



Two Peas in a Pod

Ephesians 1:17 NIV

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

How Could Your Life Get Upgraded?

Perhaps you have heard the expression, "Two Peas in a Pod". My grandmother and my mother often used it and I never understood it. I don't think my dad was much of a fan of vegetables because we rarely had them on our dinner table. Maybe carrot sticks or celery sticks but never broccoli or cauliflower and very few salads. I am guessing though he liked peas because that was too often a part of the meal. I hated peas, they made me gag when I tried to get them down so if I heard the saying, "two peas in a pod", it was not exactly a cheery idea. I didn't even know what it meant because the only peas I ever saw came out of cans and there were never just two of them; always hundreds of the terrible things and I didn't see a single pod in there, not that I knew what a pod even was. I probably would have been much happier at dinner if there were only two peas on my plate. It would have saved me the near hour it often took me to force them down my throat.

Two peas in a pod means of course that two things are alike. Our verse for today presents us with two peas in a pod and they are much better than the peas I encountered as a child. **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.** (Ephesians 1: 17 NIV) Wisdom and revelation are similar in many ways. They each indicate a special sort of insight or understanding that someone possesses. Wisdom is the translation of the Greek term "sophia" which describes knowledge, ability, learning. Revelation on the other hand is the rendering of the Greek term "apocalupsis" which speaks of something disclosed, an appearing, a revealing. Both wisdom and revelation anyone can possess. Research and deep thinking can make them yours. However, this prayer is calling for something different than can be acquired through natural means. It is the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

The NIV does something interesting in its translation of the phrase, "Spirit of wisdom and revelation". The translators are assuming that "Spirit" is a reference to the Holy Spirit and so the prayer is that the Ephesian Christians would receive the Holy Spirit which would then give them wisdom and revelation. The Spirit is of course the author of the wisdom and revelation they need, but not what the Christians are missing. We receive the Holy Spirit as soon as we put our trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He is how we are "born again". The transformation into a new creation is the result of the Holy Spirit being joined to us and without Him, it would be impossible for the remaking of us to take place.

This phrase, "spirit of wisdom" is found only two other places in Scripture and spirit of revelation is only in Ephesians 1: 17. Isaiah 11: 2, in talking about the prophesied Messiah, says of Him, **The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord** (Isaiah 11:2 NIV) Here it is clearly speaking of the Holy

Spirit, that He is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding and will be present in the Christ or the Messiah. It had to be made clear that the Messiah would be joined with the Holy Spirit as God's Son. The other passage though has a different concern. In Deuteronomy 34: 9, the expression, "spirit of wisdom" is used in exactly the same way as it is in Ephesians 1: 17. **Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses.** In this case, the spirit of wisdom is something Joshua gained through the prayer of Moses, much like what the Apostle Paul was asking for the Ephesians. It was insight and direction coming from God. Joshua had the possibility of not just his own ideas and thinking working inside him but also the inspiration and direction of God showing him the way. That is what is available to you! God insight. God thinking. God understanding. It comes we see through prayer. It is not automatically ours; we gain it when we or others pray for it.

There are two aspects to this God given understanding we see in our verse. The first is God given wisdom and the second is God given revelation. Let's consider the shade of difference between the two. When the church was facing a controversy that put it at risk of splitting right in the very beginning, wisdom was needed and not just any wisdom, God infused direction. Some of the leaders in the Christian community felt that new believers who weren't Jewish needed to be circumcised. Paul and Barnabas and others who were sharing the Gospel outside Israel were adamant that it was a terrible requirement to make. A counsel in Jerusalem was convened to decide the matter. After much discussion in which Peter even had his say, a decision had to be made. It was James, the brother of Jesus, now a Holy Spirit filled believer in Christ as Lord, who made the call. He declared, and everyone seemed to be aware that this was wisdom from God, that the new non-Jewish Christians were to avoid eating food offered to idols, blood, animals that had been killed by strangling and were not to engage in sexual immorality. That was it. No requirement for circumcision or Jewish festivals or even the maintaining of clean and unclean food regulations. This was clearly wisdom from God and the Church was protected by it.

