is vast and has enjoyed a substantial presence in diverse fields from philosophy (Kekes, 2020) to professional development (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012) and problem solving (Sternberg et al., 2019) to everyday practical reasoning (Schwartz & Sharp, 2011).

I use the term wisdom here to go beyond referencing the declarative knowledge that something is the case, or the procedural knowledge of how something works, for wisdom often seems scarce in a world inundated with an abundance of facts, data, and operations. Data only become information when we put structure and meaning to them, information becomes knowledge when we put context to it, and knowledge becomes wisdom when we put it into action in a virtuous way (Ackoff, 1989; Rowley, 2007). Aristotelian virtue is the golden mean of a spectrum that avoids the extremes where vices exist (Aristotle et al., 2004). For example, courage is virtuous because it avoids cowardice at one end and reckless bravado at the other. Humility is virtuous because it avoids arrogance at one

extreme and insecurity at the other. Prudence and temperance are among other commonly referenced virtues.

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Because Aristotelian virtue requires such a constant balance among the extremes, it necessitates sustained examination and re-examination of one's life. Socrates' assertion that "the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato, 2015, Section 38A) is arguably as true as it is harsh. Still, an examined life may not necessarily lead to a happy or prosperous one, but perhaps to a more content or thoughtful one. I write this essay examining some of my own lived experiences with the hope that it stimulates discussion among readers on the dichotomies of good versus bad and right versus wrong. My preference would be for readers to reflect on their own lived experiences and frames of reference. Personally, I am neither rich nor famous, and by all measures have been moderately successful in many endeavors. So, my stories do not lay claim to greater wisdom or achievement, or conversely to the diminished value of others' lived experiences. They are merely a vehicle that conveys my message since they are a communication medium amenable for transmitting culture and knowledge (Truby, 2017).

The stories in this essay are snapshots from my youth and young adulthood. I use pseudonyms to protect people's identities. The essay is organized by key themes involving the virtue in questions themselves and particularly the art and wisdom of questioning. There is a whole science of questioning, of which people like myself – educational psychologists, psychometricians, etc. – engage. But I have chosen to be more philosophical and humanistic here than scientific. I conclude with some interpretations of the lessons I learned and how I apply them to more contemporary problems that require me to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong. I may not have known it in my youth, but the questions I had asked myself during those developmental experiences fostered the necessary prudence to better engage others in today's world. I hope you receive them in the humble manner I intended.

### **Timing is Everything**

The ability to not just ask good questions, but the right ones at the right time, is an essential skill in life for life (Kekes, 2019). I grew up poor to uneducated parents in a developing country. My

parents believed that a devotion to excellence was paramount in everything I did, particularly in schoolwork and sports. My schooling experience was different from the vast majority of American students, and in what would be considered late-middle and high school, I took classes mainly targeted toward the science and engineering professions. I was doing kinematics at 15, yet had no clue as to what purpose or need. I suspect most students around the world feel this way about many of their classes. In my school we were never encouraged to ask meaningful questions. Some teachers even saw questions as challenges to their authority.

One of the best opportunities for learning to ask good questions came at the unfortunate expense of a school friend, Alf, who jarred his arm as he grounded his cricket bat into the rock-hard pitch during a school game. The result was the forceful and gross dislocation of his elbow. Players, parents, and coaches were shocked into silence as he screamed in horrifying pain. The cricket coach, who was not liked and often regarded as a mean-spirited and evil man, calmly approached Alf, knelt beside him, and asked, "Alf, do you have health insurance?" For some fleeting seconds all eyes diverted attention away from Alf onto the coach. Disbelief shifted to confusion and possibly even anger for some. I honestly do not recall whether Alf answered the question amidst his excruciating agony. But I never forgot that day, that sight, and that question.

Questions can ignite the imagination, illuminating paths to solutions or limiting them. It would take years before I finally understood the importance of our cricket coach's question to Alf. The health system where I grew up could be summed up in one sentence: those with money can afford immediate private care and good treatment and those without would likely face great pain for hours on end at the General Hospital. An elbow in Alf's condition needed immediate and expert remedy. While many condemned the coach's seemingly unsympathetic inquiry at the time of the incident, it was in reality the best question anyone could have asked at that time because the answer would dictate the coach's next and most important action: where to take the poor boy. I think this is a poignant example of lumping the perception we have of people's character or

nature together with the competence they might possess to approach problems in novel ways.

