



MAKING SPACE

Sermon Series Sept 1 - Oct 2

Making Space Sermon Series September 1st - October 2nd 2024

Exhausted. Overwhelmed. Overscheduled. Sound familiar?

It's easy for the business of life to consume and control us . . . until soon the pace begins to feel normal and expected. That's where the danger lies: When we spend our lives doing things that keep us busy but don't really matter, we sacrifice the things that do. What if your life could be different? What if you could be certain you were living the life God called you to live—and building a legacy for those you love?

In this series we will look at how Proverbs teaches us the importance of wisdom in uncluttering our souls and making space for the priorities that matter the most.

So what is a Proverb?

A "proverb" is a short, general-case statement of wisdom. Unlike prophecies or commands, proverbs are not absolute. Much as when a doctor tells a patient, "eat well and exercise and you'll live longer," advice is not a promise. Healthy exercisers can still suffer accidents and illnesses—but not nearly as often as those who ignore the doctor's advice. This statement is not a magical spell, protecting those who believe in God from all harm. Rather, it's an echo of the main theme of the book of Proverbs: that following godly wisdom gives a person the best likelihood for success in this life and prepares them for eternity.

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Week 1: Rest

We're all busy. Most of us feel stretched so thin that we don't even have space to think about our lives, much less follow Jesus intentionally. We need wisdom. Throughout this study we'll apply biblical wisdom from the Book of Proverbs so that we can learn how to make space in our lives for the priorities that matter most. Our busy pace and busy schedules can burn us out. We need rest. This is not an excuse to be lazy but an encouragement to be wise in how we rest. By wisdom God founded the earth, so it is a good foundation for our life. God's wisdom gives life, refreshes our soul, and helps us rest. God built a rhythm of rest into the wisdom of Scripture. Jesus modeled a rhythm of rest and invites us to find our ultimate rest in him. We can experience rest through practices like sabbath, silence, and solitude. Rest allows us to appreciate what God has done and prepares us to return to our work from a place of rest.

Understanding Who Christ is as the Wisdom of God

Proverbs 19:23: The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.

Proverbs 1:7: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

What does it mean to you to fear the Lord?

What does rest look like for you? How do we enter into true rest?

How does the idolatry of work and other activities impact your ability to get rest?

This "fear" is not terror or panic. It's a reverent, humble respect which acknowledges who and what God is. To "fear" the Lord is to believe in Him.

Rest is the definitive stance against the idolatry of work that tempts us to let work define our identity.

Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

What does it mean to rest in God/Jesus? How is that different from the rest you described in the previous section?

Which is more satisfying?

What would you need to do to find more rest in Jesus?

If we were experiencing satisfied rest, how would that change our interactions and relationships with others?

Sabbath

Exodus 20:8-10: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

LUKE 6:1-5: On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?” And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

Sabbath isn't just a day; it's a person. The Sabbath is Jesus.

How is Jesus our Sabbath Rest? by Got Questions

The key to understanding how Jesus is our Sabbath rest is the Hebrew word *sabat*, which means "to rest or stop or cease from work." The origin of the Sabbath goes back to Creation. After creating the heavens and the earth in six days, God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Genesis 2:2). This doesn't mean that God was tired and needed a rest. We know that God is omnipotent, literally "all-powerful." He has all the power in the universe, He never tires, and His most arduous expenditure of energy does not diminish His power one bit. So, what does it mean that God rested on the seventh day? Simply that He stopped what He was doing. He ceased from His labors. This is important in understanding the establishment of the Sabbath day and the role of Christ as our Sabbath rest.

Jesus can be our Sabbath rest in part because He is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8). As God incarnate, He decides the true meaning of the Sabbath because He created it, and He is our Sabbath rest in the flesh. When the Pharisees criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath, Jesus reminded them that even they, sinful as they were, would not hesitate to pull a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath. Because He came to seek and save His sheep who would hear His voice (John 10:3,27) and enter into the Sabbath rest He provided by paying for their sins, He could break the Sabbath rules. He told the Pharisees that people are more important than sheep and the salvation He provided was more important than rules. By saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), Jesus was restating the principle that the Sabbath rest was instituted to relieve man of his labors, just as He came to relieve us of our attempting to achieve salvation by our works. We no longer rest for only one day, but forever cease our laboring to attain God's favor. Jesus is our rest from works now, just as He is the door to heaven, where we will rest in Him forever.

