

BRYAN BRITTON

STEPPING STONES

Let this selection of pertinent wisdom from the past
become the building blocks for the future.

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Contents

FOREWORD	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
INTRODUCTION	10
ENDORSEMENTS	13
<i>ANCIENT LESSONS</i>	
Truth	19
Wisdom	22
The Ten Commandments	29
The Beatitudes	31
Psalm 23	33
Deadly Sins	34
<i>CLASSIC LESSONS</i>	
Buddah	41
Confucius	45
Seneca	51
Khalil Gibran	53
Lao Tzu	57
Marcus Aurelius	61
Isaac Newton	64
Mahatma Ghandi	68
Friedrich Nietzsche	74
Chinese Proverbs	78
<i>MODERN LESSONS</i>	
Martin Luther King	85
Rudyard Kipling	88
Desiderata	90
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	92
Norman Vincent Peale	99
Oscar Wilde	103
Eckhart Tolle	107
John Demartini	109

YOUTH TOPICS	
Ages Of Man	117
The Human Condition	125
Reading	142
Success	149
Happiness	158
Life	163
Leadership	168
Entrepreneurship	178
Education	185
SOUTH AFRICAN TOPICS	
Anthem	193
Brand South Africa	195
Nelson Mandela	204
Desmond Tutu	214
Ernest Mchunu	216
King Solomon	221
Judiciary	225
Local Government	228
Paradise Lost	238
Robben Island	244
Great Walls	246
Evil Managers	248
Kleptocracy.	250
Young Parliament	253
Youth	256
QUO VADIS	270
I CARE	272
BIBLIOGRAPHY	276

FOREWORD

The youth of South Africa are today under siege.

From the time they reach the age of reason (about seven years old) until they become parents, their minds and hearts are under relentless attack from various quarters.

This is because, in this period of their lives, they become capable of independent choice. Capable of choosing between foods, presents, games, clothes, movies, friends, beliefs and customs. These are but a few fronts on which these attacks occur.

Parents, businessmen, media agencies and politicians are all eager to instil their own particular vested interest uppermost in the minds of our youth. Parents are keen to influence their charges in the direction of their own values, beliefs, customs and ethics, both good and bad. Businessmen hope to improve the financial returns on their products or services by influencing the choices made by the youngsters. Politicians, using the noble shield of democracy, know too well the demographics of choice. Winning youthful minds today means popular outcomes for our smiling politicians in their future. And that converts to big bucks for unscrupulous power seekers. Media agencies serve any cause that the client and target market demand.

The 'Age of Reason' brings also the choice between good and evil. Proponents of both make convincing arguments to capture the hearts and minds of gullible youngsters.

How can we, the corrupted 'wannabees' of the adult world, help these highly susceptible youngsters make sound and moral judgements during this most important period of their fragile lives?

This publication attempts to point in the general direction of the province of good. But the real lesson comes from the Holy Bible at John 20:1-18.

Mary Magdalene, on entering the tomb where the body of Jesus Christ had been interred, saw at first an empty crypt. "They have taken my Lord away", she cried. As she wept, she bent to look once more into the tomb. There she saw, to her amazement, two angels in white.

Then, suddenly, she became aware that a third presence occupied the tomb. "Mary", she heard and as she turned, she cried out "Rabboni!" (Teacher). Jesus said to her: "Do not hold onto me for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God".

Mary ran to the disciples and shouted: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what He had said to her.

This is the critical choice facing our young people on their journey forward.

On the one hand to follow the urgings of parents, businessmen, politicians and media agencies; on the other, to follow the proclamation of Mary in the tomb, after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his miraculous resurrection.

This choice requires... faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sir Isaac Newton once said: "If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants". In this compilation I make no such claim. I have merely selected from those giants, that wisdom which relates to the youth theme of this book. I sincerely hope that by presenting this wisdom to our youthful audience, their search for moral fabric will be eased. Of even more value will be if the young identify with these ethics and adopt some of them in establishing a code of conduct for their blossoming lives.

For my mother, Constance, who understood Norman Vincent Peale, and then patiently taught me about him.

For my three sons, Ryan, Darryn and Devon, who are already better than their father could ever be. My fervent wish is that their children become better than are they.

For my retired former Coca-Cola colleagues: Fred Borchers, Lynn Coggin, Vic Loble, Trevor Gibbon, Ernest Mchunu, Geoff Gover, Bill Brady and Dave Butler. Without their assistance and financial support this work would not have seen the light of day.