On another occasion years later, I was attacked aboard a New York City subway train just after midnight. Although I had the pleasure of meeting many wonderful people there, a tall, muscular man approached me with what I perceived as malicious intent. I could see he held an object as his hands dipped into his sweatshirt's front pocket. Without hesitation, I immediately ran into the next train car. The man pursued. It was terrifying! Luckily, the train reached its next stop before he reached me, and I bolted out the nearest door and sprinted up the stairs to board a street bus in time, leaving the now clearly knife-wielding pursuer frustrated on the sidewalk as the astute bus driver quickly closed the door. "Are you okay, young man?" the bus driver inquired, looking into the rear-view mirror while making a turn.

Astute doesn't do sufficient justice to the bus driver's situational awareness, and I was extraordinarily grateful for her quick thinking and judgment. Had she hesitated to leave or waited a few more seconds, my pursuer would assuredly have made it onboard. Had she thought to ask the question of my wellbeing before taking off, he would have gotten on. Had she thought to ask him what he was doing, things would have turned out quite differently. Timing is everything! It is important for our social development and civic growth to think about our biases and prejudices. Surely the sight of a tall, muscular man approaching me in the subway after midnight was already negatively primed by media and other sensationalist stories or events (Kahneman et al, 2021; Klein, 2009). But I was not about to ask my attacker – or myself – whether acting on my bias was justified at that moment of his approach. While good questions at the right time for the right reasons are important, those receiving questions – even at the right moment – might not find it helpful or even care.

In yet another example, my university education was funded by scholarships that provided fully paid tuition and a large amount for housing. The residual responsibility was for boarding and airfare to the USA. As my mother and I did not have enough, we put on a Curry-Que, which was our country's equivalent of an American Bar-B-

Que, to raise the remainder. My aunts, uncles, and cousins helped out, and we were able to sell a sufficient number of tickets to make more than 70% of the requisite finances. We were very optimistic but not two days after the successful Curry-Que sale, a strong Caribbean breeze blew a wooden splinter into my eye; ironically while playing soccer. I remember thinking that God, fate, or chance can be cruel. Without insurance and great pain in an increasingly red eye for a few days, we had no choice but to use our recent fundraising efforts to get proper healthcare.

We paid just about all of it to an eye-specialist to use a Q-tip – a Q-tip! – to roll back my eyelid and insert special tweezers to remove the object. This 10-minute appointment cost us 10 weeks of hard work selling tickets, prepping food across 3 kitchens, and literally running house-to-house delivering meals on the day. It also seemed it would cost me my biggest dream at the time. It is easy to feel broken when these things happen to you. I had all but given up hope on coming abroad. But on the day before I was supposed to obtain a student visa from the US embassy, my mother, who had all the while remained steadfast in her prayers, returned home from work crying and almost speechless. She directed me to be quiet, to kneel beside her and to pray for thanks. As I listened, her prayer of unspeakable gratitude was a bit confusing, but when it was over she handed me a cashier's check – a gargantuan gift from an anonymous benefactor who had a deliveryman drop it off to her office – that would cover my immediate expenses. It was even more than enough to include my own textbooks. Was this God's way of teaching me something about timing and faith?

### **Calmness Personified**

Alf's disfigured arm was by no stretch of the imagination the worst thing I observed during my teens. I witnessed a boy bounce under a truck like a rubber ball when he got run over, a man stabbed to death just three feet away from me, and my own mother losing more than three pints of blood from ruptured fibroids. But school seemed to contain its own fair share of injury drama. I recall a day when a friend, Rod, begged me to allow him to tag along when I skipped school. He seemed desperate to meet his girlfriend but did not know

how to get off the premises without being seen, and I was a known escape artist. Navigating the physical terrain could be difficult. Our campus was bordered by a large, deep canal on its right-hand side, a main road to the front where the guard was typically perched, and two streets to the left and behind. The latter two school walls had profuse barbed wire and glass-protruding objects on top of them that made it impossible to scale. I knew some boys who would walk right out the front gate and ignore the guard's pleas to return. I was neither as brave nor unconscientious, and I did not want to be reported and risk my mother knowing.

