

Devotionals for the Week of February 19, 2023

Our devotional section provides additional spiritual input for helping you go further and deeper in your journey with the Lord. It is our desire, our hope, and our prayer that this devotional section will be a helpful Spiritual Life tool for you to utilize on a regular basis. Each day's devotional will typically consist of Scripture, commentary, and a prayer response. Current Devotionals can be accessed each day online at www.capecodchurch.com/devotionals or by using the Cape Cod Church App (select "Connect" on the bottom main page and then "Daily Devotional" on next page). Be sure to check Saturday and Sundays for special postings of poems, stories, etc. Printed copies from the prior week are available at the Connection Desk.

Monday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work – Pursuing Occupational Fitness

The wages of the righteous is life, the income of the wicked, punishment. He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray. Proverbs 10:16-17 (NASB)

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. Exodus 20:9-10A (NASB)

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

This is week three of a Four-week Devotional Series entitled, "Wisdom from Proverbs." Proverbs is a book about wisdom for life. It consists of many wise sayings. We find in them the themes of Scripture expressed as practical righteousness that help us examine how we live and manage daily life in the light of divine truth. The book of Proverbs strongly proclaims that wisdom begins with the fear of Lord. The "Fear of the Lord" involves a reverence for God where we truly embrace the fact that "God is God and we are not." So, Proverbs takes the multi-faceted thing we call life and zeros in on many of its facets in terms that put God right in the center of things.

In order to gain that which the book of Proverbs has to offer, we need to be ones who are willing to put our primary focus on God and that which he communicates to us about his intentions for our lives. We hope the "Wisdom from Proverbs" Series will wonderfully contribute to your life yielding a remarkable level of practical righteousness as you allow Christ to change you in a multitude of wonderful ways. This series has four weeks of Devotional material, and each week has six Devotionals (Monday through Saturday).

Week One: Start Up Wisdom. Week two: Human Relationships. Week three: Anatomy of Work. Week four: The Truly Successful Life. We begin week two: Anatomy of Work, with the following:

Here we are in the third week of looking to the book of Proverbs for the wisdom we need for life. Our first week was all about "start-up wisdom." We found wisdom for how to go about getting wisdom that prepared us to let God use the book of Proverbs in our lives. Last week the area of life addressed by the book of Proverbs was our "relationships" with others. This week the area of life to be addressed by the book of Proverbs is "work." Primarily, when we think of "work," we think of our occupations (this will be our main emphasis this week). But certainly, in the broader sense, all of life is work. The Bible says, we "reap what we sow." Generally, we get out of something in proportion to what we put into it. So, yes, life is work, but we can also say, the right kind of work is life.

As seen in the first phrase of our Proverbs 10 passage above, when we do the work of living right, we earn "life." The next words, "He is on the path of life who heeds instruction," is really what our "Proverbs" series is all about. Let's swing back the other way now. A significant part of right living is right work (in the occupational sense) and we need to heed the instruction that the Book of Proverbs offers us on it. There are four aspects of "work" that we will consider on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday of this week and then wrap everything up on Saturday.

We are going to add something very important into the mix for today, which is mentioned in our Exodus passage above, and we will come back to it on Saturday. It is "rest," the counterpart of "work." We are doing this in order to give a bigger context to our considerations on the subject of "work." It seems that there are two major struggles people have with work: getting started and getting stopped. Some of us struggle with one or the other and some struggle with both. However, very few of us find the right balance between work and rest and become occupationally fit.

In the Old Testament system God's requirements for his people provided very specifically for this balance between work and rest. The New Testament system employs the principle of Sabbath rest rather than the specific Sabbath day rest of the Old Testament (We will come back to this on Saturday). So, as we move through the week considering what Proverbs has to say about the subject of work, we will keep the need for balance between work and rest in view.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, I pray that you will help me go further than ever before in my response to you and your instruction regarding work. Truly, I want to heed instruction and not ignore reproof. Set me more fully on the path of life in regard to "work" throughout the coming week. May it be that I become one who lives right because I learn to work right. May you be glorified through my work. Amen!

Tuesday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work – Planning Your Work

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. Proverbs 21:5

Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. But you lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up? A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - then poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber. Proverbs 6:6-11

The Lord detests evil plans, but he delights in pure words. Greed brings grief to the whole family, but those who hate bribes will live. Proverbs 15:26-27

We can make our own plans, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:1-3

We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. Proverbs 16:9

There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death. Proverbs 16:25

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today we consider aspect # 1 of work: "Plan your work." There are so many things about "work" that the Proverbs above speak to. To comment on all of it would be too much. Please read through the Proverbs and write down things that stand out to you. What is the one thing that resonates the most with you? Finally, identify one change you need to make in your life in regard to the aspect of work: "Plan your work."

