

Reading and Class Materials

October 29 – November 25, 2023



Wisdom Calls

Author

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Reading/Class Schedule

Our Sunday morning Bible class will discuss the readings from the prior week.

Oct. 29 – Nov. 4 (Sunday November 5th)

November 5-11 (Sunday November 12th)

November 12-18 (Sunday November 19th)

November 19-25 (Sunday November 26th)

Sunday, October 29, 2023 (PROVERBS 10:3)

The Lord will not let the righteous soul famish

The Hebrew writer's boundless appreciation for the work of Christ is in evidence as he proclaims that through the Lord's death and resurrection, he began the destruction of the devil "who had the power of death." Jesus released "those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Perhaps then the death and resurrection of our Lord is the ultimate fulfillment of Proverbs 10:2-3: "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, But righteousness delivers from death. The Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, But he casts away the desire of the wicked."

In olden times, the fear of death was rooted in ignorance about what came afterward. Job reasoned that there was probably some opportunity for God to sort out the affairs of men, but only because his own righteousness was apparently going unrewarded on Earth (Job 14). The fear of the unknown is powerful and before Christ conquered the gates of Hades, death was almost entirely an unknown quantity.

His resurrection from the tomb makes it possible that every faithful person can follow him out and up—in the direction of an eternal reward in Heaven. "For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (First Corinthians 15:16-19).

Confidence is to replace fear; hopefulness is to replace anxiety. Satan is cast down and his power to torment the sinner's soul is hamstrung by the pure knowledge that there is life after death.

Monday, October 30, 2023 (Proverb 10:3) continued...

Life after death, however, is not for everybody—only those described as righteous. Others seek temporary prosperity, pleasure or convenience outside the will of God, but their treasures are of little lasting value. It is righteousness that delivers from death, for he who hungers and thirsts after it will be filled (Matthew 5:6). God simply will not permit the righteous soul to suffer famine, for he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 7:7-11).

Righteousness, faith and justification are our security against the looming threat of physical death and its monstrous sibling, spiritual damnation (First John 5:13). It is the persistent, persevering drive to know God's will and perform it that sustain the righteous soul and cause it to thrive where the wicked aims low and sinks lower.

Tuesday, October 31, 2023 (Proverb 10:7)

The memory of the righteous is blessed

Wisdom calls aloud again from the tenth chapter of the Proverbs to suggest that, "The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot" (7).

Thankfully, this expression does not appear to be only a commentary on the ability of people to retain information as they age. It is not about our ability to remember faces and dates and passwords, but about the way in which we are remembered according to our lifestyle. Righteous people are remembered, especially after they are gone and their records are complete, as a blessing to those whom they touched.

Righteous people are remembered for the faith that motivated them—for their kindness and joy as well as their deeds in service to God and man. The widows were not weeping around the body of Dorcas because her death brought them relief (Acts 9:36-43). They wept at their loss, showing Peter the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while alive. The memory of Dorcas was blessed because her faith was active and her gifts endured even longer than she did.

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 (Proverb 10:7) continued...

Officiating at funerals gives one a sense of the blessed memory that the righteous can leave behind. It is so much easier to formulate thoughts about the deceased when his loved ones are abounding with tales and examples of the blessing that he brought to them.

It is also so much easier to let that loved one go when his faithful life seems to testify to the goodness of his fate. It is just not so with the wicked, for wisdom indicates that his name will rot. Long before mechanical refrigeration, these ancients were keenly aware of the problem of rot. So much decay and disease was associated with rotting meat; it was repulsive and disgusting. Imagine the smell and the sight of something rotting.

Sadly, that is the effect upon the reputation of the wicked man as well. His infamy becomes etched in stone.

While the Bible warns that it is appointed unto men to die and then to be judged by God (Hebrews 9:27, Second Corinthians 5:8-10), here it also warns that our record and reputation will be assessed by everyone who ever knew us. Most are charitable in their recollections of the deceased, perhaps elevating the memory of the selfish and miserable to a minimally ambivalent status, but only the righteous are remembered as a blessing.

If you don't want your name to rot, seek first the favor of God and that of man should follow, just as "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

Thursday, November 2, 2023 (Proverb 10:26)

As vinegar to the teeth is a lazy man

"As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him" (Proverbs 10:26).