How could Jesus live a life of rest while accomplishing the most significant career—saving the world?

How does understanding the sabbath and why Jesus did His work and rested change how you see taking time to rest?

The deepest need of every human heart is to be at rest with God. The rest we long for has been given to us through the restorative power of the gospel. God has raised you to new life in Jesus and has seated you at his right hand (see Eph. 2:1-10). You are now and forever alive with Christ. Therefore, Jesus has become your rest (see Heb. 4:9-10).

Matthew 3:17: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Jesus never did any work to be accepted. Jesus did all His work because He was accepted. He wants you to rest knowing that the Father loves you in Jesus Christ, who died for the forgiveness of your sins including the ways you have lived without rest and looked for rest in the wrong places. Jesus died so that you could rest in His work, knowing the Father says over you in Jesus, "This is My beloved child, with whom I am pleased."
Take a moment to rest in that truth.

Proverbs 3:21-26: My son, do not lose sight of these—keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

What are the results when wisdom comes to us?

What promises are made for us?

How can you live a life in which the wisdom of God is life for your soul (see v. 22) and in which you can rest without fear (see v. 24)?

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

What is silence and solitude for you? Is it hard, easy, uncomfortable for you? What impact does it have on you?

Solitude and silence work together in disciplining our hearts to find satisfying rest in Christ. Solitude is blocking out all outside voices and interactions so that we can focus on God. Silence is abstaining from speech so that we can listen to God's words to us.

Solitude and silence are invitations to disciples of Jesus. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples :“Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. Mark 6:31.

Closing:

Place your feet flat on the floor.

Inhale counting to 3 Exhale counting to 3 Do this 3 times

Repeat to yourself Psalm 46:10: “Be Still and know that I am God.”

Do this when you are in need of rest. Reflect on how God's wisdom gives life, refreshes our soul, and helps us rest.

Close with the Lord's prayer.

WEEK 2: Friendship

It's foolish to live in isolation. Wisdom comes to people through the shared wisdom of others. We all need loyal friends. From the very beginning God said it was "not good" for people to be alone. One way we pursue God's best for our lives is by investing in meaningful friendships. The kinds of friends we spend time with has a huge impact on our lives and future. Wise friends develop relationships that grow deep. They are friendships that draw into what is in our hearts. Wise friends stick with us, and we stick with them. We all need friends who understand us and that we can understand. There is a willingness to extend forgiveness on both sides of the friendship. This deep friendship is created as we walk with people through all that life throws our way, even when going deep isn't easy or convenient. Jesus' relationship with the disciples demonstrates the way and wisdom of friendship. Even Jesus, who was God, didn't isolate Himself but pursued friendships. Jesus is our greatest friend and models what true friendship looks like.

What makes a good friend?

How have your friendships changed in adulthood?

How have your friendships changed as you've grown as a follower of Jesus?

Making Space for Friendships

Friendships are risky. We worry about speaking too quickly, saying the wrong thing, gossiping, starting a conflict or causing any number of problems. But God made us for relationships. We need the accountability of faithful friends to help us pursue godly wisdom. We connect to the giver of all wisdom and other people who are also connected to Jesus.

Proverbs 15:1-2: A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge attractive, but the mouth of fools blurts out foolishness.

Proverbs helps us to see that the delivery of our words can cause anger or turn it away. How we communicate makes a difference. Our body language, expressions, tones and timing send a message that energizes our words so they are understood or makes them confusing which diminishes them entirely.

In what ways do you struggle with communicating?

Proverbs 18:1,24: An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels. One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

In what ways has God been a good friend to you? How does He stick with you, draw you out, and forgive you?

What kind of a friend are you? Do you stick by your friends? Do you draw them out? Do you forgive them?

