



# WILLOW CREEK ASSOCIATION NZ

## **I'VE BEEN THINKING – by Alan Vink**

Some years ago Richard Prebble, a prominent politician at the time, wrote a book with the title “I’ve Been Thinking.” It was a phrase that seemed to catch on and before long it became a popular comment in everyday conversation.

I remember the funny side. I would say, “I’ve been thinking recently” and the person I’m talking to would respond, “Was that a painful experience?”

Jokes aside, the practice of “I’ve been thinking” should characterise the life of us all and certainly every leader. So the question for this moment is, “How much intentional and prayerful thinking do I really do? How much time do I routinely set aside and reflect over what’s happening in and through my life?”

Now here’s something to think about! For years I have understood that wisdom is the application of knowledge. So if I learn something new or am reminded of something I already know and then apply it carefully and appropriately then I have exercised wisdom and overtime I become a wiser person.

Though this is true, I have come to realise that there is a missing piece. Knowledge alone doesn’t produce wisdom; rather it is knowledge plus understanding that produces consistent wisdom. As a formula, it looks like this:

Knowledge + Understanding = Wisdom

The origins of the English word for ‘understanding’ are interesting. Five hundred years ago one could have talked about understanding (standing under) a tree in a shower of rain. Today we use the word figuratively to mean ‘have a comprehension of or grasp the meaning of (as if one knows something from the bottom up from having stood under it). It means to perceive, discern, and be aware of. It is about insight – the ability to see deep inside a matter, an issue or a problem. This kind of insight only comes after intentional thinking, reflection and prayer.

I now ‘understand’ better why the book of Proverbs has so much to say about this. Right off the bat in chapter 1:2: “The proverbs of Solomon for attaining wisdom and discipline, for understanding words of insight...”

“Apply your heart to understanding” (2:2). “Blessed is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding” (3:13). “Though it cost you all you have, get understanding” (4:7).

So some years ago I adopted a new practice. To take time out each week to reflect, think and pray on current issues affecting my life, to reflect on my recent responses and actions and to pray and ask the ‘Omniscient One’ to give me new and fresh thoughts so that I might not only find solutions but that my leadership practice will get better and better.

What about you? Is your ‘understanding’ growing in depth as well as breadth? Are you giving time to critically evaluate your practice and think deeply about what you’re doing, and why you’re doing it? For me it’s 5.00-7.00am (I’m a lark) three to four times a week.

It seems to me that this is an important principle and concept to stand under in becoming an excellent leader.

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