When you hire someone or simply are relying upon a friend, volunteer or child to come to your aid, few things can be as irritating as being let down because of another's laziness, dereliction and apathy about the task you find so vital.

What could be as irritating? Sour wine on the teeth or smoke in the eyes! Modern experience with the former is probably rare, but not so with the latter. Everyone has strayed too close to a campfire, cigarette, fireplace or burning building. And few things are as objectionable.

Paul reported that, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). That was not a compliment. Lazy people still expect to eat and must depend upon the kindness of relatives, churches and taxpayers to answer their appetites. These are not the aged, infirm or unfortunate, but those who could work, but will not. "As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him."

Friday, November 3, 2023 (Proverb 10:26) continued...

Another proverb suggests that, “Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, And an idle person will suffer hunger” (19:15). Some of the Thessalonian saints were hungry, lazy, deep sleeping busybodies (Second Thessalonians 3:11). Paul commanded, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (10).

Then there are those who are quite diligent in the secular portions of their lives, but incredibly slothful over on the spiritual side. Part of the problem lies in compartmentalizing life—better to have one life where the spiritual rules the secular. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (Second Timothy 2:15).

Such diligence depends upon ceaseless prayer (First Thessalonians 5:17), daily study (Acts 17:11), and serious preparation to defend one’s convictions (First Peter 3:15). Even the pursuit of heaven requires effort: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:11).

Diligence is integral but is sometimes scarce when the objective is not dearly held. Apathy takes over when our interest wanes and we become shiftless employees or unreliable messengers. “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

Consider yourself sent by God into your life to do good, win souls, and approach Heaven. You can’t afford to be smoke in God’s eyes or vinegar upon his teeth.

Saturday, November 4, 2023 – Consider the following questions from this week's readings:

1. What should be inspired in every believer, knowing that God will not let the righteous soul famish?
2. When our lives have ended, what should we desire to be remembered about us?
3. In what ways does laziness impact physical circumstances? How does it affect God's spiritual work?

Sunday, November 5, 2023 (Proverbs 11:1)

Dishonest scales are an abomination

Wisdom calls aloud from the book of Hebrew Proverbs, if only men will pay attention and give heed.

“Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, But a just weight is His delight” (11:1).

The value of meats and vegetables at market has most always been assigned in part by weight. A shady businessman could easily inflate his profits by fixing his store’s scales or even pressing down upon one side with his thumb as the calculation was being made. On the other hand, however, many stores now utilize self-serve bins and scales, allowing an unscrupulous consumer to print his weight sticker and then add more product to the bag. Either way, somebody is going to be cheated.

The world is filled with dishonesty, and it almost seems as if the only way one can keep up or even get ahead is to “play the game.” If everyone is dishonest, doesn’t that make it all right?

Well, no. The car salesmen might roll back the odometer on that Ford Festiva you’ve been eyeing. The waiter might charge you for a soda you didn’t order. The “great eBayer—would do business with again!!!!” might neglect to tell you that the CD he is selling you has more scratches than a cat post, but at no stage in this devolution of society is the Christian’s participation sanctioned. That is often the bitterest pill to swallow—that one cannot simply go with the flow when the flow is down a moral sewer that looks appealingly successful from a distance.

Monday, November 6, 2023 (Proverb 11:1) continued...

Honesty really is the best policy, just like your mother told you and even if dear old Mom herself was not above snatching an illicit free sample of grapes at the fruit stand. Honesty is easiest when universal, but that ideal is unlikely ever to be realized among men. The disciple of Christ cannot wait until the ideal is achieved and all are honest before he becomes so. The wrong thing is never the right thing to do and the golden rule urges us to do the right thing unto others regardless of how they operate or respond. “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Wisdom calls aloud and says that, “Dishonest scales are an abomination to God.” That means more than just lying about how much weight you’ve gained on this diet. It’s about treating others fairly and honestly because that is the right thing to do. “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ ... Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:15, 25).

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 (Proverb 11:22)

As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout

Wisdom calls aloud from centuries gone by to remind modern men that, “As a ring of gold in a swine’s snout, So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion” (Proverbs 11:22).

