

# The Story of Socrates and the Delphi of Oracle



## WORD BANK:

**Philosopher:** someone who loves wisdom

**Pursuit:** to chase after

**Reputation:** What people say about you

**Oracle:** someone who gives advice or predicts the future

**Athens:** a City in Greece

**Delphi:** a place in Greece

**Prophecy:** telling the future

**Temple:** a place where people prayed

**Politician:** someone who works in politics or the government

**Government:** a system or group of people who run a city, state, or country

**Poet:** a person who writes beautiful words

**Craftsman:** someone who makes things, like baskets or tables

**Skeptical:** not certain if something is true

**Wise:** having good judgment, making good choices

**Humility:** being modest or keeping a low opinion

**Claim:** say

**Knowledgeable:** knowing a lot of things, being smart

**Continuously:** to keep doing something

Socrates lived in Athens from 470–399 BC, almost 2,500 years ago, and spent his life in pursuit of the Truth. He was known throughout ancient Greece as a Philosopher, or lover of wisdom. Indeed, his reputation was so great that many thought he was the wisest person alive.

One day, when Socrates was around 40 years old, a friend of his went to the Oracle of Delphi\*\*\* to ask if there was anyone wiser than Socrates, and she replied that there was no one.



*\*\*\*The most powerful woman - perhaps even person - of the entire ancient world was the Oracle of Delphi. This was a special high priestess, called a Pythia, who every day would go to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi and predict the future. People from all over the ancient world would travel to the Oracle to hear her advice or prophecy... we'll discuss her more in future newsletters.*

When Socrates was told that he, of all men in Athens, was wisest, he was very skeptical. How was it that he could be wisest when Athens had so many famous politicians, artists and poets? Surely there must be some mistake.

So Socrates decided he first would visit with the politicians of Athens. Surely if he were to talk with these famous men of government, he would find that they have great wisdom.

Socrates learned that the politicians believed themselves to be very wise and the people as well thought them to be knowledgeable of all good things. Yet, they were not wise men. Socrates tried to show this to them, to tell them that they were not so wise, but they refused him. The politicians became angry at Socrates and sent him away.

Socrates then spoke with the poets and craftsmen of Athens. They all seemed to have some knowledge of things, yet they too thought themselves very wise. They also became angry with Socrates when he told them that they really knew nothing. Socrates then thought about true wisdom and what it means to be wise:

Wisdom is humility, knowing that we know very little and importantly, that we should not claim to know what we do not know. Socrates says:

“I am wiser than that man. Neither of us probably knows anything worthwhile; but he thinks he does when he does not, and I do not and do not think I do”.

**Socrates was thought to be the wisest man in Athens by the Oracle, because instead of thinking he had wisdom, he knew that it was better to instead continuously pursue new and truer knowledge.**