

Weekly Devotion October 26, 2020
Pastor Matthew Woods, Grace Lutheran Church

“Getting Good Advice”

Well, good morning all. Hope that this finds you well as you tune in. Some of you are asking how the Newlyweds are doing. They are well, and enjoying married life. Thanks be to God. And thanks to all you who have been praying and wishing them well.

And some of you have asked about mom. She is holding her own, sporting knitted caps, and working hard to keep her strength up. So far so good. She is half-way through her chemo and eager to have it behind her. Thank you to all who continue to pray for our family and send cards to mom. Special shout out to Jackie for the great hats.

So, lets talk about advice. By the time you view this I will have undergone my first colonoscopy. I was ready to go back in March but that’s when Covid moved in to kick our butt. So, I am finally checking that one off my bucket list. The mere mention of the procedure has strangely evoked a lot of reaction.

It all starts with the question: “Is this your first one?” I answer “yes” because I hit the Five-O last November. Lucky me. Then comes the smiles, an occasional chuckle, and then a story about that person’s experience, and finally the advice. And its been a riot hearing all the takes on such a glamorous procedure. For example: one person said, “You should really fast two days before” while another said, “You should eat a lot so that you have something to actually pass besides water” --to make it worth it, I guess. How about the fluids? One experienced voice said to me, “When it comes to that really sweet solution you have to drink--just drink the solution down rather than sip it so that you get it over with quickly.” Another experienced voice also suggested that I mix the go-juice that you have to drink with lemonade. I had numerous other stories and with each story I got another little piece of advice. I started having a lot of fun with it. Thank you to all who have enough concern for me to offer their advice. The best part is that when you summarize what was said it is clear that it all comes out all right in the end.

Scripture has a lot to say about getting good advice from reliable people. Proverbs 24:6 for instance says, “For by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.” But I think the Proverbs 2 makes a very important distinction about getting advice and discernment; learning and applying what you have learned.

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—³ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, ⁸ for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. ⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. ¹¹ Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.”

Let me premise my next thoughts with a word of warning to those of us who are quick to give advice. I remember reading somewhere—wish I could remember where: “A need is not necessarily an invitation and a problem doesn’t always have a solution. Not everything is meant to get fixed by you.” Instead remember to listen more than speak. Weigh the matter carefully, before you speak as an expert on something. And remember that helping others is not about you.

The proverb is telling us however to seek wisdom when it can be found. I still enjoy learning from those who have much to teach me, especially from the ninety somethings that have lived a lot longer than me. My favorite professors are the little old ladies who read and reread their Bible. That Word saturates their experience and at their age they speak their minds freely which makes them a lot of fun.

But Proverbs 2 is not just advice, it is God teaching us about wisdom. Seek the Lord where He may be found we are told. Sometimes that is found in people that have lived long enough or been through enough to know something who are experiencing something they know a lot about because they have lived it. For instance, how many of us parents try to teach our children about mistakes in life we wish we could have avoided when we were younger. We do this because we have lived it. We know what direction something might go because we've been there and done that.

Ultimately good advice takes us in the direction of Godly advice. When the proverb says, "Store up God's Commands", it advises that godly advice works best when it is integrated into our life, when faith turns into action. In the end wisdom that comes from experience, when combined and tempered with God's Word we will be better equipped to be discerning; knowing how and where to apply the advice we are given. Literally to take someone else's experience and integrate it into our own for the purpose of deeper faith is the ultimate goal.

So, it says, "seek it as silver or a treasure hidden." "Then you will be able to know what is right and fair." "Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you." When you put this altogether wisdom will keep your backside out of trouble. From buying the right car to learning how to care for a sick member of the family to experiencing a first colonoscopy. Wisdom will benefit where ever life may take you. So, seek the advice of godly people, and certainly of God knowing that path has been walked before. And on that path we will find our way.

Announcements

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods
John 3:30