

A Scarecrow's Wisdom

I have always been a big fan of movies. One of my favorites growing up was *The Wizard of Oz*. The songs, the dancing, the story and costumes were all captivating to my young mind. Years later I read the books and got a different view of the narrative. And years after that, when I was in college, I discovered the political significance of the tale and an even deeper appreciation of this magical story. But it took some personal growth and inner reflection to reveal the most important message of all. And to awaken my sleeping mind to the wisdom it held.

There is a song I've always liked by the band America called *Tin Man*. In it, there is a line that states, "Oz never did give nothing to the Tin Man, that he didn't – didn't already have." One day while singing it for the millionth time, the true meaning of it finally hit me: after all the trials and turmoil, strife and struggle Dorothy and her crew had to go through to get to the Wizard, with their hopes and dreams of receiving the gifts they sought – Oz only gave one of the foursome a gift.

As the song points out, while the Tin Man might not physically have had a beating heart, he did exhibit more "heart" and character than anyone the Wizard had ever met. In the end, all Oz gave him was a trinket to represent that which he already had. The Cowardly Lion, in similar fashion, only *thought* he needed some courage. Turns out all he needed was the right set of circumstances to summon the courage he already possessed. Even Dorothy was left out. Oz did offer to give her a lift back to Kansas in his hot air balloon, but he ended up screwing that up and left her behind. Glenda the Good Witch had to point out to Dorothy that she had the ability to go home the whole time with a simple click of her heels. The only one that really made out from the trip to the Wiz was the Scarecrow, for Oz gave him the greatest gift of all – the gift of Knowledge.

Things haven't changed much since then. Prison is now Oz, and the cast of the movie are everywhere. I see Wizards every day, spouting off their opinions on every subject and pontificating on how everyone *else* should live their lives. But a simple peek behind the curtain will reveal that they really have no clue about anything. There are Tin Men, the guys that put up a tough façade in order to appear cold and indifferent. But once you get to know them, I mean really get to know them, the tin and the tough guy image falls away to bare a heart of compassion and love for their neighbor that Jesus himself would be proud to see. I know Lions that roar with the best of them. Yet deep inside, they are afraid to face their addictions, or confront their past. They have all the courage they could ever need to conquer them – they're just scared to discover who they genuinely are. And just like Dorothy, we're all desperately searching for a way out of Oz so we can return to Kansas, Texas, New York, or wherever HOME is. Lastly, there are the Scarecrows. We have plenty of them.

Any fool can make money. But without knowledge of how to *keep* it, what to do *with* it, and how to *make* it work for You – as opposed to you working for It – the money will disappear before your eyes. Any idiot with the gift of gab can pull a girl. But to win and keep the heart of a true woman of character – the kind of woman that will grow *with* you and make you WANT to be a stronger, better man – you will need knowledge of how to communicate with her in a manner that

reaches her soul, and not just her ears. And in order to have a future outside these prison walls, you will need to learn a hell of a lot more than what got you here.

I've met hundreds of smart young men in prison. Smarter than most people here will ever know. They have sharp minds, a thirst to learn, and a desire to grow and gather information. And they use those minds to harvest that information from every source around them. But it's going to take more than that. Where knowledge is the accumulation of information – **Wisdom** is knowing what to DO with that knowledge. My prayer for you is that you will develop your knowledge *into* wisdom, and use it to benefit and better the lives of all those you encounter, as well as your own.



2022