Hence, I took the canal. You have to imagine climbing a 10-foot stone wall, lowering yourself to a ledge overlooking the canal with your left hand grasping the top of the wall you had just scaled and your right hand holding a rusty old pipe next to it. With your left foot firmly planted on a protruding grey stone, you would vigorously shuffle towards the other side of the pipe while quickly switching hands and feet to reach the smooth grips of the wall that bordered the street behind. If you were to fall, you would drop a few dozen feet onto hard concrete and likely break many body parts. If it had recently rained, you would likely risk falling into gushing river water that came down from the hills, or worse into mud and silt. Either would certainly suffocate and drown you within minutes.

I reluctantly allowed Rod to tag along. It was a relatively cloudy day. We climbed together and I told him to straddle the wall while I demonstrated the technique. "See!" I exclaimed after I did it, "It's easy!" But Rod panicked when he saw the task ahead. I could see in his eyes that he was visibly scared and now that I recall it, likely not thinking much if at all. Without warning me or permitting my counsel, he announced that he had to see his girlfriend and quickly scooted himself atop the wall to the back fence. I watched in silence as Rod tried to carefully avoid the barbed wire and glass, but enough just was not sufficient. He ripped his index finger wide open on one of them. The cut was so deep, and the blood was in such a hurry to escape, that you could see the finger bone from where I stood. We were forced to return on campus, confess our sins, and call his father.

I accompanied him to the doctors. I'm not proud of what I am about to admit but for a short while in my teens I fell in with a certain crowd and smoked cigarettes. Rod was one such friend, and while we were at the doctor's office, he could not stop indulging himself. Every time Rod lit a new cigarette, the doctor kept looking up at him as he cleaned, sewed, and dressed the wound. When the doctor announced that he wanted to show us something, I prepared for a very harsh scolding about the dangers of skipping school and smoking. Instead, the bearded bear of a man proceeded to remove the first three buttons of his shirt and pull his vest down.

"Do you see this? Would you like to know how I got it?" he asked, pointing to a very large, roughly shaped, purplish-black scar on his chest. I can see it when I close my eyes now, and perhaps it was just Rod's blood lingering in the air, but I am sure I can also smell it. The doctor coolly shared how the surgery was a result of too much smoking in his youth. Rod was aghast, exclaimed his apathy, and continued to smoke. But that exceedingly visual lesson was enough to halt my bad habit. I've often asked myself why I started with it in the first place, and I have the doctor's scar (and smell) to thank for better health today. Yet the most memorable thing is the levelled tranquility with which the doctor seemed to ask his questions, with little if any hint of judgment towards us. Sure, his message was backed up with an unforgettable vision. But great questions asked without serene humility may not always be well received. Even when the receiver is willing to engage in polite disagreement, those who ask good questions ought to be prepared for an undesirable answer; at least from some. But should that preclude us from asking with care?

### **Perspective Over Perception**

Perhaps I was a bad person for smoking. Perhaps Rod was a terrible one for responding with such vigorous apathy and ignorance. "Who is a bad person?" is an interesting question. We are taught from very young to think about good versus bad and right versus wrong, often from a perspective of substance (who or what is good or wrong) with little regard to one of process (how do I determine who or what is right or bad). I learned this lesson in high school working at a supermarket so that

my mother and I could make ends meet after my parents had divorced. I enjoyed working the weekends because the heavy foot traffic meant great tips for taking customers' groceries out to their cars. At times I skipped school in the early afternoons to help make extra; hence, the Rod story from earlier. There was hardly anyone in the store on weekdays, so the manager would make us check the expiration dates on items and restock the shelves accordingly. I was often alone in the front aisles. It was boring and mostly forgettable!

But one memory that stands out is a theft I witnessed when a quite disheveled man walked into our building and left three minutes later with a jug of milk, a large sack of sugar, and some diapers without paying for them. I ran over to the security guard's desk to inform him since I assumed he had missed it. The usually always vigilant guard glanced at me out of the corner of his eyes and said, "Yes, I saw him!" "Why didn't you stop him?" I incredulously asked. He turned to look squarely at me and asked what I witnessed the man carrying. "Milk, sugar, and diapers," I replied. "Exactly!" and he looked away again. I shrugged my shoulders: "Exactly what?" "Well, either he has a fetish for dressing up in diapers and pouring milk over his head while he eats sugar crystals, or, he's going to mix the sugar into the milk to feed his child, who perhaps also needs some clean diapers. Which one do you think is more likely?" He asked.

