

## **A Simple Prayer**

*by*

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Courage. Serenity. Wisdom.

Embodied in a brief prayer that I learned as a child, I have found through my lifetime that we really need little else - except, perhaps, a dictionary and a thesaurus.

To ask the Lord for anything more just might border on the selfish. To ask for these is to ask to be His servant.

Still, what is it that we ask?

What is courage?

What is serenity?

And most of all, what is wisdom?

Courage has been touted as many things by poets and authors since the dawn of time. Books have been written trying to define it by example. To me, a simple man, courage itself is also simple. Courage is what happens when determination is stronger than fear. I like my definition because it does not speak to the consequences of whatever thing that happens, it only speaks to the balance between fear and action. It is simple.

Serenity is a bit harder to get a grip on because it is more complex, yet in a truly Zen manner, it too is simple. Serenity is the state of acceptance. Serenity arises when our mind and spirit accept that there is nothing to be done about the state of affairs. Oddly, achieving serenity also takes a good deal of courage. In many cases acceptance can be painful. Our instinct is to stop the pain through action. If our determination to stop the pain exceeds our fear of the consequences, then courage arises. But courage is also needed to accept the pain incurred when whatever action we may take will be fruitless.

And that leads us to wisdom. Only in wisdom can we determine which actions will be successful and which will be fruitless. Once again, to act or not to act on our wisdom takes courage. Wisdom may give us hints at whether or not an action may have the desired outcome, but that same wisdom tells us flat out that we may be wrong. The determination to act upon our wisdom must exceed the fear of failure -whether that action be to engage in a courageous act or to adopt the serenity needed to do nothing.

Courage allows us to make change but it also takes courage to accept serenity.

Serenity allows us to view things calmly bringing us not only acceptance but wisdom.

Wisdom, wrapped in serenity, brings us to a point where we can identify the next thing requiring courage.

And so, the prayer, "Lord, give me the courage to change the things that I can, the serenity to accept those that I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference" really covers all the bases we will ever need.