This compilation represents the works of authors, sages, scholars and enlightened philosophers recorded by history. The ideas, excerpts, quotes, concepts and philosophies presented here have been drawn from

a variety of sources and are all, to my knowledge, in the public domain. All works used in *Stepping Stones* have been attributed to their originators, and if I have erred in any accreditation or have omitted any source, then I am truly sorry.

This work addresses the 17-million strong audience in South Africa considered to be young. To the fortunate amongst that number, the content will, at times, seem mundane. I would urge these individuals not to scoff but rather to share their understanding with a less fortunate friend. To those who find the content beyond their comprehension, do not despair. Stick at it. Many of us who are members of the older generation are still attempting to drink daily from the fountain of wisdom.

Educated in South Africa, at Christian Brothers College and the University of the Witwatersrand, the author recently celebrated 40 years in the field of financial management. During this period of time he was involved in a wide variety of industries, ranging from fertilisers, beverages, security, banking, design, advertising, venture capital, healthcare, auditing, stock-broking and software to vending. This has exposed him to multi-nationals, local corporate giants, newly listed companies, unlisted entities and entrepreneurs serving commercial markets and government organisations, both in South Africa and abroad.

In 2005 he suffered a stroke forcing him to retire from active business life.

He believes that: "Evil thrives when good men do nothing". I have been guilty of doing nothing before. I am not a colonialist; I am a South African by birth. I love my country. I obey my God. I will be damned if I again do nothing, while evil managers of men cause this beautiful land to sink into the morass of despair that typifies Africa today.

The educational system in South Africa has failed the young learners of this new nation. The writer has contributed this work as a very small step in the giant leap necessary to rehabilitate a system which should be regarded as a national imperative by the government of the day. We privileged few, who bear but few scars from our horrendous past, should be motivated now to contribute, in any way possible, to the resuscitation of this beautiful land we still all call home *and to the rehabilitation of our youth, who must soon lead.*

He currently resides in KwaZulu-Natal, on the east coast of South Africa, and dedicates himself to writing on topics of youth, motivation and business. His three sons are involved in the information technology (IT) sector in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is in turmoil today. The euphoria of the end of apartheid and the advent of democracy, the 'Rainbow Nation' thrill, the racial honeymoon, the dignified patience of the previously disadvantaged – all have grown old. The prospect of a leftist government, labour driven, long on demands yet short on intellect and morals, promises that the dream will become a nightmare.

One reason for this development is that the aspirations of the youth have not been satisfied. After those dark and desperate years, which saw the end of the apartheid regime, a generation of young people were filled with the joy of their impending freedom and the opportunities this event would bestow on them. Sadly, the incoming majority has been concerned with the creation of a new elitist class and redistribution of wealth to the senior cadres. There has been little concern for the aspirations of the young people of South Africa.

The benefits of learning, character building, moral education and religion were lost in the turmoil of the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in a rudderless, sometimes murderous element, pervading South African society. The Rainbow Nation is today the crime mecca of the world, and the 'haves' now have more and the 'have nots', appallingly less.

Can we put an end to this moral decay?

Certainly not where the greater number seem to think that a cell phone is worth more than a human life. John Ruskin, British social commentator (1819-1900) may have been very insightful when he once said: "Let us reform our schools and we shall find little reform necessary in our prisons".

Perhaps adopting sound, non-sexist, non-racial and evergreen wisdom from the past can be used to commence regenerating the shredded moral fibre of this country?

What is this morality to which we should aspire?

Morality refers to the concept of human ethics which pertains to matters of right or wrong – also referred to as good and evil – used within three contexts: individual conscience, systems of principles, and judgements – sometimes called moral values – shared within a cultural, religious or political grouping.

The code of ethics is concerned with how a moral person should behave. Ethical values are beliefs concerning what is morally right and proper as opposed to what is simply correct or effective.

Whether in life or business, ethical values should be ground rules for behaviour. When we live by these values we demonstrate that we are worthy of trust.

A system of standards used to produce honest, decent and ethical results is considered moral.

Albert Schweitzer, author of *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest, the Decay and Restoration of Civilisation* and *Civilisation and Ethics* has this to say on the matter: "Ethics are nothing but reverence for life. This is what gives

me the fundamental principle of morality, namely that good consists in maintaining, promoting and enhancing life, and that destroying, injuring and limiting life is evil”.

