

Sagacious Doves
The Word: Sagacious

As a young girl, and quite frankly, even now being in my middle fifties, I love the experience of finding a place of solitude and curling up with a good book. I would most definitely, during the course of reading, come across a word that I did not know. A word that would peak my curiosity as to its meaning. As I would come across words that I did not know, I would write them on the blank pages in the back of the book. I always had the good intention of looking them up at some point as a way to increase my vocabulary. It seemed such a wise thing to do. Anyone can pick up a book from my childhood and I can almost guarantee there you will find words written in the back of most of the books I've read. One such word that you might find is the word *sagacious*.

I cannot quite remember what book I had been reading at the time. I have tried to remember and even searched for it. A few books did come up in my search, such as *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. I believe that was one of the books I was reading at the time, but I am still not certain of the actual book where I initially came across the word *sagacious*. I don't even remember if I stopped at some point to look it up, as that would have taken me from my comforting place of solitude to go find the dictionary. Throughout the years though, that word continued to creep periodically from my subconscious mind into my conscious mind.

Sagacious, sagacious, sagacious... and, yes as it entered my conscious mind, I would repeat the word at least three times, sometimes in my head and sometimes out loud. At times, I would stop and give pause to consider what the word actually meant. I would break it down like my elementary school teacher taught me. Saga means something legendary or a long story.

Sag(e) means a wise one; and -cious means, “being like something”, I would think to myself... yet I never got up to physically look up the definition of the word *sagacious*.

Sagacious, sagacious, sagacious... The word was so mesmerizing and enticing to me. It had what Daniel Harkavy referred to in his book with Michael Hyatt, *Living Forward* as “pull power”. The word kept pulling at me through the years, almost like a nagging thought, until one day about 15 years ago, I finally stopped to look it up. And, again, I can’t quite remember what if anything I might have been reading at the time, but there it was again, the word sagacious had creep back into my present mind.

Thankfully, I did not have to leave the comfort of my chair this time to get a dictionary, something that had always prevented me from looking the word up over these many years. At last, with the help of technology, the internet at my fingertips and my laptop, all I had to do was “Google it”.

SAGACIOUS. After so many years of going in and out of my consciousness, I had finally taken the time to find the formal definition of the word *Sagacious*. There it was!

Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary defines *sagacious* as showing keen mental discernment, being shrewd and skilled in following a trail. Someone with quick intellectual perceptions, of keen penetration and judgement, discerning and judicious.

I thought to myself, as I read the definition over a few times, I really like the word sagacious; what great qualities and characteristics to possess; and then I began to examine myself. Do I possess these qualities? Do I practice these attributes and traits in my daily life? And most of all, did I instill these important elements of character in my son and especially in my daughter? After some thought and reflection, by all accounts I felt most certain that I did.

I felt sagacious. And began to describe myself as sagacious. The word gave me a sense of self-confidence. It was a quality that I wore like my coat of arms. When I thought of myself as sagacious, I actually felt like I was wearing an armour and that I had the ability to invent and realize the life that I wish to have no matter what life threw my way; and believe me I have experienced many curve balls in my life, and as life is, will experience some more. Not that I am looking for more curve balls in my life, I just have come to understand that life has it's challenges and that for the most part, challenges help us to learn and grow. It's how we learn to become resilient, how we learn what we are made of and how we learn to bounce back!

As a school counselor by profession, my next thought was about the young girls that I had worked with over the years, and the ones that I currently work with, and the ones I had yet to work with. How could I help them to experience the same confidence that I felt? Could I somehow use the word that had enticed and pulled at me throughout the years to inspire and encourage young women to always dream big dreams and to be intentional about inventing and realizing the lives they wished for? Could the word that I had carried around in my subconscious actually have a bigger purpose than how it made me feel? I began to have a sense that there was more to why this word stuck with me over all these years. Just maybe, God was trying to tell me something about one of my purposes' in life. I am a firm believer that everything that happens in life has greater meaning and a God-given purpose for a specific time and place in our lives, and in the lives of those we impact. Every experience and yes, perhaps, every word! *Sagacious* is that word for me!