Wise friends stick with us, and we stick with them. Friends draw out the best in us, and we draw out the best in them. Friends forgive each other and walk with each other through all life gives us. They are the first to show up and the last to leave. God made us for relationships. Proverbs verse 1 tells us when we are unfriendly, when we isolate ourselves we seek our own desires.

What draws you into isolation? Do you prefer to isolate yourself?

What are the results?

Living in isolation separates us from sharing the wisdom of others. We all need loyal friends. From the very beginning God said it was “not good” for people to be alone. God created Eve so that Adam would have a companion. Investing in meaningful friendships is one way we pursue God’s best for our lives.

In what ways do you see God’s steadfast love through friendship?

How do we walk in obedience and live in wisdom as a friend?

How do we as a community of believers make space to grow together as friends beyond this group session and activities at church?

How can we be the type of Christian community that makes space for friendships with people who don’t believe in Jesus?

Growing Through Relationships

Proverbs 13:20: Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 27:5-6,17: Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted but an enemy multiplies kisses. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 17:9: Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Choose your friends wisely. Our friends will help to guide us. They may rebuke or criticize us as a life-giving correction out of love. They help us to be more refined and developed which improves our character. As a friend they do this out of love. They forgive, and love us without keeping a record of wrongs.

What do you agree with in these proverbs?

What do you disagree with or feel uncomfortable about?

Romans 5:6-11: You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While

we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Hebrews 10:19-25: Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

In Romans and Hebrews we read how we are reconciled to Christ, drawing close to Him with a sincere heart.

How do these verses affirm your relationship with Christ?

Jesus Our Example of Friendship

Jeff Vanderstelt in his book "Making Space" points us to John 15:12-17 to find both our identity in Christ and our calling to nurture loving friendships.

John 15:12-17: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

What's the greatest love? How does Jesus demonstrate that love to you?

What kind of relationship did Jesus have with His disciples?

What kind of relationship does Jesus want with you, servant or friend?

Jeff states: "In Christ we're no longer enemies of God or slaves to sin; we're now friends of God. No longer do we have to clamor to prove ourselves, get noticed, or live in fear. Jesus has made us friends with God. If you want to have real friends, you first have to know friendship with God through the cross of Jesus Christ. He forgave you of your sins, set you free from your

bitterness, healed the wounds of your past, and gave you the love of God to be a friend. True friendship happens in no other way.”

God commands us to love one another. How does that change how we live out relationships with others?

We are called to forgive others. How does forgiveness change our relationship with others? Does it make a difference in relationships?

When we love others, the way Jesus loves us, we are able to forgive others and deepen our relationship with them. We are able to embrace a relationship built on trust, grace and love. We need the accountability of faithful friends to help us live out the wisdom of God.

Closing:

This week connect with someone you haven't talked to or given your attention to for a long time. Take time to strengthen your relationship by sharing how important they are to you and how God has moved you to reconnect with them.

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Week 3: Parenting and Family

Parenting is a sacred calling that the Lord gives us. We lead our kids to Jesus so that they can know who God is and how they can relate to Him as their Father. The concept of discipline isn't a picture of punishment or harsh treatment. The rod should remind us of a shepherd who devotes his life to caring for sheep, using the rod to discipline them and gently guide them. This is how God disciplines us. We're called to lead our children in following Jesus not by simply talking to them about God; but by demonstrating a life lived close to God in repentance, faith and action. When we fail, we look to Jesus. Parents train up our children with a gentle application of the goodness, beauty, and joy of Jesus Christ. We train our children to be sent out to make a difference in a world that desperately needs hope.

Training and Discipline

PROVERBS 3:11-12: My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

What picture is formed in your mind when you hear the word discipline?

Why does Solomon say that we should not dislike discipline and correction?

What makes us dislike discipline from God or from our parents, spouse or others in our community?

The Life Application Bible Notes say...

"Discipline sounds negative to many people because some disciplinarians are not loving. God however is the source of all love. He doesn't punish us because He enjoys inflicting pain but because ... He knows that in order for us to become morally strong and good, we must learn the difference between right and wrong."

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

Rev. Billy Graham wrote...

