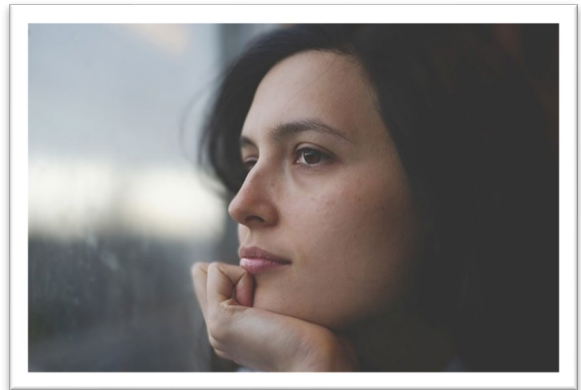




A friend and I were discussing the fallout from last year. I admitted to him that I caught myself saying, “I don’t know what or who to believe anymore,” nearly every week. He agreed that discerning the truth was a daunting task made more difficult because people seemed to make decisions based on how they felt about an issue rather than on the facts or merits presented.

He had observed many people reacting emotionally to the news or their social media feeds rather than thinking through the stories that reported the latest on viruses, politics, and social unrest. He concluded that people lacked the virtue of solertia and that resulted in their increased anxiety and anger about 2020.



What in the world is solertia? To be honest, I had no idea. He explained that it is a building block of Prudence that helps you quickly size up a situation, pick up on subtle clues, and come to a right decision. (Refresher: prudence is your ability to know what is really good and then to make a plan to get it.) Solertia, he said, helps you determine if something is believable and true in the moment.

Solertia can also be called shrewdness. A shrewd person deals with issues rationally rather than with spontaneous reactions. He or she is NOT tossed about in a sea of emotions when they hear or see something that is difficult or novel. Rather, they STOP and THINK about the topic before ACTING. They rarely react with emotion or make a snap judgment or speak irrationally.

It occurred to me that most of us could benefit from cultivating solertia during the coming year. Here are a few suggestions on how to improve your shrewdness and quickly size up a situation to find the underlying truth.

STOP The most important step to becoming shrewd is to hit the pause button. Give yourself time to assess the situation. Developing this habit will prevent you from entering a rabbit hole or jumping off an emotional cliff that looms right in front of you.

CONSIDER Think about what biases or motivations may be at play. How are your thoughts or those of the other impacting the situation? Consider if these biases are revealing the truth or covering it up.

RESERVE JUDGEMENT Matthew 10:16 tells us to be *shrewd as serpents and simple as doves*. Be precautious and maintain a holy outlook when you aren't sure what is ahead or true. Never inflame the issue on one hand or overlook it on the other. Sometimes the best and quickest assessment is to admit that you need to think about it for a while before coming to a decision.

PRAY In January of 2014, Pope Francis observed how the Three Wise Men needed to be shrewd and discerning in the face of Herod's deception. He referred to their need as spiritual shrewdness. He commented on how important it was for them to ask God to help them discern Herod's comments and motivations. Praying to God, like the Wise Men did, helps you to avoid falling prey to the world's deceit or be sidetracked by its false attraction. Here is a prayer that can help you to just that.

Good and gracious God,

Teach us how to see your true light in the world around us.

Help us avoid the snares of darkness and the shadows which seek to envelop our life.

Help us safeguard your truth with holy shrewdness and guard it against deceit which, many times, is also disguised as light.

Instruct us never to be content with a life of mediocrity, of playing it safe, but to draw close to what is good, true, and beautiful.

Defend us against evil distractions that confuse us from taking the right path and guarding our faith with prayer, with hope, and with charity. We ask this in the Name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

This newsletter series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, creators of Teaching the Way of Love. Teaching the Way of Love is designed to help you become a faithful, joyful and confident parent. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies on how to become the best parent you can be. Consider becoming an annual member of the Teaching the Way of Love program. Members receive practical and timely parenting resources. Go to twl4parents.com/membership for more information.



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