One evening as I sat on the couch the pull of the word was as strong as a spiritual presence, a call to my soul that this word had a greater purpose, not just for my life, but for how I

could have a positive impact on the lives of others. My message would be for young women, and with the guide of the Holy Spirit, I penned this poem about what I wanted young girls to believe about being *sagacious!*

Sagacious Girl

*She is a Sagacious Girl, with a broad and bodacious smile,
That shelters her deepest thoughts, desires, dreams and wishes;
Shared only with those worthy of her trust, who have hope for her future.
She takes care to own her space and to safeguard her boundaries.*

*She is a Gracious Girl, with hands open to serve the world,
Her heart so compassionate, she feels that one day,
She'll be the one, that one to inspire and impearl,
The suffering of the unwanted, undesired and uncared for.*

*She is an Ingenious Girl, always creating and recreating
Who she is, who she wishes to be, trying and testing
She'll never stop learning, desiring, thirsting, seeking,
With these come knowledge, wisdom, mastery and yes, power.*

*She is a Resilient Girl, bouncing back at the speed of light
Racing to make up lost time, being quick yet wise, to
Achieve, aspire and attain, despite the disappointments and setbacks
That only serve to make her stronger, flexible and even more resilient.*

*She is a Lively Girl, vivacious, dynamic and full of movement
She walks with rhythm and rhyme, gaining power with each step
The music and muses keep her stroll on beat, until
She reaches her destination, even livelier than when she started.*

*She is a Sagacious Girl!
Gracious, Ingenious, Resilient and Lively
She is a Sagacious Girl!
Intelligent, wise, perceptive, astute and bold, Sagacious Girl!*

This book represents my desire to share with young girls everywhere how taking on the values and characteristics of the word sagacious could have a profound impact on how they can create and invent the lives of their dreams and goals.

This book is designed to assist young girls in the daily practice of what it means to be sagacious. *Welcome in my Sagacious Doves!*

PART I
YOUR COMMISSIONS

Remember it is I who am sending you out as sheep into the midst of wolves; prove yourselves as sagacious (as serpents), and as innocent as doves.

Matthew 10:16 (WEY)

A Simile as Wise Advise

It did not matter which biblical version I read, when I got to the part that read, “as serpents” I would pause. What did it actually mean to be “as sagacious as serpents”? I knew there was wise counsel in these words, as these were the words that our Lord Jesus used to give instructions to his twelve disciples. Thomas Watson, a Puritan preacher and author from the 1600s summed it up in his writing, *Wise as Serpents-Harmless as Doves*. Watson wrote that, first, Our Lord Jesus gives His apostles their commission; second, He foretells their danger; and third, He gives them instructions.

Jesus told them exactly what they were to do as disciples, such as minister to others and heal the sick. He also told them where their boundaries were. That they were about to embark on a glorious, but hazardous work. There were certain towns that He warned them not to visit. He admonished them to give as they were given to, and to be careful not to take on extra baggage. They were to be gracious in their response to reception and hospitality, and to not overstay their welcome. Lastly, Jesus told the disciples that they must be “wise as serpents, and innocent as doves” in their approach. You see, Jesus was about to leave the disciples. He was about to embark on the ultimate sacrifice and wanted to make sure that he left them with sound advice.

But, how can one be both “sagacious” (wise) as serpents, yet innocent (harmless) as doves. Initially, I considered them in complete opposition. It’s like trying to mix oil and water. No matter how hard you shake, or how long you shake, once you stop, they still separate from each other.

Jesus is the ultimate in using parables and similes to make a point, and this one does not lose it’s meaning, nor if you take the time to think about it, it is not even hard to grasp. The thing that I still found most intriguing and more conflicting is the comparison of a serpent to a dove. I have used similes as a school counselor. Similes such as “you are acting as nutty as a fruitcake” or “you both are as different as night and day” are just a few . As you can see, the art of using similes is still used to make a point and to give wise advice and direction. For the most part I do have to stop and explain the meaning. I usually get a response of, “What does that mean?” But I have come to value using similes and parables to assist with understanding particular situations and to make a concept more clear to the students I work with.

With this particular simile, “sagacious” (wise) as serpents, yet innocent (harmless) as doves, my goal became how to use this particular bible verse in giving young girls direction on how to be as sagacious as serpents, yet as innocent as doves. How to navigate through life successfully and to obtain the goals and dreams that they desire. Just as my first reaction concerning the use of the word serpent had to be something I had to come to understand, I knew this is where I needed to start.

Your Commission: Be Sagacious (Wise) as Serpents, *NOT* as Serpents

To be sagacious means to have or show keen mental discernment and good judgement. To be shrewd means to have practical cleverness and to be astute in diplomatic skills. It is the ability to see through and understand what is possibly hidden or puzzling.

