

# The Wisdom Tree

By Len Worley, Ph.D.



Once in the Garden of Paradise, when God was making humans, the time came to decide exactly what it was that would make woman and man different than all the other beautiful creatures made. The Great Wisdom decided to place the smallest of small seeds inside the deepest place of each human being.

It was willed so, and from that long ago day, whose time has now been forgotten, the Great Wisdom made it that every human being born would be endowed with a seed of Itself. The seed is passed down from one man to the next and from one woman to the next. But, this seed remains hidden and out of sight. It grows into something mysterious and grand only when the human being learns how to nourish it in a special way, the way a gardener carefully tends a young plant.

Of course, you will want to know what this tiny seed is that grows into something mysterious and grand, and, you will *certainly* want to know what feeds it, what makes it grow.

I will tell you, but first you must understand what the Great Wisdom had in mind when the seed was placed into every human being.

Knowing that human life would be filled with many trials and sorrows, griefs and regrets, the Great Wisdom endowed human beings with an unusual ability, that is, the ability to turn their most sorrowful sorrows into something precious. Out of compassion for the difficulties humans face, the Great Wisdom gave a seed that would grow into one of the most precious things in the entire world.

This gift is called The Wisdom Tree.

Not only is this tree beautiful when fully grown, but its fruit is most magical because it has a most unusual effect on those who have suffered. When someone has gone through unexplainable hardships, the fruit of The Wisdom Tree gives unexplainable comfort.

But like all great and beautiful things, the Great Wisdom knew, and even intended, that this seed must be fed with a most unusual food in order for it to sprout, rise, grow tall, and bear its most precious fruit.

The food is our suffering.

Knowing that there would be no lack of this food, that human life would entail difficulty, The Wisdom Tree was given as a consolation for the turmoil that each human must bear. It was given as a comfort for the bitter things one must taste in the course of a day and a lifetime.

However, suffering alone is not sufficient to grow the tree. Everyone suffers. What makes the Wisdom Tree grow is when a human being brings his or her suffering as a gift to the Tree, fully feeling the difficulties of life, and gives their feelings fully. This, in some mysterious way, makes the tree grow.

Some human beings grow great and beautiful trees, and their fruit is enough to feed not only themselves but also provide nourishment for many others. But sadly, the great tree in waiting does not always grow in everyone.

Some who do not want to suffer, in spite of their hardships, pretend not to feel their pain. Others feel that suffering is a sign of weakness, and so they withhold their real feelings and do not give the gift that will feed the tree. Some unfortunate others feel as if their suffering is somehow less important, comparing their life to someone less fortunate, and so they live silently in their sorrows, not realizing that their vulnerability is what the Tree most yearns for. Even others withhold their gifts from the tree, thinking that giving in to their feelings of pain would only cause their difficulties to grow and become worse.

All of these for various reasons do not feed their tree.

There are those, however, who do understand the purpose of the tree. They bring their griefs, their pain, their angry resentments, their betrayals and their betraying. For all these are gifts to the soil that feeds the Tree.

They know that The Wisdom Tree only grows from real feelings. Real tears. Real hurts. Real sorrow. Real anger. Real failure.

Realness grows the tree.

And to this day you can look into the eyes of those who know the secret of realness, and you can see how big and bountiful and beautiful their tree is, the one that grows inside them.

How does the Tree do this? How does it take suffering and grow beautiful, nourishing fruit?

In the night, when we all sleep and are resting, when our work is done and we relax our hands, the Wisdom Tree receives the suffering we have offered it as real food. It eats and drinks our sorrows, if only we have said "Yes" and given our real feelings. Through our dreaming it reworks the tired sorrows we bring. Just like worms that eat rotting debris in the soil, making rich humus with many nutrients to feed the plants, so our dreams turns our deepest regrets, mistakes, foolishness, into food for the tree to grow.

In the morning The Wisdom Tree gives its fruit in the form of a dream.

Sadly, not all people realize the gift which has been given in the dream. They do not bother to crack the nut to get to the fruit. They do not take the time to peel the fruit to taste the sweetness that is inside.

But there are those who know their dreams contain rich nuggets of wisdom-food, and they look forward every morning to discovering what The Wisdom Tree has ripened in the night.

The gift of dream-wisdom always provides us with something we did not know. This is how The Wisdom Tree guides us, sometimes correcting us, warning us, and sometimes inspiring us.

Dreams are often like puzzles that take time to figure out how all the pieces fit together. But if you take the time to understand your dreams, you will realize how wise and giving The Wisdom Tree is. You will also come to feel that it loves you and in its own way is trying to help you everyday. (And I tell you a secret here: the more you eat the fruit of your wisdom-dreams, the more dreams the tree will produce for you.)