The old adage "plan your work and work you plan" rings true. The work to which we give ourselves is all-important. Always, we want our work, the plans we have for doing that work, the attitudes and motives we bring to our work, and the overall course of our lives to be fully aligned with God and his ways.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, thank you that you are always at work. I sense that you are at work in my life right now in some very special ways. Where I am too lax in the management of my life, help me to be more deliberate and diligent. Where I am too uptight and controlling in the management of my life, help me to be more relaxed and dependent on you. I commit myself to you, Lord, and the changes you want to make in my life. Amen!

Wednesday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work - Being an Obstacle Overcomer

Despite their desires, the lazy will come to ruin, for their hands refuse to work. Proverbs 21:25

The lazy person claims, "There's a lion on the road! Yes, I'm sure there's a lion out there!" As a door swings back and forth on its hinges, so the lazy person turns over in bed. Lazy people take food in their hand but don't even lift it to their mouth. Proverbs 26:13-15

Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and become a slave. Proverbs 12:24

Work brings profit, but mere talk leads to poverty! Proverbs 14:23

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today we consider aspect # 2 of work: "Be an obstacle overcomer." There are so many things about "work" that the Proverbs above speak to. To comment on all of it would be too much. Please read through the Proverbs and write down things that stand out to you. Someone has said, "The bumps are what we climb on." We not only have our "work," but we have the work of overcoming the obstacles to the work that is ours to accomplish. Life is truly a challenge, but we must not be immobilized by the element of "challenge" that permeates life. Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation (challenges) but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33B).

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, deliver me from fear and fill me with your peace. Grant me a confidence in you that allows me to rest in spirit but invigorates me with divine energy for the work of actively serving you. Help me to see obstacles as surprise avenues that foster and connect me more fully with your presence, your grace, and your mission (work). Amen!

Thursday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work – Taking the Long View

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows over time. Proverbs 13:11

Lazy people don't even cook the game they catch, but the diligent make use of everything they find. Proverbs 12:27

Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper. Proverbs 13:4

Those who follow the right path fear the Lord; those who take the wrong path despise him. Proverbs 14:2

Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor. Proverbs 21:21

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today we consider aspect # 3 of work: "Take the long view." There are so many things about "work" that the Proverbs above speak to. To comment on all of it would be too much. Please read through the Proverbs and write down things that stand out to you. What is the one thing that resonates the most with you? Finally, identify one change you need to make in your life in regard to the commonsense reminder: "Take the long view."

The "now generation" term was coined sometime after World War II in the midst of an unparalleled age of prosperity that began and continues on even now. It is a term that captures a dynamic that no one in our present culture can escape entirely. The following statements are attempts to grasp and address this dynamic:

- We live in a culture of instant gratification versus investment in activities with rewards accruing over time or in the long term.
- Being able to find a meaningful role to play in communities via employment or service is a great countermeasure.
- Opportunities to feel one's contribution either in employment or volunteering are essential.
- The fact that things are more accessible than rewarding experiences is a real problem.
- Our sense of achievement is no longer based on a goal but on quick changes to the latest and greatest things.

Quite insightful stuff that helps us get a handle on some of what contributes to "now view" thinking and "long view" thinking in our approach to life. We need to know what makes us tick. We need to address the things that are true of us that interfere with our living lives that really count. Living for the "immediate" is unacceptable. Read back over the five statements again but think in terms of living for Christ and his kingdom as you read. Self-centeredness, materialism, gratification, etc. can be countered but it requires a "long view" of life where our goal is Christ and his kingdom.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, teach me how to persevere in my work. Each and every day, help me to care deeply about other people in the midst of everything you give me to do. May my life bless those around me in ways that impact them for your kingdom, Lord. Deliver me from the scourge of the "immediate" and fill my life with that which truly counts for the "long haul." Amen!

Friday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work – Valuing Integrity

Wealth created by a lying tongue is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap. Proverbs 21:6

Don't cheat your neighbor by moving the ancient boundary markers set up by previous generations. Do you see any truly competent workers? They will serve kings rather than working for ordinary people. Proverbs 22:28-29

The Lord detests the use of dishonest scales, but he delights in accurate weights. Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Honesty guides good people; dishonesty destroys treacherous people. Proverbs 11:1-3

Godly people find life; evil people find death. The Lord detests people with crooked hearts, but he delights in those with integrity. Proverbs 11:19-20

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool. Proverbs 19:1 (NASB)

Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1

Better to have little, with godliness, than to be rich and dishonest. Proverbs 16:8

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today we consider aspect # 4 of work: "Value integrity." There are so many things about "work" that the Proverbs above speak to. To comment on all of it would be too much. Please read through the Proverbs and write down things that stand out to you. What is the one thing that resonates the most with you? Finally, identify one change you need to make in your life in regard to the commonsense reminder: "Value integrity."