To be sagacious is to have a basic and fundamental knowledge of what areas you can go into and what areas you cannot go into, and to always be on your guard against snares, traps and deceptions that are seen and unseen. It is both knowing the boundaries and limits that keep you away from reaching your God-given potential.

Jesus wanted the disciples to be successful and to reach their God-given potential in spreading the Gospel throughout the land. A land known to be full of snares, traps and deceptions. The analogy of being wise and being as a serpent was a powerful visual that He used to make this point. The point to you is to use cunningness and cleverness as you navigate in your daily life. There is power in questioning, setting limits and being cautious.

The Serpent: Consider the Bioga Snake

Yes, the thought of snakes give me the creeps, but it is necessary to mention them here to understand what Jesus meant in His parable to the disciples.

The Bioga snake is considered remarkably beautiful, combining the rich colors of the finest gems with the splendor of burnished gold, mingled with dark brown shades. The under surface of the head and body is of a silver white, separated from the changing blue of the back by a golden chain on each side, the whole length of the body. There are reflected tints of silver color, golden yellow, red, blue, green, and black, mingled, and changing in an extraordinary and beautiful manner; so that, when about to change its skin, it seems studded with a mixture of diamonds, emeralds, topazes, sapphires, and rubies, under a thin transparent veil of bluish crystal. I can just imagine the visual beauty of the bioga snake.

Found in India, the boiga is considered one of the most slender of serpents in proportion to its length, which exceed three feet in length, and is hardly a few lines in diameter. The tail is almost as long as the body, and at the end is like a needle of fineness; yet it is sometimes flattened above, below, and on the two sides, rendering it in some measure, a square. From the delicacy of its form, its movements are necessarily extremely agile; so that, doubling itself up several times, it can spring to a considerable distance, with great swiftness. It can twine and twist itself, most readily, and nimbly, around trees or other such bodies; climbing, or descending, or suspending itself, with the utmost facility. The boiga feeds on small birds, which it swallows very easily, notwithstanding the small diameter of its body, in consequence of the great distensibility of its jaws, throat, and stomach, common to it with other serpents. It conceals itself under the foliage of trees, on purpose to surprise the small birds, and is said to attract them by a

peculiar kind of whistling. Yet, it seems to possess a more perfect instinct than other serpents, joined to more agile movements, and more magnificent ornament. How shrew and sagacious does the boiga snake appears to be!

In the isle of Borneo, the children play with the boiga, without the smallest dread. They carry it in their hands, as innocent as themselves, and twist it about their necks, arms, and bodies, in a thousand directions. The boiga returns caress for caress to the Indian children who fondle it, and seems pleased to be twisted about their delicate hands. How innocent and harmless is the boiga snake appears to be!

According to this representation, the boiga is not merely to be praised for its beauty, but may be said to fulfill the meaning of Matthew 10:16, combining the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.

As you can see from considering the boiga, a snake can be both sagaciously wise and innocently harmless. Yes, some snakes are harmful and some are not, and we do consider snakes to be cunningly wise and shrewd. Jesus knew this when he gave the commission of this parable to his disciples! Let us consider a few things that we can learn from examining the characteristics that Jesus wanted his disciples to learn from being as “sagacious (wise) as serpents”, but “NOT as serpents”.

Sagacious as Serpents

A shrewd person sees danger and hides himself, but the naive keep right on going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 27:12 NET

Remember our definition of sagacious. To be sagacious means to have or show keen mental discernment and good judgement. To be shrewd means to have practical cleverness and to be astute in diplomatic skills. It is the ability to see through and understand what is possibly puzzling or hidden.

To be sagacious is to have a basic and fundamental knowledge of what areas you can go into and what areas you cannot go into, and to always be on your guard against snares, traps and deceptions that are seen and unseen.

To possess discernment means to detect with the eyes, ears and all other senses available to you. It also means to read someone or something, and I don't mean to tell them how you feel. Reading someone or something means that you can tell if that person, thing or situation mean you good or bad will. It means to carefully watch people and your surrounding with a cautious spirit. Being able to read people and situations is a crucial skill. It's a skill that we should all desire to have.

Remember the description of the boiga snake. Snakes are good at hiding, avoiding and escaping. In fact, the most common form of protection for a snake is avoidance. A snake's first line of defense is to escape to safety among rocks, underbrush or up trees. Snakes are quick to be on the alert for dangers, and experts state that snakes are generally nonaggressive. Snakes do not

go on the hunt to attack humans, and are known to only attack in self-defense. It is usually in their own natural environments that most human snake bites tend to occur.