"God does not discipline us to subdue us but to condition us for a life of usefulness and blessedness. In His wisdom, He knows that an uncontrolled life is an unhappy life, so He puts reins on our wayward souls that they may be directed into the paths of righteousness."

Do you agree or disagree with Rev. Graham? Why or why not?

The God who guides, removes obstacles, and provides abundantly for His people can be trusted to discipline them for their good and His glory. Solomon instructs his student not to despise the Lord's discipline or become weary of His reproof. When we despise the Lord's discipline we are rejecting or minimizing it. The Lord's discipline is not punishment; we learn by being disciplined. We learn to identify actions that displease the Lord and impede our spiritual progress. When the Lord disciplined Jonah for his rebellious attitude, he prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. The whale was the Lord's messenger to save Jonah from the stormy sea, but it was also the means whereby the Lord taught Jonah to obey him. Discipline in the Lord's hands is an effective tool He uses to shape us into the kind of people He wants us to be.

PROVERBS 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Jeff Vanderstelt tells us: "Train a child according to his way," meaning each child is unique and has an individual personality that God will delight to work through. As parents, we have a responsibility to train our children in light of their uniqueness. Parents train up our children with a gentle application of the goodness, beauty, and joy of Jesus Christ."

Solomon offers sound advice for parents. When a child is raised with the right values, and the right perspective, those lessons will last a lifetime. The literal wording here implies that the rightly trained child will not deviate from this path. Of course, Solomon's proverbial counsel is not an iron-clad promise. Despite the direction in which godly parents point their child, he or she may choose to pursue the way of the crooked. Yet a foundation of godliness gives the child something positive to "fall back on" when they come to their senses.

How does God train us, love us, and lead us?

What does good parenting look like to you?

How is parenting children a form of disciple making? How can parents model discipleship?

What parts of parenting are the most difficult for you?

Relating to God in Parenting

Parenting is a sacred calling that the Lord gives us. We lead our kids to Jesus so that they can know what God is like and how they should relate to Him.

Reflecting on relationships, what does it mean to relate to God, to have a relationship with Him?

How are you teaching/modeling to your children how to have that kind of relationship?

How can you make time for the conversations and christian education that is important for your children?

Consider the unique way the Lord has made your children. What unique ways do you have to help your children learn about God?

When we think about our parenting and our family dynamics, we know that there are times that we fail our children. Like Adam and Eve who were the first parents, we cannot fix our eyes on our own efforts in parenting and on the outcomes in our children's behavior, we will either puff up in pride at our supposed accomplishments, or wilt in despair as we declare our efforts futile. But when we acknowledge our belief that only God can do a work in our children's hearts, we have hope for their future and ours.

How have you tried to parent by relying on yourself, and those around you?

How do you deal with your failures as a parent?

Do you ever compare yourself to other parents? How has it been helpful or harmful to you and your children

Have you looked to God for wisdom on how to parent? How has it been helpful?

God is a God of grace, who forgives and saves, who loves us and our children more deeply than we can imagine. Spend time in conversation with Him. In Him you can find wisdom and understanding so that you can walk in wisdom with our children. He is our hope and our guide.

Living Out God's Wisdom

Proverbs 3:1-8 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

God calls us to a step farther than not just memorizing God's word but to act on it, to live a life of obedience, keeping the commands of God. If we only know the words but do not obey it, it is like we have forgotten God's command. Obedience is one of the heart, being obedience not by mere conformity to God's will, but a heart that loves and obeys Him. Our heart is the first thing that wanders away from God, but it is also the first thing that returns to God."

Do you ever have difficulty loving and obeying God with all your heart? How do you get your wandering heart back into a relationship with God?

How can you help to train up your children to understand how to have a heart relationship with God?

Solomon advised his son to live a life of trust in Yahweh. Solomon knew God was worthy to be trusted. It is easy for us to put our trust in something or someone other than God, sometimes it is in ourselves. Or maybe we put half our trust in God and half our trust in self or something else. Trusting God with all our heart means to decide to put away our own understanding and instead to choose to trust God and His understanding.

