

Devotionals for the Week of February 12, 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 – Human Relationships – Become a “Get It” Person First

To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction. The Lord approves of those who are good, but he condemns those who plan wickedness. Wickedness never brings stability, but the godly have deep roots The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives the godly are well rooted and bear their own fruit. The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble. Wise words bring many benefits, and hard work brings rewards. Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others. A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted. An honest witness tells the truth; a false witness tells lies. Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing. Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed. Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace! No harm comes to the godly, but the wicked have their fill of trouble. The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth. The wise don't make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their foolishness Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up. The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray The way of the godly leads to life; that path does not lead to death. Proverbs 12:1-3, 6, 12B-23, 25-26, 28 (NLT)

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

This is week two 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 the 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: Human Relationships, with the following:

Last week was all about what we might call "start-up wisdom." In other words, wisdom about how to go about getting wisdom. Our prayer responses from last week (which follow) seem to capture this for us and help to prepare us as we began this week:

Lord, as we explore the book of Proverbs in the weeks ahead, it is my prayer that I will be able to give you the center place in my life more than ever before. I pray that through the book of Proverbs all the many facets of my life will be touched by practical wisdom and become beautifully aligned with you and your desires for my life. Amen!

Lord, with as much of my heart, soul, and mind as I know how, I express these words to you now, "I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments." I look forward to saying them to you over and over again in the coming weeks in response to all that you bring to me of yourself and your intentions for my life. Amen!

Lord, help me to hunger for you and the wisdom you have to offer. Teach me what it means to put you at the center of everything. Please continue your work of grace in my life that infuses me with a genuine humility of mind, heart, and spirit. I love you, I worship you, and I depend on you, Lord. Amen!

Lord, I do pray that I will be more willing than ever to be instructed, to admit where I am wrong, and to accept where I need to change. Truly prepare my heart for the work you want to do in my heart and life through the book of Proverbs over the next several weeks. Amen!

Lord, forgive me for all the times I wouldn't come and didn't pay attention. Continue your work of transforming my heart, soul, and mind, so that, more and more, you have the center place. Help me to see you in the midst of everything. Speak your wisdom into every aspect of my life and grant that I become more and more aligned with the practical and spiritual intentions you have for my life. Amen!

Lord, thank you for the "start-up wisdom." Please continue to put all these things in place in my life and prepare me in every way for all that you want to accomplish in my life through the book

of Proverbs as it speaks to key areas of my life. In the words of the Psalmist from earlier in the week, I say to you, Lord, "I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments." Amen!

So, here we are ready and prepared to let God use the book of Proverbs in our lives. The area of life to be addressed by the book of Proverbs this week is our relationships with others. There are four aspects of relationships that we will consider on each of the next four days, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then wrap everything up on Saturday.

We are going to let Proverbs 12 help us begin to consider the practical wisdom God has for us in our relationships with other people. A good portion of Proverbs 12 is found above. Please read it through and then read it through again. But the second time, in all the places it uses the words wicked and good/godly or foolish and wise, substitute this instead: "those who get it" and "those who don't get it." Throughout the week we will use portions of this passage along with other verses from the book of Proverbs and Scriptures from elsewhere in the Bible as well.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

This is enough for one day. Please identify a few things that can form the basis of a prayer response that you put together for yourself. God Bless you today and as you go forward in our adventure with the book of Proverbs.

Tuesday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Human Relationships – Build a Foundation of Unconditional Love/Loyalty

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. Proverbs 17:17

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:12-13

But Ruth said, "Do not beg me to leave you or turn away from following you. I will go where you go. I will live where you live. Your people will be my people. And your God will be my God. I will die where you die, and there I will be buried. So may the Lord do the same to me, and worse, if anything but death takes me from you." Ruth 1:16-17 (NLV)

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

In all that we are, in all that we do, and in all that we proclaim, there is nothing we at Cape Cod Church value more than the "unconditional love" of God. The more we are steeped in the world around us, the more foreign the notion of "unconditional love" is to us. At the same time,

however, the extremely "conditional" environment of the world makes the truth of God's "unconditional love" tremendously appealing.

"Unconditional love" is the backbone of relationships. In contrast we live in a "throw away" world and the impact of this is devastating to relationships. People constantly move from one thing to the next, from one situation to the next, from one relationship to the next. The pattern is: get it, use it, dispose of it, move on; get it, use it, dispose of it, move on; get it, use it, dispose of it, move on; etc. Are you not overjoyed and overwhelmed with the fact that God does not do this with us. "Unconditional love" is the backbone of God's relationship with us and it must be the backbone of our relationships with others."

We have a term that characterizes those who make "unconditional love" the backbone of their relationships with others. It is "loyalty. "Loyalty" in relationships is a rare thing in our "throw away" world today, but it is the paramount need of the times in which we live. Here is a line from our Proverbs 12 passage from yesterday, "The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives." Notice the phrase, "the godly save lives." Let's be quite literal here, the godly save lives and don't throw them away. In other words, the godly are loyal.