Throughout the eastern world in Old Testament times and even today, rings are frequently placed in the noses of women to enhance their beauty (Genesis 24:47, Isaiah 3:21). Only more recently, and with rather mixed results, have American women begun to imitate this custom. Yet while one might adorn herself with a golden nose ring in the hope of catching the eye of some eligible suitor, few would find it reasonable to do the same for her pig. What a waste, one might respond at seeing an expensive piece of jewelry dangling from a hog’s runny nose, fresh from the mire, but there it is. The two—golden ring and pig nose—just do not belong together.

The same, however, can be said for one who has received from God the all too rare gift of physical loveliness, who mars her beauty with an utter lack of discretion. Discretion is not just the better part of valor; it is also the quality of good judgment, prudence and modesty. It is what Peter was describing when he instructed women to adorn themselves with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (First Peter 3:4).

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 (Proverb 11:22) continued...

Our society, however, implores women of every age to flaunt their physical attributes, exposing the legs, midriff and chest so that men might lust and women might envy. It is

hardly uncommon to see prepubescent girls parading about in indecent clothing, developing an even more immodest personality at the same time.

And that is precisely the point. A lack of discretion is not simply a matter of attire, but gets to the heart and soul of the woman who lacks it. Her speech might be indiscrete gossip or innuendo (First Timothy 5:11-15). Perhaps she has become assertive to the point that she rejects the authority of her parents or headship of her husband (First Peter 3:1-6). An indiscrete woman can upset the balance of the church by overstepping her role (First Timothy 2:8-14).

Yet it is when she makes herself the object of leers and catcalls that her indiscretion is most clear. Instead of looking at her to lust after the exhibition, we should pity the incongruity of her appearance—lovely in form, ugly in faith. “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

A beautiful woman who has not the discretion to conceal the lust-worthy parts of her anatomy is nothing to be praised.

Thursday, November 9, 2023 (Proverb 11:29)

He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind

Proverbs 11:29 offers some surprisingly modern advice as wisdom continues to call aloud to anyone who would consult the ancient text for divine insight.

“He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.”

The Old Testament offers yet another warning against selfish, shortsighted behavior that brings disastrous consequences. Hosea cautioned that, “They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind” (8:7) who choose idolatry over truth.

Yet how many men today continue to trouble their own houses?

It all begins idyllically enough. A man finds the perfect girl, convinces her to date him and eventually marry him with romantic notions of picket fences, lassoing the moon and living blissfully until death parts them.

Then other cliches intervene. The honeymoon is over; a seven-year itch yearns to be scratched. Mid-life crises produce hairpieces, convertibles and sometimes an eye that wanders away from the wife of his youth.

Friday, November 10, 2023 (Proverb 11:29) continued...

He troubles his house by overworking to be rich (Proverbs 23:4), provoking his children to wrath with neglect or abuse (Ephesians 6:1-4) and failing to honor and understand his uxorial weaker vessel (First Peter 3:7).

He sees to his own needs, forgetting to esteem those closest to him as better than himself (Philippians 2:1-4), wielding his headship over the home as a weapon to suit his own satisfaction.

Then comes reaping season—maybe years later when his marriage is in a state of frigid estrangement and his children are but distant strangers.

A husband or father is in a position of leadership, even headship, but that does not qualify him to be the home's dictator. Some men trouble their houses when they begin to think of themselves as the sun and their family members as mere orbiting satellites, there to bask in his glory, tremble at his power and answer his every whim. Mom is unhappy and the children are counting off the days until they reach majority and are mercifully paroled. They love Dad in spite of himself, but that tenuous connection will not survive many miles. Off at college or otherwise on their own, Dad will find phone calls and visits to be tragically rare.

Unfortunately, it is much too late during the harvest to sow anything else or anything more. He reaps the wind of loneliness, regret and failure because he troubled his house with selfish leadership. God is not mocked; a man will reap what he sows (Galatians 6:7).

Saturday, November 11, 2023 – Consider the following questions from this week’s readings:

1. In what ways do people try to justify dishonesty?
2. What kind of adornment is precious in the eyes of God?
3. In what ways do some “trouble their own house”?

Sunday, November 12, 2023 (Proverb 11:30)

He who wins souls is wise

The apostle Paul was at once self-effacing and militantly confident.

While he could look at himself and acknowledge the infamy of his former persecution of the church of Christ, he could also see the power of his conversion story to impact the consciences of others.

Paul wrote, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life” (First Timothy 1:15-16).