Trusting God is the choice to "invite" God into our everyday life and conduct. It is to practice the presence of God in the regular and sometimes mundane things that happen every day.

Gotquestions.com says "As we seek God's will, we should make sure what we are considering is not something the Bible forbids. For example, the Bible forbids stealing; since God has clearly spoken on the issue, we know it is not His will for us to be bank robbers—we don't even need to pray about it. Also, we should make sure what we are considering will glorify God and help us and others grow spiritually".

Where do you put your trust?

How do we as parents model trusting God?

How do you know the will of God?

How do we train our children to know the will of God?

By trusting God, we come to know Him better, we develop a natural reverence and awe of Him. We draw closer to Him and further from evil. Trusting Him gives us a greater sense of peace and strength that we would not have if we live apart from Him.

Closing:

Spend some quality time this week with your children, grandchildren or any youngsters in your life or take time to pray for the young people of FLC.

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Week 4: Money and Work

Jeff Vanderstelt tells us that Making God small is foolishness, the writer of Proverbs tells us, because it doesn't reflect a fear of the Lord. When God is small, we lie in bed at night wondering who'll provide for us tomorrow. A trivialized God causes fear, anxiety, and insecurity because even if God cares, He can't do anything; we must provide for ourselves. We must hoard our money for our good. When God is small, I'm big. A minuscule God drives us to make ourselves important: "Look what I can do! See what I've made! Look at how important I am!" When God is small, you become the center of the universe, and you'll be the one whom everyone should worship. While we might not ever say thoughts like this out loud, we live them out in the way we relate to our finances and our careers. God is big. God is weighty. God is good. In a culture driven by the urge to prove and earn our significance, Jesus has made us recipients of His work and His gift. In Christ we're significant not because of what we do but because of what has been done for us. Jesus completed the work God set before Him and gave all He had to God in order to serve us. Jesus is the personification not only of the wisdom of work but also of wisdom with treasure. Wisdom tells us, "Don't pursue money! Pursue wisdom!" In other words, pursue Jesus. We pursue the giver of every good gift and love Him. And with Him we get everything else. When you're rooted in who God is and what He's done for you and when your identity is at rest in Christ Jesus, you can go to work as a servant of Jesus, not as a slave to significance and security.

How does your vision of God being big or small change how you use your time and money?

How does your vision of yourself change based on your vision of God being big or small?

Do you approach work and money as God being big?

Reflect on the last statement of the above paragraph: When you're rooted in who God is and what He's done for you and when your identity is at rest in Christ Jesus, you can go to work as a servant of Jesus, not as a slave to significance and security.

Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not?

What would it take for you to live by that statement?

How has God proved Himself to be big and trustworthy?

One area in which people have difficulty fearing the Lord and surrendering their lives to is money and work. God is interested in every part of our lives, including our work. So how do we apply the wisdom of God to our money and our work?

Jeff Vanderstelt gives us 4 points to consider:

- People who fear the Lord are teachable—willing to submit to what God’s Word says and to learn from God through His Word.
- People who fear the Lord are also repentant. As God reveals pursuits they need to turn from and areas in which they haven’t trusted or submitted to God, they turn from those and turn to God for forgiveness through Jesus and for help by His Spirit.
- People who fear the Lord also surrender. They willingly say to God, “My life is Yours, and I want You to speak into every area of my life. What do You want to say to me?”
- People who fear the Lord submit not only to God’s Word and what He says but also to others. They want to gain wise counsel from people who also know and fear God.

How can you apply the wisdom of God to your money and work?

Provider God

John 1:3 :Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

What does John 1:3 tell us about God as worker, creator and sustainer?

How did Jesus submit His life’s work to God and surrender His status and treasure in obedience to God?

How does Jesus make us rich?

If we believed we were rich in Christ, how would that belief change the way we live and work?

What do our budgets and our time at work reveal about who we believe God is and about the way He views us? Are we givers or getters at work and with our money?

What do your daily attitudes, emotions, or responses to work currently reflect about who you believe Jesus to be and what he has done for you?

Why is it hard to trust God with our money and with our careers?

If we were wise with our work and money, what impact would our wisdom have on our neighborhood, town, or city?

