

## Experience doesn't always equate to wisdom

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How many times have you been told to listen to those with experience? How often were you led to believe that those with experience possessed greater wisdom?

Experience is important or nice to have, but it doesn't always equate to wisdom. One thing I've learned over the years is that someone with more experience isn't always the wiser person, and someone else with little experience could actually possess a ton of wisdom. Sure, experience can be beneficial, but only if it is properly evaluated.

John Maxwell said we all begin our lives as empty notebooks. Every day we have an opportunity to record new experiences on our pages. With the turning of each page, we gain more knowledge and understanding. Ideally, as we progress our notebook becomes filled with notations and observations. The problem is that not all people make the best use of their notebooks.

Some people seem to leave the notebook closed most of their lives. They rarely jot down anything at all. Others fill their pages, but they never take the time to reflect on them and gain greater wisdom and understanding. But a few not only make a record of what they experience, they linger over it and ponder its meaning. They reread what is written and reflect on it. Reflection turns experience into insight, so they not only live the experience but learn

from it. They have come to understand a secret: experience teaches nothing, but evaluated experience teaches everything.

It's a terrible thing to pay the price for experience and not receive the lesson. But that is often what happens with people. Why? Because when an experience is negative, they often run away from it. They're quick to say, "I'll never do that again!" They don't hang around long enough to learn the lesson or true value of the experience.

Well, I say don't run away! Take time to reflect on what happened, evaluating what went right and what went wrong, and why. There may well be another occasion when this experience pops its head back into plain view. This time it may be a much more positive experience.

I previously mentioned that an inexperienced person could still be a wise person. How can that be?

Someone can learn just as much by evaluating another person's experience. They can get the lesson by observation or through detailed study without having to experience the same thing for themselves. There's a famous parable of a fox, a wolf, and a bear that goes like this:

One day the three of them went hunting together, and after each caught a deer, they discussed how to divide the spoils. The bear asked the wolf how he thought it should be done. The wolf said everyone should get one deer. Suddenly the bear ate the wolf.

Then the bear asked the fox how he proposed to divvy things up. The fox

offered the bear his deer and then said the bear ought to take the wolf's deer as well.

"Where did you get such wisdom?" asked the bear.

"From the wolf," replied the fox.

This is why it is just as important to evaluate and learn lessons from others' experiences as much as it is to learn from our own.

But there's still more to it. If you're waiting around for personal experiences to happen in order to learn valuable lessons, you're risking being blindsided by an unavoidable consequence. To get ahead of this curve, engage in a targeted reading and observation program to become wiser on matters in advance of their occurrence. This could prevent frustration, heartache, or even a tragedy. To gain wisdom, read autobiographies, reputable self-help books, or philosophical or religious writings. I personally learned a lot about wisdom from reading the thirty-one chapters of Proverbs in the Bible (a chapter a day).

Lastly, when you become blessed with wisdom in an area of life, I ask that you to share it with others so they can learn to benefit from it as well. There's no sense keeping it to yourself; otherwise, it'll eventually just end up in a grave. Wisdom should be proliferated, not hoarded. Ideally, it should move from person to person to improve and advance the human race.

~ The End ~