Read through the Scriptures above again and note all that is said about unconditional and loyal love. Think about your own relationships with people and determine to check them out carefully for what you actually bring to those relationships in regard to loyalty. Let God help you replace "throw away" thinking and behavior for "loyal" (unconditional love) thinking and behavior.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Put together a prayer response to God for yourself and incorporate into your response our theme response for the series "Lord, I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7)."

Wednesday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Human Relationships – Cultivate Abundant Sensitivity and Empathy

A loud and cheerful greeting early in the morning will be taken as a curse! Proverbs 27:14

Don't visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome. Proverbs 25:17

The godly care for their animals, but the wicked are always cruel. Proverbs 12:10

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

We saw yesterday that good relationships and friendships need a good foundation, and that foundation is loyalty. Loyalty springs from our commitment to consistently extend unconditional

love to another person. One's ability to love unconditionally is directly proportional to one's personal experience with God and his unconditional love. The person who is learning to love unconditionally and to be loyal in their relationships with other people will also become someone who cares deeply about and connects solidly with the needs of others.

Good relationships need all the sensitivity and empathy we can bring to them, and the wisdom of Proverbs gives us some great help with this as seen in the verses above.

The one who doesn't get the above Proverbs 27 verse right either doesn't care or can't accept that their friend is hard wired not to be a morning person. Accepting and caring about the make-up of others is what sensitivity and empathy are all about.

A "wearing out your welcome" kind of person as seen in the above Proverbs 25 verse is focused on themselves and what they want from their friend and not on caring about the needs of their friend.

The above Proverbs 12 verse on godly care of animals is included because of the truth that the kind of nurture and care present in one who treats animals properly is the kind of friend we need to be.

Caring about and for the needs of others is essential for good relationships. The person who truly cares is a person who is learning the art of sensitivity and empathy. The vital element of all of this is learning to "listen" to others. Our Proverbs 12 passage from earlier in the week speaks to this, "Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others." The more we listen the more we will be in touch with the needs of others. The more we are in touch with the needs of others, the more they will trust us and count on us. And the more others can trust us and count on us, the more we will earn the right to speak wisdom into their lives. Again, our Proverbs 12 passage from earlier in the week speaks to this quite well, "To speak an encouraging word cheers a person up. The godly give good advice to their friends."

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Put together a prayer response to God for yourself in regard to caring fully about the needs others and remember to incorporate our theme response for the series "Lord, I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7)."

Thursday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Human Relationships – Pursue Honest Interactions that Genuinely Build Up

Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous. An open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. Proverbs 27:4-6

In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery. Proverbs 28:23

Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it. But I pray constantly against the wicked and their deeds. Psalm 141:5

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

The key word for today is "edification." If we want to do our part in the pursuit of good relationships, we will have to learn to genuinely "edify" the people around us. Edification is all about building up and not tearing down. The secret ingredient in being one who edifies is honesty. Our Proverbs 12 passage from earlier in the week speaks to this: "An honest witness tells the truth; a false witness tells lies Truthful words stand the test of time but lies are soon exposed. Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth."

The focus on honesty in our pursuit of being one who edifies other people is not so much on accuracy as it is on appropriateness. Whatever we speak into the lives other people needs to be accurate but not everything that is accurate needs to be spoken. This idea is captured well in the following Proverb.

A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word! Proverbs 15:23 (NASB)

Edification includes both correction and affirmation. If the words we speak into another person's life are all correction or all affirmation, then we don't really have an "honest" relationship. Words that are "apt" and "timely" will sometimes "correct" and sometimes "affirm." This being said, we need to address the more blatant dishonesty of "flattery" that is so prevalent in our day. The verses from Proverbs and the Psalm above speak to this very well.

Honesty moves us past flattery to genuine "building" up. How easily we become ones who are afraid to say anything to our friends that is not positive and affirming. How readily we surround ourselves with the wrong people. We need to have people in our lives who speak "truth" to us. But again it is truth where "accuracy" is tempered by "appropriateness." How blessed we will be if our relationships with others are characterized by "appropriate" interactions that truly build up with just the right amount of "correction" and "affirmation."

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Put together a prayer response to God for yourself in regard to honest edification and remember to incorporate our theme response for the series "Lord, I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7)."

Friday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Human Relationships – Handle Conflict in Godly Ways (Calm, Peaceful, & Private)

Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.
Proverbs 13:3

The mouths of fools are their ruin; they trap themselves with their lips. Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one's heart The first to speak in court sounds right-until the cross-examination begins An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars. Proverbs 18:7-8, 17, 19

When arguing with your neighbor, don't betray another person's secret. Others may accuse you of gossip, and you will never regain your good reputation. Proverbs 25:9-10

A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence.
Proverbs 11:13

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today's focus is on how we handle the inevitable conflicts that are a part of our personal relationships with other people. The kind of communication that takes place in the middle of our conflicts has an awful lot to do with the longevity of our relationships.