Paul was surely a militant evangelist when it came to that form of teaching to which he was committed and by which he was redeemed (Romans 6:17). He took the “great commission” and ran with it all over Europe, suffering all manner of hardship to bring forth fruit throughout the ancient world (Colossians 1:6).

His devotion is imitated today by those who take the name of Jesus with them wherever they go—whether it is into the church building, the workplace, the neighborhood, the playground or across the ocean and into the jungle.

Monday, November 13, 2023 (Proverb 11:30) continued...

Wisdom calls aloud from Proverbs 11:30: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.”

Soul-winning is a wise way to occupy one’s time. The Holy Spirit likens it to sowing good seed upon the soil of men’s hearts—some stony, some thorny, some hard and some soft (Matthew 13:3-23). “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (23).

Do not let the terminology confuse you. Soul-winning is not about feathers in your cap or credits on your ledger. Soul-winning is about doing your part in the advancement of the cause of Christ. We are often heard to pray about “growing in grace and in

number” and we logically hope for God to give the increase, but in concert with him, we must sow the word and nurture it like a tender plant (First Corinthians 3:6-8).

The wise soul-winner is “diligent to show [himself] approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (Second Timothy 2:15). He owns the first principles of his faith and is capable of teaching them to others because he stands ready and willing to defend the hope that abides within him (Hebrews 5:12, First Peter 3:15).

He who wins souls is wise. What does that make the Christian who does not win souls or even try?

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 (Proverb 12:4)

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband

Long before King Lemuel appeared on the Bible stage to report what his mother taught him about virtuous women, Proverbs 12:4 established a simpler standard for excellence among her tribe.

“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.”

Much of the Proverbs—and the entire Bible for that matter—is written from an overwhelmingly male perspective. That should not be too dreadful for its female audience, however, for God himself is presented as male also.

This particular proverb is a reminder to women that their behavior and reputation will have an effect on both the character and courage of their husbands. Woman was created by God to be man’s helper, a similar term to the one used later of the Holy Spirit. Plainly understood, man needs help. He needs guidance and reminding and reward to be motivated and to persevere.

A good wife is like a crown for her husband. He might already enjoy all the trappings of family headship and perhaps he is successful in business or the community, but without an excellent wife, everything is tarnished just a bit. Her excellence, so thoroughly described in Proverbs chapter thirty-one, is not necessarily indicated by stunning physical beauty or her own ability to make a buck, but is determined by her willingness to excel in her role of helpmeet. She crowns her husband by loving him and

respecting him, occasionally chastening him for his faults, but always supporting him with her affection.

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 (Proverb 12:4) continued...

A far less excellent wife is more concerned with selfish ambition than her God-given role in the home. She causes her husband shame by disrespecting him, or cheating on him, or sharing in the sins of others. Perhaps she likes to nag or gossip or cause trouble in the neighborhood by being nosy or obnoxious. Maybe she is neglectful of her home, or her children or her husband, and the attitude of disregard becomes public. The shame that results is likened to rotteness in her husband's bones—a painful, slowly degrading and ultimately fatal emotional cancer.

Excellent wives love their husbands and children and are careful to be “discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:4-5). None of this will make her popular with Gloria Steinem or the feminist movement, but it will make her excellent in the mind of her husband, and more importantly, the judgment of her God.

The contrast is striking and unmistakable—a good wife is like a crown upon a husband's head while a shameful wife is like a consuming disease inside of him. Which will you be?

Thursday, November 16, 2023 (Proverb 12:10)

Regard for the life of his beast

Wisdom calls aloud in an unexpected way from Proverbs 12:10, which reads, “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”

Modern readers will probably interpret this passage in terms of pet ownership, but the original audience was more likely to view animals as beasts of burden, future sacrifices or even meat. Applications to wisdom can be found on both sides, however.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, God has entrusted the sub-human portion of his creation to the sometimes uneven oversight of mankind. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

This dominion extended to ingestion after the ark landed and God’s concern for the animals immediately began to fade in man’s estimation (9:1-3). Animals shared man’s curse in the soil and their brows sweated as copiously as their masters’. Even the Sabbath day of enforced rest was shared with the animals (Exodus 20:10).

Friday, November 17, 2023 (Proverb 12:10) continued...