Proverbs 11:28: Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

What does flourishing look like to you?

Is it easier to trust in riches or trust in God? Why or why not?

Philippians 2:5-11: Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What do these verses tell you about the way Jesus did His work on earth?

What did Christ give, and how did He give?

How did Christ labor with endurance and faithfulness to complete the work God gave him to complete?

What was the result of Jesus' work?

How do we benefit from His work?

Heart Work

Gotquestions.com says "Colossians 3:23-25 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." Another translation says to "work heartily". Yet another says to "work willingly". The Amplified Bible adds "from the soul." Ephesians 6:7-8 shares a similar concept: "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." In essence, this is the Christian work ethic. We are commanded to put forth our best efforts, to work from our heart and soul at whatever we do. We are accountable to God and stewards of the gifts He has given us. Our work flows out of our gratefulness to Him.

Work has a way of giving us a sense of purpose, productivity, and dignity. Christians should work hard. Work is integral to life, and approaching work as God-given will give us more pleasure in it. We can work cheerfully and without complaint because we are working for the Lord who loves us and has redeemed us. A good work ethic can also be a witness to others (Matthew 5:16). The world takes notice of our efforts and wonders why we do what we do. It is important to note that the Bible does not condone workaholism. We do not work merely to amass worldly wealth (in fact, Matthew 6:19-34 warns about this). We work to bring glory to God. We also do not work ourselves into the ground or to the extent that our health is damaged or our families suffer".

What does how you do your job say about what you believe about God? Is there a correlation? Is your focus on serving God?

How does our view of productivity change if we see it as a way to give glory to God?

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-21. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

How do we extend the gratitude we have for God to others in our world by how we use our time and money?

How does what you do with your money express what you believe about God?

Wisdom

Proverbs 3:13-16: Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

Godly wisdom is the kind of wisdom that comes from the very heart of God, who is all-wise. As you look to God for all you need, you will find that your life is producing purity, peace, gentleness, willingness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity—and that's how you'll know the Word of God, wisdom, is taking root.

Closing:

Spend some time creating a basic budget. Consider looking over your last three months of spending to see where you are spending your resources. Evaluate if you are using your resources the way you want to.

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Week 5: Word and Prayer

God has made Himself available to us as the ultimate, trustworthy source of all wisdom and understanding. God is a Father who wants to be in relationship with us by speaking to us, cherishing our lives, and freely gives us His wisdom. We encounter God by spending time in the Bible and spending time in prayer. Seeking Him in His Word and in prayer is the wisest thing we can do to gain wisdom. Wisdom gives us experience, knowledge and good judgment so our actions and decisions can guide us to submit our entire lives to Him. God's Spirit, speaking through Scripture, brings us life. When we read the Bible, we look to see where we can see God among the people of the Bible. When we pray, we open ourselves to listening to God's response.. Bible studies are not about discovering a user manual for life but about finding and understanding God Himself. When we engage with the Bible and prayer, we bring our lives to God to receive Him. When we read the Bible and pray, we're looking to see, hear and understand God's work, God's life, and God's action in this world. Finally, we reflect to understand how all of these truths inform and transform the way we live our lives.

Proverbs 3:8 says the fear of the Lord will bring "healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

Solomon tells his student what the results will be if the student trusts in the Lord wholeheartedly, acknowledges the Lord in everything, fears the Lord, and turns his back on evil. Good health and being refresh are the normal results of a good relationship with the Lord.

How does relying on the Word of God in the Scriptures and in prayer bring healing and refreshment to your life?

What changes would you need to make space in your life for this to happen?

What are the consequences of depending entirely on yourself?

Seeking God in Word and Prayer

The rules of St Benedict instruct us to: "Listen with the ears of your heart." This short phrase describes the posture that we need to be in before coming to God. It is this characteristic of Benedictine spirituality that being receptive or open is emphasized before being able to actively listen. Listening with the ear of the heart is a kind of silence, but it is not the absence of sound. It is an act of generously listening to the world and to God with a mindful and loving heart, unfettered by internal chatter, personal ambition, hidden agendas, and personal prejudice.