The Proverb 13 verse above says it well, doesn't it? Controlling the tongue is the key to a lifetime of solid, long-term relationships. If we have problems controlling our tongues in the middle of our conflicts, it is almost a sure thing that we will have problems controlling our tongues in regard to what we have to say to third parties about the relationships in which we are experiencing conflict. The additional Proverbs above speak very well to the issue of gossip and the additional destructive impact it has on our relationships.

Earlier in the week we talked about the "throw away" world we live in and the devastating impact this has on relationships. Whether we realize it or not, poor communication in our relationships during times of conflict is a manifestation of a "throw away" orientation to life. Consistent poor communication in times of conflict reflects a lack of commitment to getting the relationship right. Whether we realize it or not, if we are not working at getting a relationship right, we are in the process of "throwing it away."

Our Proverbs 12 passage from earlier in the week gives us several fitting lines that help us see our need for this kind of commitment: "A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace!" The person who lacks a commitment to getting communication right in times of conflict in their relationships, will very likely be one who is quick-tempered, makes cutting remarks, and plots evil (retaliation). The committed person is one who is planning on peace and seeks to stay calm when insulted and use words that bring healing.

We have a lot to think about today. Keep in mind that when we are in the book of Proverbs, truth comes to us primarily in the form of principles that need to be applied to our lives. But realize this: the inherent danger of having principles to apply to life, is approaching them in a self-help kind of way and not in a godly way. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understandings. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and 'he will make' your paths straight." Godly ways are "always" the best ways.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Put together a prayer response to God for yourself in regard to godly conflict and remember to incorporate our theme response for the series "Lord, I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7)."

Saturday – Wisdom from Proverbs – Human Relationships – Gain the Higher Perspective of Christ

Help, O Lord, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth! Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and deceitful hearts. May the Lord cut off their flattering lips and silence their boastful tongues. They say, "We will lie to our hearts' content. Our lips are our own—who can stop us?" Psalm 12:1-4

"Do not give what is holy to dogs—they will only turn and attack you. Do not throw your pearls in front of pigs—they will only trample them underfoot. Matthew 7:6 (GNT)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Luke 23:34 A

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Today we wrap our week of letting God use the book of Proverbs to help us with personal relationships. While the book of Proverbs has been our main focus, we have looked at a few Scriptures from other places in the Bible that fit in and we will do that again today. We have found Proverbs 12 to be filled with wisdom for personal relationships. Here are several more fitting lines: "To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction. The Lord approves of those who are good, but he condemns those who plan wickedness. Wickedness never brings stability, but the godly have deep roots The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble. Wise words bring many benefits, and hard work brings rewards."

We have talked about "getting it right" with our personal relationships. For this to happen, we must be willing to learn and that takes discipline and an openness to correction. This is the focus of those who are "good" in contrast to those who plan wickedness and of course this is where God's approval rests. God knows what is best for us and his ways bring stability and deep roots to the godly. When it comes to relationships, there is no more powerful factor in what kind of

relationships we will have than the words we speak. Those who "get it right" in regard to the words they use in their relationships are the ones who escape the trap that those who "get it wrong" fall into and the trouble that follows. Truly, the hard work of becoming one who consistently uses "wise words" in personal relationships will reap many benefits and rewards.

The Psalm above reminds us that "godly" and "faithful" people (those who pursue "getting it right") are the exception rather than the rule. This Scripture is surely a commentary on today's world and the abundance of ruined relationships we see all around us and all too often within our own personal experience. We are going to conclude today and the week with the two portions of Scripture above from Matthew and Luke. They provide a great way to overcome those moments that come in our relationships and "do us in" so to speak. In the heat of the moment we can so easily forget all about being "godly" and "faithful."

Thinking of those we are in a relationship with in terms of "dogs" and "pigs" doesn't sound like such a good idea on the surface. Let's put the focus on the words "holy" and "pearls." There are things that are special and precious to us and we need to discern when to open up and put such things out there and when not to. Often it is those who we are closest to that trample on our "pearls" so to speak. We need to be selective and judicious in sharing the things that are the most special and the most precious to us. All too often, we set ourselves up for trauma in our relationships because we are not "wise" about when and who we share what is most important to us.

The words of Jesus in the Luke passage above were said while he hung on the cross. He was surrounded with people who were at extreme odds with him. When you are up against those who are at odds with you, picture yourself lifted up (like Jesus) to a higher perspective. Don't settle for staying in the fray. Remind yourself that those at odds with you just "don't get it." Stop and say within yourself, "they don't know what they are doing." Jesus felt sorrow for those who crucified him. He had a very lofty perspective, and he forgave them. Try this out and it will make a huge difference in how you handle the tough spots in your relationships with others.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Put together a prayer response to God for yourself in regard to the higher perspective of Christ and remember to incorporate our theme response for the series "Lord, I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments (Psalm 119:7)."