To aid you in your search for ethics, I have gathered a selection of pertinent wisdom from the past. Perhaps young people in South Africa will see in these excerpts, building blocks with which to construct a viable morality for their young lives and hence for the country they are destined to inherit.

If they do nothing, the street kids of today will sadly become the gangsters of tomorrow.

ENDORSEMENTS

ERNEST MCHUNU

“I knew Bryan as the Chief Accountant when I was at The Coca-Cola Export Corporation in Southern Africa. He played a significant role in ensuring that the South African branch of the United States parent came in on budget each year. I learned a great deal from him in those years. I hope that the youth of South Africa learn a great deal from his book.”

Ernest Mchunu was born to abject poverty in Alexandra, a shanty town on the doorstep of affluent Johannesburg, and through his belief in ‘good’ rose to become an international executive. His remarkable story is told in his book *Cheeky Native*.

KEN CROSS

“I met the author 10 years before this, when we crossed paths in a business transaction. He, the financial director of a JSE listed subsidiary and I, the financial partner in a venture capital business. Little did we know at the time that our mutual concern for the underprivileged youth of South Africa would lead to us shaking hands once more and spending time in earnest discussion.

Bryan is impressive in his dedication to research and analysis. His dogged determination allows him to get things done under difficult circumstances. I was intrigued to hear him talk passionately on his concern for the moral and spiritual shortcomings of today's youth.

This has been topical for me, having been deeply involved in trying to uplift the lives of street children in South Africa. This is a highly vulnerable sector of society, with little moral and behavioural knowledge. Living in 'rat pack' conditions from an early age, with no parental guidance, few genuine reference points for good social interaction and a life focused on physical survival, leaves precious little room for moral integrity and a spiritual understanding of life.

For both Bryan and I, our privileged upbringing in Christian families has led us to an awareness of the deterioration of moral standards and a concern for the future generations of leaders emanating from today's youth."

Ken Cross retired in 1994 from Siemens Telecommunications as financial director, and subsequently spent four years in Uzbekistan on missionary work with Operation Mobilisation. He currently holds a position as trustee in 'I Care', a non-governmental organisation (NGO) giving street kids a future. Ken has been married for 46 years and has four adult children.

DR LYNN COGGIN

"The depth of reading, studying and experience implicit in the compilation of eclectic knowledge contained in this publication will be readily and naturally appreciated by all deep-thinking people; all who will marvel at the fact that so much pertinent wisdom has been encapsulated in a book which is not a tome. The strength of the material is that it is aimed

primarily at our younger folk, who in this day and age might not be all that enamoured of reading, due to the fast-moving computer technology available which holds so much allure for them, and occupies so much of their time.

As a 'companion' publication, which could reside at the bedside or in a briefcase, to be read on business flights, all young people and executives would have at their fingertips a fount of knowledge to which they would only normally be privy through copious reading of tomes in the library or exhausting research on the internet.

The major value of this book is that it has been researched and compiled by a scientific mind. With many years of successful business experience behind him, the author's objective is to guide young people in a direction which will enhance their own lifestyle management and business acumen. In this sense therefore, the reader has had all of the hard work done for him or her. This facet could be adjudged a windfall for the aspirant reader.

I would have valued such a publication in my own youth.

I consider that *Stepping Stones* contains essential reading for all young people."

Dr Lynn Coggin is a retired management consultant and author of the book: *ABI: Over 60 Years as a Bottler of Coca-Cola*. Today he is doing research for a new novel, which will be based on German naval activity off the South African coastline during the Second World War.

ANCIENT LESSONS

TRUTH

*B*efore we understand wisdom, we must examine the nature of Truth.

Truth is righteousness; righteousness is light, and light is bliss.

Truth is impartiality, self control, modesty, endurance, goodness, dignity, renunciation, mediation, fortitude and compassion. These are the various forms of truth.

Truth is a basic law of life. Truth is the means and the ultimate goal.

Truth is the gateway to the Kingdom of God.

Truth is the law of freedom, falsehood the law of slavery and death.

Truth is justice, fair play, adherence to the fundamental laws of ethics. Purity and truth are the twin factors that unfold and awaken the divinity that lies dormant within you, and leads you to perfection.

Will, justice, harmony, forgiveness and peace are all forms of truth.