Someone has said, "integrity has no need of rules." It has also been said, "It's easy to maintain your integrity when no one is offering to buy it." And then there is this quote, "One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised." If there was ever a word that captures the heartbeat of what it means to be a Christian, it is the word integrity. Yes, there are all the wonderful words of our Christian faith like redemption, grace, forgiveness, salvation, etc., but without integrity they are just words. The person who has integrity is a person who is genuine; they are the real deal. The greatest trial for Christianity over the centuries has come from those who claim to be adherents but are not genuine. Integrity in regard to their Christian faith is missing and so they are not the real deal.

The commonsense reminder: "Value Integrity," is being put before us in a rather strong manner. The purpose for this is not to make us feel guilty, but to inspire us to a "higher plane" or "higher road." There are those who have not come to genuine faith in Christ and stand in need of true salvation. Our prayer for them is that they would embrace Christ for all that he is and has done so

that they become recipients of eternal redemption and are put squarely on the path of becoming all that they can become through Christ. However, there is great concern today for the rest of us.

We are those who have been redeemed and there are probably very few of us who do not need to be put more squarely on the path of becoming all that we can become through Christ. We need to be inspired to this higher path and the key is integrity and that is our hope and prayer for today.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, forgive me for all the ways my walk has not matched my talk. Lord, in all the nitty-gritty areas of my life like those today's Proverbs put before me, help me to have "integrity" like I've never had before. I want to walk with you 24/7 and I want it to be clearly seen all the world that I am the real deal. Amen!

Saturday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Anatomy of Work – Observing Spiritual and Physical Rest

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. Exodus 20:9-10A (NASB)

Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:6-11

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Colossians 3:17, 23-24

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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. Matthew 11:28-30

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will find good. Proverbs 19:8

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today, we wrap up our week of looking to the book of Proverbs for wisdom in regard to the subject of "work." At the beginning of the week, we talked briefly about "rest" the counterpart of "work" and said we would come back to it today. It seems that there are two major struggles people have with work: getting started and getting stopped. Some of us struggle with one or the other and some struggle with both. However, very few of us find the right balance between work and rest.

In the Old Testament system God's requirements for his people provided very specifically for this balance between work and rest.

The New Testament system employs the principle of Sabbath rest rather than the specific Sabbath day rest of the Old Testament.

The Hebrews passage above captures the shift to the New Covenant relationship God has with His people. So, the primary emphasis of Sabbath/rest for us is spiritual. God is at work in us to produce a life through us that corresponds with Who He is and all He desires for us. But we must rest from our own works and let the Spirit work in and through us. This is the Sabbath rest God has for His people today. This does not mean that we escape work. We will need to work hard at all of life.

It is God's plan that we work heartily at all he gives us to do. But as temples of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the work we give ourselves to and the work that comes forth from us must always be God's doing. In addition to the primary emphasis of Sabbath/rest we must give ourselves to the secondary emphasis of Sabbath/rest as well. Here we are looking at the concept behind the Old Covenant understanding of Sabbath/rest. While Sabbath observance is not carried forward, the concept of resting from human activity is. We should be devoted to hard work but not so devoted that we don't build necessary rest into our lives.

So, Sabbath/rest is first, a new covenant concept that deals with the inward spiritual reality of entering God's rest, whereby we rest from work generated by us in favor of work generated by Him in and through us; and second, the need to rest from human activity (the concept behind the Old Covenant understanding of Sabbath/rest). The idea of resting from human activity includes the physical rest of sleep, as well as the need for breaking away from routine responsibilities in favor of recreational rest (this is multi-faceted and includes daily breaks, days off, vacations, etc.).

Sabbath is all about rest. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and the Lord of rest. Most of us are weary and heavy-laden and desperately in need of rest on all levels. We have much to learn about Sabbath rest and Jesus invites us to come and learn from Him. He is gentle and humble in heart

and waiting to give rest to our souls. He will do it if we will come to Him. He really means it when He says His yoke (work) is easy and His burden is light.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Come up with your own prayer response today (for the whole week) that incorporates some "good" wisdom that has truly touched your soul.