As the tree grows tall and bears much fruit, it offers precious gifts for many others. Those whose tree is strong realize that they cannot take suffering away from anyone else, but what they do have to offer is wisdom. When you give someone wisdom and they digest it, it becomes sweet comfort for the disappointments of life. So, in this way, your Wisdom Tree can actually help others. But only if you have fed your tree well.

How do you feed your Wisdom Tree?

The tree can be fed quietly, alone in the privacy of each person's heart. Giving your suffering in a real way is the only requirement. No pretending, no denying, no feeling ashamed for the weakness you feel; and most certainly, no feeling that any failure is too big to offer as sacred food for the sacred tree.

Sometimes we have our suffering but do not give it to the tree. Of course, if the suffering is real, the tree will still take it. But what the tree loves is that you offer your suffering as a gift. You don't keep it all for yourself. This is sometimes hard for human beings to understand, but it is one thing, among many, that the tree can teach you, if you ask.

One way we give our suffering as a gift is to write what bothers us and then keep this writing in a special place. Another way is to speak to someone, but not just in a complaining way, but instead with the intention of learning from our difficulty.

Sometimes, our suffering is too great to realize alone, and it is for this reason long ago that people have learned how to gather around the tree and feed the tree together. The tree loves this and invites all who come to gather closely around it, and thus be close to one another. For that is how the tree feels loved, and that is how we feel loved; when we gather safely and close to one another and share the realness of feelings.

Now perhaps you are wondering, "If this tree is so special, what can I do to find this tree inside myself? And what can I do to protect this tree once I have found it?"

The Wisdom Tree has Six Great Guardians that form an invisible circle around it. If you find your way to at least one of these guardians, you will soon feel the presence of all the others, and then once you have placed yourself right in the middle of their circle you will be right where The Wisdom Tree grows.

The Six Great Guardians show us where The Wisdom Tree is, and they also will protect the tree, since it is a most precious possession that should be safeguarded.

I will also tell you a secret here. When place yourself in the very middle of the Six Great Guardians surrounding the tree, you are sure to be protected, along with the tree.

"Protected from what?" you may ask.

Many things; but for sure you will be protected from making foolish mistakes and doing things that harm yourself and harm other human beings. In fact, you might say that when we lose our way and wander outside the Great Circle, then we are most likely to do things that are not wise for us.

Now I will tell what the Six Great Guardians are.

The first is Gratefulness. This prevents bitterness and resentment from taking hold like angry weeds, and it also helps us not get caught in feeling too sorrowful for ourselves, as if we are the only ones who suffer.

The second is Compassion. This prevents meanness from taking hold. It gives us a kind way of seeing ourselves and others. When we have Compassion, it helps us discover the third Great Guardian.

Forgiveness is the third. This guards us from getting lost in the past. Knowing how to let go of the past frees us and helps us move on and live fully in today.

The fourth is Humility. This prevents arrogance, a very dangerous attitude that destroys friendship and makes us think that we are better than we are. Humility helps us to stay real.

The fifth of these great guardians is Understanding. This is a most magical guardian, for when you understand something from all angles, when you get what went before someone's actions, even your own, then you are able to see how Life happens, that everything is the result of something else. No one is to be blamed. This entails a deep seeing, seeing underneath human behavior, seeing below the surface.

The sixth guardian is Valor. This is courage for a noble cause. It prevents weakness. It helps us do and say the right thing even when we are afraid. It helps us stand for ourselves and for anyone who needs protection. Valor gives us self-respect, something important for protecting the tree, and yourself.

The Six Great Guardians stand together in a perfect circle. Remember that you must find your way to middle of the circle to realize their greatest power. (This is another secret you will discover: the Six Great Guardians balance one another, and thus balance you.)

Now you see that The Wisdom Tree cannot be forgotten if you want it to grow. It must be tended to every day and especially each night before we go to bed, for that is how we feed the tree. We give it our difficulties and it takes them and turns them into the sweet fruit of our dreams.

You also know some of the magic that the Six Great Guardians provide. Let yourself feel any one of them and they will help you find your way right to the very middle of their circle where you will discover your tree.

Most importantly, remember that the tree is in you, waiting, hoping, wanting your gift, which is the realness of your feeling.

In other words, it wants you to simply be you. And I will tell you now: this is the greatest secret of all.



Author's note

The Wisdom Tree had its inception when reading a curious passage by Carl Jung: "Tears, sorrow, and disappointment are bitter, but wisdom is the comforter in all psychic suffering. Indeed, bitterness and wisdom form a pair of alternatives: where there is bitterness, wisdom is lacking, and where wisdom is there can be no bitterness. (Mysterium Coniunctionis, Collected Works, Volume 14, paragraph 330)

The Six Great Guardians are inspired by the beautiful presentation of The Six Heart Virtues found at [www.eventtemples.com](http://www.eventtemples.com) in the article, "Living from the Heart."