

Freedom in Faith February 23, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Book of Proverbs: Introduction from <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-proverbs/> --

The Book of Proverbs is a book of wise sayings from those considered wise. Chapter 1:1 attributes these sayings to Solomon (reigned c. 971–931 B.C.) as author or collector of its contents (1:1; 10:1), including the proverbs copied by Hezekiah's men (25:1). There are also two batches of sayings from a group called "the wise" (22:17–24:22; 24:23–34), and "oracles" from Agur (30:1–33) and Lemuel (31:1–9). Although Proverbs was begun in the time of Solomon, it probably was not in its present form until the time of Hezekiah (reigned c. 715–686 B.C.).

The goal of the book is stated right at the beginning (1:1–7): to describe what wisdom is and to help God's people become wise. Wisdom is founded in the "fear of the Lord," and it enables believers to express their faith in the practical details of everyday life.

The book is addressed to a young man. The situations he will face while he is young receive much attention. These situations supply concrete examples from which all readers can apply lessons to their own lives. Anyone who is wise and who pays attention will benefit (1:5) from this instruction.

The reader of Proverbs must seek to understand the various types of people the book describes. The most obvious characters in the book are the wise, the fool, and the simple. Proverbs urges its readers to be wise, which means embracing God's covenant and living out the covenant in everyday situations (compare 2:2;

10:1). The fool is the person who constantly opposes God's covenant (1:7b). The simple is the person who is not firmly committed, either to wisdom or to folly; he is easily misled (14:15).

Book of 1 & 2 Corinthians:

Paul is acknowledged as the author 1 & 2 Corinthians, as found in 1:1-2 and 16:21 and then affirmed by the early church fathers. 1 Corinthians was written approximately 51 A.D., while 2 Corinthians was written about 55 A.D. The writing would have been towards the end of Paul's three-year residency in Ephesus. The city of Corinth was heavily influenced by the Greek culture with most of the church population being of gentile descent. The city was a highly travelled shipping port filled with a variety of cultures and beliefs.

Remember the context of this letter. Paul is dealing with a church that is struggling with a number of issues. The people of this faith community were struggling with pride over which minister they were following as they lived into their Christian faith. In a time of early church growth, the Corinthian church seemed to focus inward on ecstatic spiritual gifts, heady theology, and a lack of healthy unity. To "right the ship" or focus the church, Paul brings the church back to basics. Paul calls them to remember the great work of God in reconciliation of humankind to God through Christ. In that reconciliation, God made the followers a new creation in Christ. Not a people given over to sin, discord, and pride, but devoted to reconciliation between God and humankind, and person to person. We all are on the same playing field in our need to be at peace with God and one another.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Proverbs 3:5-10 (NRSV)

- ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.
- ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
- ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
- ⁸ It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.
- ⁹ Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce;
- ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

2 Corinthians 9:6-12 (NRSV)

- ⁶ The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you

may share abundantly in every good work. ⁹ As it is written, “He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Questions to Ponder:

What jumps out at you from these passages?

What does it look like to trust in the Lord with all your heart?

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

How does one honor the Lord with substance and first fruits?

According to both scripture passages, what is the result of giving out of first fruits and sowing bountifully?

Do you believe in the principle that if you sow sparingly that you will also reap sparingly, or if you sow bountifully you will also reap bountifully? Why or why not?

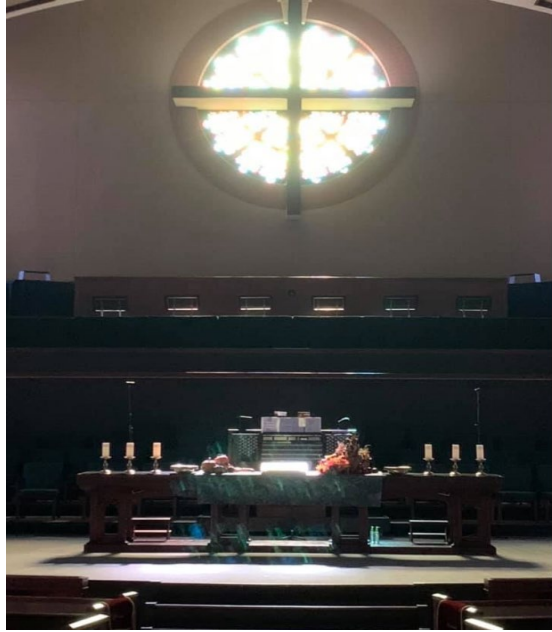
Commentary:

The proverbs in the first passage stand for themselves. Proverbs highlights the idea that the beginning of knowledge and wisdom is to fear the Lord:

Proverbs 1:7 (NRSV)

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The “fear” of the Lord is not meant to be a hair raising horror flick, but a feeling of awe and majesty in regards to approaching and connecting to the Lord. Much like when one steps into a beautiful sanctuary with the sun piercing through the stained glass windows on to the Bible that sits on the altar.



The beauty of it in person is awe inspiring. That is the way we are to approach God as we seek to understand life from the point of God’s wisdom. It is wisdom that will guide us through life as we seek to turn our learning experiences gained through our failures and successes into meaningful growth. The start of the learning is found in our connection with the Lord. Likewise, all that we have, possess, and give comes from being a creation of the Lord. When we give of ourselves to others and God, we are merely returning a portion of the gifts God has given us. The question is, will you give abundantly or sparingly? Well, I guess, it all depends on the results you desire.

The passage in 2 Corinthians 9 before verses 6-12 have the author praising the church in Corinth for sending a love offering to the ministry. The financial gift will have a wide and positive impact on the ministry. Verses 6-12 are the result of a continued encouragement to be happy in all giving knowing that great things will come.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

How do you honor the Lord in your everyday life? Be specific.

How do you gain wisdom in your own life?

What does it mean for you to fear the Lord on a daily basis?

What are you sowing in your life?

How are you giving?

How can you show cheerfulness in giving?

Explain a time when you gave to the ministry and a great thing was the result.

What does it mean to return something to God?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
3. What can you determine to give cheerfully, or return to God, this year toward the ministry of Christ in FUMC, Coppell?