Truth always exists in a pure unmixed state. Truth includes self restraint, absence of jealousy, forgiveness, patience, endurance, kindness and love.

The path of truth is a precipitous one. It is slippery and as sharp as the razor's edge. Hard it is to tread; difficult a path it is. Giants among spiritual men walk over it to the City of Perfection.

Whatever you do, be true to yourself and to the world. Hide not your thoughts. Be frank. Be sincere. Be candid. Be straightforward. Be courageous to express your views.

Ancient lesson

Speak the truth. Truth alone triumphs, falsehood never. This goes to the heart of the matter. All the lessons which follow in this book are based on this simple fact. If you believe in the truth and practise it in your life, then you will understand 'good' as used many times in the pages that follow.

It is simple. It is wise. It is truth.

Be faithful to your trust. Deceive not the man who relies on you. Keep your promise even at the cost of your own life. Your life may go but not the given word.

Veracity is the habit of speaking the truth and is a virtue.

A lie is the intentional deviation from the truth.

A liar is a coward. Uttering falsehood is a certain mark of cowardice. Speak the truth. You will become courageous.

Ancient lesson

Morality is the basis of all things and truth is the substance of all morality.

Mahatma Gandhi

Take note also of Albert Schweitzer's definition of morality included in the introduction to this book. These two gentlemen have given you a solid explanation of the concept of morality. Now read on.

To tell a lie is a sin. He whom utters a falsehood loses the faith of others. People will not believe a liar, even if he speaks the truth. The habit of telling lies becomes deep-rooted by repetition of lies. Man tells many lies to cover up one lie.

Let truth and purity light up your career, guide your conduct and mould your character.

All the above virtues, though seemingly different, have but one and the same form, namely truth. All these hold up truth and strengthen it.

WISDOM

Wisdom means having the knowledge and understanding to recognise the right course of action and then having the will and courage to follow it. To recognise the right course comes from reading, learning, listening, asking, religion, common sense, parents, teachers, priests and respected elders.

Wisdom is often captured in a succinct quote or saying. It conveys years of experience and learning in a few simple words:

The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.

Cicero

To know when to be generous and when firm – that is wisdom.

Elbert Hubbard

The truest greatness lies in being kind, the truest wisdom in a happy mind.

Ella Wilcox

It is characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

Henry Thoreau

Science is organised knowledge. Wisdom is organised life.

Immanuel Kant

Knowledge is a process of piling up facts: wisdom lies in their simplification.

Martin Fischer

Ancient Lesson

The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.

From truth comes wisdom. From wisdom comes morals. From morals comes decisions. Decisions to do the right thing or wrong thing. Using ancient and modern wisdom, this book attempts to show you how to discern the difference.

The beginning of wisdom is doubting; by doubting we come to question and by seeking the answer, we may soon come upon the truth.

Pierre Abelard

A short saying often contains much wisdom.

Cicero

Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.

Theodore Rubin

Good people are good because they have come to wisdom through failure. We get very little wisdom from success.

William Saroyan

Wherever you are, be there totally.

Eckhart Tolle

That man is richest whose pleasures are the cheapest.

Henry Thoreau

The most valuable thing I have learned in life is to regret nothing.

Somerset Maugham

The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from the old ones.

John Maynard Keynes

No one can give better advice than yourself.

Cicero

Reading is knowledge and knowledge is power.

Unknown

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.

Goethe

Ancient Lesson

Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

This clever analogy with the process of developing photographs, introduces the concept of positives and negatives. You will learn later in the book how to develop positives in your life, so that the negatives don't result in fear.

Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

Michael Pritchard

One's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.

Oliver Holmes

All life is an experiment.

Ralph Emerson

Wisdom is knowing a world of good, and being able to relay it in just a few words.

Unknown

We can stay young by focusing on a dream instead of on a regret.

Unknown

We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

EM Forester

The most certain sign of wisdom is continual cheerfulness.; Her state is like the things above the moon, always clear and serene.

Michael Montaigne

What a new face courage puts on everything.

Ralph Emerson

Real wisdom is when your famous quote is shorter than your name.

Unknown

Wisdom is divided into two parts:

- (a) having a great deal to say and
- (b) not saying it.

Unknown

The best cure for anger is delay.

Seneca

If I have been of service, if I have glimpsed more of the nature and essence of ultimate good, if I am inspired to reach wider horizons of thought and action, if I am at peace with myself, it has been a successful day.