So to be as *sagacious as serpents* means that we are able to perceive, avoid and escape from danger! Not to run toward danger. Not to be in an attack mode. Sometimes we consider perceiving situations that should be avoided or escaped from as moments we should take a stand. We consider avoidance of these type situations as cowardice acts, when in fact they can actually be thoughtful, self-preserving acts. Should not our main purpose be self-preservation? Why would we wish to put ourselves in harm's way? Running towards danger should be the last thing that we wish to do. Being "safe not sorry" takes on a whole new meaning when applied here. Being as *sagacious as serpents* is a quality that all of a sudden does not feel as creepy as it initially did, does it?

Your Commission: To be Harmless as Doves

Remember it is I who am sending you out as sheep into the midst of wolves; prove yourselves... as innocent as doves.

The dove is one of the first two birds mentioned in the bible. You are familiar with the story of Noah's Ark, in which Noah and his three sons built a floating zoo under God's directions. After raining for 40 days and 40 nights, the waters began to recede. Noah then sent two birds out of the ark: a raven and a dove.

First Noah sent the raven from the window in the ark, and the raven flew back and forth until the waters were dried up, never to be seen again. Noah later sent the dove, but the dove returned to the ark after finding no place to rest its feet.

It must be noted that there are vast differences in the characteristics of a raven and a dove. First and foremost, a raven will eat the bodies of animals killed by other animals, but a dove will not. It has been said ravens will often follow packs of wolves to gain access to the meat the wolves tear apart. But when the dove went forth from the ark, it returned because doves will not rest on a carcass or eat decaying flesh. The dove's diet consists mainly of seeds and grains.

Once again, Noah released the dove from the window of the ark. Eventually the dove brought back an olive leaf. The olive leaf in the mouth of the dove continues today as a universal symbol of peace, even in the midst of conflict.

An old wise saying that I would frequently hear from my high school principal, Dr. Charles Edward Murray was, "*Birds of a feather flock together*". I don't know about you, but I

would rather flock with the doves, than the fly with the ravens. We are sometimes mostly defined by the company we keep.

The dove is also considered a symbol of purity and faithfulness. The dove was also the only bird that could be offered as a sacrifice in the Old Testament. What a symbol of righteousness, nobility and truth. Thankfully, we do not have to be so righteous, as Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven; it is good though to aspire to be as righteous as we possibly can.

To be “harmless as doves” expresses the need for the disciples to be prudent in their actions and behaviors. They were to show cleverness and shrewdness in their dealings, especially as they ventured into the world among their adversaries, those who meant to cause them ill will; *among the wolves*. They were not to step to the level of their enemies. They were to do good and to not give any ammunition to their enemies that could be used against them. In other words, they were not to give their enemies anything that could be used against them to make them look bad. Yes, looking “bad” is sometimes mostly in your control. You can determine how you respond to situations and people. You determine your how others see you.

Jesus himself was compared to the innocence, harmlessness and purity of the dove. Because of his innocence, Jesus could challenge his adversaries. His enemies could never find anything in his life that he did that would discredit him or make him look bad. So, the only thing that they could attack was his teaching, to spread *rumors* that by doing good he broke the law, or that he performed miracles under the influence of the devil. By making his enemies focus on his teaching, Jesus made his beliefs the focus of conflict, not his actions or behaviors. By all account, Jesus did not experience sinful actions or behaviors. He was *as innocent as a dove*.

Conflicts in life are not always avoidable, but from my experience working with young people, especially young women, I do know that the actions and behaviors that result from conflicts can. Someone once said that “You don't have to go through the sewer to know how dirty it is. All you need to do is go down to the sewage plant and you will know”.

Sin would have us believe we have to be involved in order to know what is going on. We don't. Like the snake, we can be sagacious: wise, prudent and shrewd, by perceiving, avoiding and escaping from dangerous situations; and like the dove we can be symbols of peace, grace and integrity. It really is your choice!

Remember Jesus said, “*Remember it is I who am sending you out as sheep into the midst of wolves; prove yourselves as sagacious (as serpents), and as innocent as doves.*”

Let's practice living as Sagacious Doves!

It's not an anomaly!

It's only a simile!

Are you ready?

Let's go!