I felt somewhat embarrassed in that moment because I remembered how my own mother would sometimes mix sugar into milk for me when I was younger. I assumed she was buying or borrowing the ingredients since as I grew older she would sometimes send me to respectfully ask for some from our neighbors. But who knows? There is a temptation to falsely dichotomize people as either entirely good or bad based on whether we perceive their actions as either wholly right or wrong. Our lack of knowledge about others' motives and intentions can lead us to poor reasoning and invalid conclusions. Accepting that others are different in how they think and subsequently act is easier said than done. Even harder is recognizing that our experiences are often unique to our cultural and societal norms (Soyer & Hogarth, 2021).

Haidt's (2001) comparison of an elephant and its rider to our intuition and rationality in moral reasoning is particularly salient here. For instance, some eastern cultures do not frown upon eating a dog whereas in most western cultures they do. Interestingly, his studies have shown that when asked for specific moral reasons, very few people from either cultural side could articulate any grounded moral reasons for eating, or frowning upon, the delicacy of a dog. The point is that our intuitions often lead our rational selves to behave in convicted ways without knowing why we believe or do the things we do. The answer is not to banish our intuition but to use it together with our own grounded moral reasons to derive at defensible conclusions. Hence, moral dual processing uses both our intuition and our rationality to make ethical decisions. It seems easy enough. So, why do we as adults still have such a hard time deciding on what's right or good?

### **Context, Context, Context**

Right versus wrong and good versus bad are not as situationally simple as we often make it seem. I tend to reason that a thief's actions are wrong because stealing is wrong. But should stealing candies or cars be judged on the same basis as stealing diapers or milk? If our circumstances can affect our moral motivation and moral reasoning (Haidt, 2012; Zimbardo, 2007), then our judgments about right or wrong and good or evil may be too hasty if we cannot empathize with the predicaments in which some people find themselves. Such situations can then hamper people's ability to act according to societal or ethical norms; such as the case with the "thief" in the previous section. But people violate norms for a large variety of reasons (Bicchieri, 2017) and we often incorrectly attribute their behavior to their demographics, personality traits, and moral dispositions; ignoring the circumstances they face or the situations in which they find themselves, and how it impacts their reasoning, motives, and actions (Fiske, 2018; Ross & Nisbett, 2011).

As a collegiate soccer player, a referee once told me that my [racially expletive] kind did not deserve to win. As a coach, I was cautioned after requesting a referee remove his hands from my player's shoulders after he had refused her request. He stated quite emphatically and without

reason that I was to blame for her insolence. How was her request not to be touched insolent? The opposing team's coach approached me after that game to express his disdain that I was treated that way. I wanted to ask, "Why didn't you say something?" In a separate instance, I was once kicked out of a graduate course on the first day of class because the professor did not appreciate my own question about his syllabus; never mind the entire class had been asking one another the same thing during the break several minutes before. "I don't appreciate your type," he said to me, "You should find another course!"

There were students in that class who were prominent social justice advocates. But not one of them stood up for me at the time. Instead, some would approach me in the halls the following days to quietly vent their frustration; others only remonstrated behind closed doors. Like the opposing team's coach, my graduate student peers clearly chose to remain silent during and after an event they all seemed to perceive as unfair. Their inaction might be attributed to the so-called bystander effect, developed in the field of sociology in the 1960s after Kitty Genovese – a New York City resident – was brutally raped and killed in the street while a number of people listened but did little to directly intervene (Cook, 2015). While my case was nowhere on par, people obviously acknowledged wrongdoing being done to me and chose to say or do nothing.

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Was my coaching colleague and classmates' silence at wrongdoing justified? Can such silence be justified? Reflecting on my graduate classmates' situations, I am sure that many of them would have faced the threat of running afoul of instructors who controlled their academic careers. Perhaps commitments to causes, even the best ones, might not include unyielding fealty. Besides, there were fellow classmates and teammates who came to my aid when I needed a place to stay, food to eat, and once even clothes to wear. I have also had other professors treat me with absolute respect and open doors of opportunity for me; just as I have received caring, thoughtful, and just refereeing on other occasions that made my playing experiences enjoyable and rewarding.