Alex Noble

Life is the only real counsellor; wisdom, unfiltered through personal experience does not become part of the moral tissue.

Edith Wharton

We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future.

George Bernard Shaw

We learn wisdom from failure much more than from success. We often discover what will do, by finding out what will not do; and probably he who never made a mistake, never made a discovery.

Samuel Smiles

Nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time.

Theodore Roosevelt

I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power, the greater it will be.

Thomas Jefferson;

Ancient Lesson

Life is the only real counsellor; wisdom, unfiltered through personal experience, does not become part of the moral tissue.

All through this book you will be encouraged to pack the pertinent wisdom into your knapsack. At the appropriate time, in your long journey through life, you will be required to dig into your knapsack and unpack a relevant piece of wisdom. This to vault over a hurdle which life will have placed in your path.

The state of your life is nothing more than a reflection of your state of mind.

Wayne Dwyer

Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as real strength.

Frances de Sales

Don't worry about avoiding temptation, as you grow older it will avoid you.

Sir Winston Churchill

By reading one gains the benefit of others' wisdom. For it to be meaningful in your own life, it has to have relevance. It has to be something you can carry with you on your travels through life. It is there to give you direction when the choices are complex and you are at a fork in the road. It is at these times that you should be able to draw on the wisdom you carry with you, but may not yet have used. It will help you make the right decision, and even if you take the wrong fork in the road, your wisdom will make you aware of your mistake until you correct the situation.

Gaining wisdom is like the father who warns his son not to touch the plate on the stove. The son will bear this advice in mind but continues to ponder the reason for not touching the plate. When he finally touches the plate, he becomes knowledgeable and wise. He has vivid recall of the pain, remembers the smell of burning flesh, understands the knowledge he has been given, and goes on to offer his offspring the benefit of his newfound wisdom.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever”. These words are found at Psalms 111:10. The Ten Commandments are found in the Holy Bible at Exodus 20:2-17:1.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me

Other gods include worldly goods, passions, power, money, pleasures, drugs, alcohol and other people.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain

This is not using the word ‘God’ in an unholy context in everyday speech, or as a curse, swearword or adjective in a non-religious context.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy

Reserve Sunday to give thanks to the Lord for His graces during the week gone by, and seek His protection, guidance and good graces for the week ahead.

Honour thy father and mother

After God, respect and honour your parents. Show them kindness, hold them dearly in your heart and make them part of your life.

Thou shalt not kill

Kill means that you may not take the life of another human being.

Thou shalt not commit adultery

This includes not only the active pursuit of another's spouse whilst in wedlock but also by being the cause of another's marriage break up.

Thou shalt not steal

Includes your neighbour's possessions, both tangible and intangible, his ideas and his time.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour

This means lying in any form. Untruths spoken, false flattery and deception are all untruths and should be avoided.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house

Here 'house' is meant to include possessions, relationships, worldly goods and all that is not yours. Jealousy should be avoided at all costs.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, servant, handmaid, and so on

Be content with that which the Lord has given or entrusted to you and do not search or want that which others have.

THE BEATITUDES

The Beatitudes are found in the Bible at Matthew 5:3-13.

**Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Poor in spirit means to be humble. Humility is the realisation that all of your gifts and blessings come from God.

**Blessed are they who mourn
for they shall be comforted.**

Mourn for our own sins against God who has been kind to us.

**Blessed are the meek
for they shall possess the earth.**

This means obedience to God and being gentle and kind with our fellow human beings.

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice
for they shall be satisfied.**

Can be interpreted as a continuous desire for moral perfection.

**Blessed are the merciful
for they shall obtain mercy.**

Give love, compassion and forgiveness to your fellow human beings.

**Blessed are the pure of heart
for they shall see God.**

Means acting without personal gain and being unselfish.

**Blessed are the peacemakers
for they shall be called sons of God.**

By imitating God's love of man we act as peacemakers.

**Blessed are they who suffer persecution
for justice sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

If you are persecuted for believing in God, endure it, for salvation shall be your reward.

PSALM 23

*W*isdom is the truth of ages captured in simple, universally acceptable and eternally valid terms.

Nowhere is this more pertinent than in Psalm 23 of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Young people, youth leaders, civil servants, citizens and community leaders everywhere should take time to examine this priceless piece of advice. Be uplifted, motivated, comforted and guided by its eternal message:

"The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the Valley of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever".

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