Read Proverbs 2:1-10. My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you

will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

In verse 1 God addresses us as “My son,” taking the posture of Father. God is our Father who speaks to us, cherishes our lives, and freely gives wisdom.

What did you learn about the character of God from this passage?

What is God doing in the passage above?

What do you learn about yourself, how to respond to Him, your role in your relationship with God, and how you may change your life?

How do these images compare with your mental picture of God as you pray and read the Bible?

Where do you see Jesus in these verses?

Are there ways you might change your prayer and reading habits?

Jeff Vanderselt gives us this reflection from Proverbs 2:1-10:

God gives commands, speaks, gives understanding, protects us, gives bountiful wisdom, and watches over us. God makes Himself known and generously speaks into every area of life to bring wisdom and knowledge that are pleasant to our souls.

You’re a son or a daughter of God. In Christ you’re protected, guarded, upright, and a dwelling place for wisdom. You’re His child, not because you did your best but because God is the Father. You’re protected, not because you’ve guarded yourself but because God is your shield. Your identity is rooted in His identity.

We’re called to receive God’s words, give attention, call out to Him, raise our voice to Him, seek Him like a treasure, understand Him, find knowledge, receive wisdom, and understand justice. Many of these implications reorient the motivation and the manner in which we come to God through Bible reading and prayer.

What does it mean to you to be a son or daughter of God?

What is your role in this relationship?

The Bible's Importance

Gotquestions.org makes these comments: “The importance of the Bible is impossible to overstate. Throughout the ages, countless men and women have written volumes to underscore the significance of the Scriptures. But we should not take any human’s word for it. What the Bible tells us about itself is all that matters.

The importance of the Bible is based on the fact that it is the revelation of God to us . Scripture is God’s Word to humankind. The importance of the Bible is that it gives us the opportunity to see and know God. The Scriptures reveal His character and nature, His sovereignty and power, and His reason for creating us, the universe, and everything in it. We read about God’s dealings with humankind, His goodness and grace, His light and love, His holiness and justice, and His mercy and compassion”.

How would you describe the importance of the Bible?

How has reading the Bible affected your relationship with God?

How has it changed you as his son or daughter?

PSALM 28:7-8” The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

What assurances does God give us in these verses?

Who or what do you look to for protection?

When is it hard to trust God to protect you? Why?

Psalm 46:1-3: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Are there areas of your life that feel out of control, chaotic, confused, or stressed?

Have you reached out to God in prayer?

How has he answered your prayers or taken away your fear?

REGULARLY READ THE WORD

Reading God’s Word every day can be a challenge. Find a time in your day when you are able to have the mental and relational capacity. Schedule that time on your calendar and keep it as your daily appointment with God.

Read with family members, coworkers, or people in your community or tell them about your commitment. Join First Lutheran Church and participate in the Bible Recap.

In Bible Recap, Tera-Leigh Cobble has provided a way for us to start each day’s reading:

Before you read God’s Word today, ask for His help by praying these 5 prayers:

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. Let any knowledge I gain help me love You and others more, and not puff me up.
3. Help me see something new about You that I’ve never seen before.
4. Correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. Direct my steps according to Your Word. Amen.

When we read the Bible, we’re looking for God. When we engage with the Bible and prayer, we bring our lives to God to receive Him.

Series Reflection

In this series we have learned the effects of walking in God's wisdom. We have seen what a blessing it is for us and for others to see all the ways that Jesus works in and through us. It guides us in taking care of ourselves by resting and taking sabbath time, in developing and maintaining life-giving relationships with people around us, in parenting our children, in handling our money and how we work, and in how we read God's word, pray and stay in relationship with Him. It is through God that we are given words of wisdom in all that we do. It is His wisdom that can change our lives by changing our thoughts and attitudes.

Closing:

Spend time this week in prayer, seeking God's wisdom for you and your family.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Compiled by Pam Miller, Adult Ministry Coordinator

Resources:

1. BibleRef.com
2. Making Space by Jeff Vanderstelt and Brad Watson
3. Got Questions.com
4. Enduring Word.com