Even family members can behave differently across circumstances. In my young adulthood, and quite early during my marriage, I often got upset at my in-laws while playing competitive table-top strategy games like Settlers of Catan. When I was winning, they would halt their trading with me. It was most vexing! But in hindsight their behaviors were not malicious nor intentionally personal, even though it felt that way in the moment, because I have also been treated with far more kindness and respect from them outside of our games; or even in those games when I was not winning. Thus, blanket questions about who is good or who is bad might do very little to highlight the complexity of the circumstances across and within certain experiences. Bad people do exist, and when they hurt others - financially, physically, and emotionally - they should be held accountable. So too should the systems that perpetuate their indolence, ignorance, apathy, and hatred. But why should my circumstances – whether in winning or from insufferable positions – have a stronger claim to righteousness over others?

### **Conclusion**

Curiosity is a powerful mental agent. Children are curious, and often ask questions of their parents to better understand and make sense of their world. But adults seem to have a more difficult time formulating good questions. Perhaps it isn't entirely our fault. As Dr. Seuss said, "Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple" (in Jones & Headley, 2017, p. 11).

Questioning is a crucial part of the sensemaking and problem-solving process. Although I am well aware that even the best framed and well-timed questions won't solve the world's biggest problems and bring us to our desired ends, my hope is that formulating good questions with humility at the right time, with the proper perspective, considering context, can give us better possible beginnings to approaching the problems we face.

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Questions improve problem framing because they heighten sensemaking. Ancona (2012) stated that the act of "sensemaking involves coming up with plausible understandings and meanings; testing them with others and via action; and then refining our understandings or abandoning them in favor of new ones that better explain a shifting reality" (p. 5). She went on to share an analogy that Brian

Arthur (1996) used to describe the sensemaking experience at a business tech venture in a casino game context.

"How much to play?" you ask.

"Three billion!" the croupier replies.

"Who'll be playing?" you ask.

"We won't know until they show up," he replies.

"What are the rules?"

"These will emerge as the game unfolds," says the croupier.

"What are the odds of winning?" you wonder.

"We can't say," says the house. "Do you still want to play?"

I find the final question from the house most vexing. The croupier has not withheld information. The answers are factual, straightforward, and simple. But there is a lot to unpack as to whether I still want to play. In the grand game of life, some might be more risk taking and others more risk averse. I think a healthy balance can be struck between the two. At times that will mean we encounter greed, apathy, ignorance, hatred, and lust for power on either side of the spectrum. But it does not excuse us from at least trying our best with what we have been given, and believing that in the vast majority of cases, others are doing the very same. As with deliberate, spaced, and repeated practice applied to any endeavor (Ericsson & Pool, 2017), learning how to ask good, meaningful questions can perhaps be honed into a sort of expertise. It is the uncertainty itself in the word 'perhaps' that permits wisdom to be fostered since it leaves open the possibility that we could after all be entirely wrong.

The late Swedish statistician Hans Rosling used to ask himself questions about what he thought he knew about the world that data could prove him wrong (Rosling & Hargestam, 2020). The late Business professor Clayton Christensen used to ask his students what they were willing to do to go to jail and give up their ties to family, friends, and community (Christensen et al, 2012). I imagine this made many of their students uncomfortable.

But if we focus on asking hard, often unwanted questions, we might shift our thinking from what is right or wrong to how we ourselves think about right or wrong. For instance, take the famous and somewhat recent US case of *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd versus Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, in which the shop owner and baker – Jack Phillips – refused to sell a wedding cake to an LGBTQIA+-identifying couple.

The act of refusal became a politicized weapon for both first amendment and civil-rights advocates. But how do we confine and define “refusal” when Phillips also offered the couple the chance to purchase anything else in the store, citing the specifically unique role that his particular Christian beliefs held towards non-heterosexual wedding unions? Conversely, how does Phillips himself validate a universal epistemology for all heterosexual couples for whom he is willing to bake a cake when he simply cannot know for certain whether their sexual habits and proclivities include other anti-biblical views such as open infidelity? We could extend this thesis-antithesis questioning process to a host of other everyday issues that increasingly seem to divide people from one another and from Christ. For example, what if the person who refused to wear a mask during the Covid-19 pandemic had endured rape with the assailant’s hands covering their face and the mask reminds them of the brutal trauma? What if the person who still wears a mask today has severely compromised immunodeficiencies, or wore masks even before Covid? (Yes, people wore masks even before Covid).