Revelation on the other hand is where the Spirit of God uncovers something for the believer, unveils what was before hidden, what could not have been known if it were not for God. When Jesus asked Peter who he thought Jesus was, Peter replied that Jesus was **"the Christ, the Son of the Living God."** **Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.** (Matthew 16:16b-17 NIV) This knowledge was supernaturally placed in Peter and even though he might have at first thought he came up with the idea himself, it actually came directly from God. An example of divine revelation which may not seem like it on the surface is that of Ruth.

We have documented the fascinating account of the Moabite Ruth's conversion and faith in God but have not given enough attention to the amazing decision she made to go with her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem. When her husband died, and her mother-in-law was also a widow, Ruth decided to make the dangerous and even hopeless trek with her to Naomi's hometown and resettle there. It is most odd that she chose to do this. Her own family was still in Moab and her friends were there too. You might say that it worked out for her making the move. She met her future husband there who just happened to be wealthy and kind. Yet, what is intriguing is how this decision to leave Moab and restart her life in Bethlehem came to pass. Ruth ended up fitting perfectly into God's plan not only for the nation of Israel but also for the entire world. She and the husband she met in Bethlehem, Boaz, became the parents of Obed who was the grandfather of David, the greatest king in the history of Israel before his descendant Jesus came along, Jesus, the Savior of the world.

It is impossible to fathom that God would leave it up to chance to decide how His Son's birth would come to pass. Could it be that the Lord would let just some random set of marriages and conceptions lead to the coming of the Messiah or did He have picked out who He wanted in the lineage of His Son? The fact that the book of Ruth is in the Bible, that this seemingly inconsequential, nondescript foreign woman has a book to herself in the "Jewish part" of the Bible is eye-popping. Her story is critical to understanding God and how

He works in our lives. Nineteen times the personal name of God, YHWH, is used in the short book of Ruth and it is because it is being made clear the LORD was in charge and directing Ruth as she moved forward. She is a classic example of God providing revelation to guide His people. How could Ruth have known how critical it was that she go with Naomi to Bethlehem? It had to be the revelation of God pushing her along. Why would she want to throw her life away by leaving her hometown and following her strange and despondent mother-in-law to a foreign country that offered her no promise as an impoverished widow? It had to have been the revelation of God that strengthened her faith in the plan. At least that is what it seems when you read the book of Ruth and take note of how she became a part of the genealogy of Christ. God could not have left such a crucial matter up to chance.

Recently I read the account of seven Christian men who were arrested for the murder of a radical Hindu priest in Eastern India. Rioting put pressure on the police to find someone responsible and these seven men were imprisoned even though it was clear they were innocent. A Maoist guerrilla group claimed responsibility for the murder but still the Indian government, without evidence, kept the men in prison. One of the men jailed, Gornath Chalnseth was married and had two sons. His wife, Ruth wept day after day. The situation seemed hopeless. She worried about how she could raise her children by herself. Would her husband ever be released? Ruth says that her fourteen year old son, when he saw her crying came to her and tenderly pointed out, "Mom, why can't you pray? You start praying, and God will comfort you. God will solve your problems." A fourteen year-old was instructing a seasoned believer in how God is. She said that her seven year old son also noticed when she was gloomy. He would often approach Ruth and tell her, "Come to our room; let us pray. We only hope on Jesus. He will solve our problems." Wisdom and revelation came to Ruth in a way she could not have predicted. It was a long wait, but Ruth's husband and the other six men were released eleven years later after a Maoist terrorist confessed to the crime.

God is not going to show you things so you can feel smart about yourself or be better than others. He does so in order for you to know Him. That is the goal of your life, whether you realize it or not, whether you recognize it or not. Your whole purpose is to know God and become intimate with Him. The stars in the sky, the sun rising in the east, the birds heading south, the cool breeze that hits you in the fall, all are there for you to know God better and be close to Him. He will show things that you only He can reveal, and when He does, open your eyes, because Christ is there with you. He has something to say.