You might say that given the gravity of the consequences, we have a right to know other people’s whys. But are you willing to ask? To what end is your question truly aiming for? Marriage rights, religious rights, medical rights, and the duties they prescribe, seem to be a contemporary game of war these days. I suspect they will never cease. But I am beginning to wonder if we have confused meaning to do well with always needing to know who or what or why. Perhaps, in the same way that I had the point of playing family games all wrong, which was not to always win by using the best strategies, or even to win at all, I myself might be misunderstanding the point of some of the arguments I wage. I look at life as a constant game in which one must compete in order to play

well. Lumpkin et al. (2003) viewed competition as a means to put one’s best against another person’s best. It has taken me some time to realize that it is not only okay to sometimes let others win even when I know how to gain a fair advantage, it is also sometimes merciful and fair. It is no guaranteed strategy that we will always win by granting an allowance or being open to a different perspective, but perhaps we will always play well and right by it.

While I have been raised and taught not to cheat and steal, my family’s current economic standing is considerably safe. We have a consistent income, health insurance, a roof over our heads, food to eat, and people who love us. But I cannot predict the future and I do not know the depths of destitution from a provider’s perspective. How far would I go to feed my family if their lives absolutely depended on my actions? Which societal norms, institutional rules, or constitutional laws would I break in order to ensure their survival? These hypothetical questions of moral fortitude are rife in the domain of academic ethics yet still practical for consideration in everyday life (Appiah, 2008; Singer, 2016). And though there are times when people and systems should be held accountable for their wrongdoings, perhaps we can all learn to show some humility to admit that we are neither angels nor devils, and yet sometimes both saints and sinners. I may not have qualified as an angel when I smoked or skipped school, but I don’t believe I was a devil for it. Rod’s reasons to see his girlfriend may not have justified his skipping school or his apathy towards his doctor’s message, but it would be harsh to say he deserved to have had his finger ripped open.

Desert is such a funny thing, and there is no justification when police officers and other authorities egregiously abuse their powers through violence on unarmed and compliant citizens. Likewise, there is no justification for condemning all police officers as violent and racist. To do so would commit a fallacy of composition. I twice found myself saved by police officers who appeared out of nowhere to rescue me from what would surely have been grave endings. There were other officers who were utterly unhelpful and disrespectful. One wrestled and handcuffed me to the ground only to say later

that it was a case of mistaken identity. Yet he offered no explanation or apology. One cursed and threatened me for walking too close to a construction cone on a Sunday morning when no one was up, around, and certainly not working construction. I might question a police officer's character or intentions when he approaches me, but 911 is still on my speed dial because to me, the alternative where I think in absolutes is far less desirable. But that is my choice and others might feel different. Denigrating them for it is utterly unhelpful for understanding, if not progress, to be accomplished.

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*Perhaps instead of thinking about democrats and republicans, or conservatives and liberals, good guys and bad ones, right and wrong, as ideological and absolute truths that describe fundamentally righteous or deplorable people, we might ask what it is that we might all have in common that can enable us to serve those who may be very different from us (Hess & Noguera, 2021). The lessons of my youth have provided me a proper perspective of duty. I think it is misguided to say, "Do it for those with whom you agree (or worse, who agree with you)," because it ignores the others with whom we must still work. If partial selection becomes our norm, it will be harder to maintain our obligation to serve all our neighbors according to their worth as dignified human beings, as Christ commanded.*

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Life, fate, and God have their peculiar methods for teaching us the lessons we need to learn when we need them the most. But some of the most important lessons to learn and unlearn might involve the ability to humbly ask ourselves better questions when the timing is right and with the proper frame of context. So, perhaps the questions are not as simple as: who is a good or bad person? Whose politics is correct? And perhaps the answers aren't as simple as: This one or that! Perhaps we might do better to ask: how might I be spectacularly wrong? How might my experiences, pride, bias, and prejudice be in the way of understanding someone else's situation? Is my interpretation of this law, action, or message correct? Am I living according to God's word? Questions are just interrogative statements by definition. But there might be some virtue in the act or process of questioning, and not just answering or being definitive in how or what we think. There might just be some wisdom in questions themselves.

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