Perhaps content that the spirit of animals only goes downward to the earth at death, men felt liberated to use and abuse their animals (Ecclesiastes 3:21). Yet for every Balaam who kicked his donkey, there was a Jacob who erected booths for his cattle (Numbers 22:22-33, Genesis 33:17; cf. Second Chronicles 14:15). David was so concerned for a fictional ewe lamb that he decreed its killer should be executed, only to discover he was the man who had committed an even worse thing (Second Samuel 12:1-15).

The work animal was to be permitted to feed while it trod out the grain, providing a somewhat unflattering metaphor for minister support in the New Testament era. “For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does he say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope” (First Corinthians 9:9-10, see also First Timothy 5:18). The point is that farmers and shepherds and businessmen were to have regard for the welfare of their animals and not just treat them like disposable commodities.

This comes a little easier for modern pet-owners, with their lovable poodles and kitties. God watches over the lowest of his creatures, hopeful that his highest will not abuse or neglect them. Cruelty to animals is especially unwise when man considers that there are still beings higher than him.

Saturday, November 18, 2023 – Consider the following questions from this week's readings:

1. How would you define soul-winning? What is involved in soul-winning?
2. Do the actions of a spouse reflect on their mate? Why?
3. Does dominion over the animal world give man the right to abuse the blessings God provides?

Sunday, November 19, 2023 (Proverb 12:15)

The way of a fool is right in his eyes

It is probably unwise and unkind to call one's own child a fool, but who among us hasn't been at least tempted at times?

Your drink is too close to the edge of the table, the patient father tells his son. "No, it isn't," the lad replies, moments before sending the glass crashing to the floor with a wayward elbow and flood of soda.

It's cold outside; you need your coat. "No, it isn't. I'll stick with the tee-shirt," a daughter answers. Hours later, her goosebumps have goosebumps, but still she won't admit she was r-r-r-r-wrong.

Children are not fools but fools are like children. For some unapparent reason, each is convinced that he is almost always right and is surely correct this time. And then he is proven wrong and yet doesn't remember the lesson the next time that somebody older and wiser offers counsel.

Monday, November 20, 2023 (Proverb 12:15) continued...

Wisdom calls aloud on that very topic in the book of Hebrew proverbs. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise" (12:15).

This truism touches on nearly every aspect of life and is an obvious symptom of a heart too proud to admit wrong, accept advice, handle chastening or learn better. Not only does it apply to the person who rejects good counsel on mundane matters, but it also fits those who risk their lives and souls rather than submit to the advice of someone who has already walked the same regrettable path or who can more objectively and clearly see its end.

Such a person is so foolish, in fact, that the objection of another will probably only serve to harden him in his position. Then, he must prove that he is right, even if he secretly knows that he is wrong. He must exert greater effort and expend all energy to support his pride and beat back the one who only wanted to help.

You shouldn't cross this busy street in the middle, but wait until you reach the crosswalk. "I'll show you," he answers before embarking on his own personal game of Frogger. Squash goes his pride and the melon on his shoulders.

That fool is a long way from the great men of the Bible. Jeremiah said, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O Lord, correct me" (10:23). Apollos could be corrected as well, even though he was articulate and knowledgeable, because there was something that Aquila and Priscilla knew that he didn't.

Saul, however, you couldn't tell anything. He was convinced that David was after his crown and insisted on pursuing the shepherd boy until the search finally killed Saul himself. That's the way of a fool.

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 (Proverb 12:22)

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord

Wisdom called but I had my son tell her I wasn't at home, not realizing that, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

Most people value honesty and demand it of others, judging themselves to be people of integrity as well. There exists, however, a vast region in which "little white lies," harmless exaggerations, and expert equivocation are deemed acceptable—at least when I am trafficking in them. When someone else is padding the resume and getting the job instead of me, I'm less pleased. When some criminal is getting off the hook with legal technicalities and tortured definitions of the word "is," we are outraged.

Perhaps God hates deception so much because it was the instrument that the devil used to pollute Eden with sin and ruin man's stewardship of the Garden. The devil, after all, is the father of lies (John 8:44) and his Paradise prevarication was simple, yet crafty. He confused spiritual and physical death in the mind of a naive woman, persuading her to focus upon the temporary benefits of sin while ignoring the lifelong and eternal consequences. The Holy Spirit explains without excusing that she was deceived and therefore fell into transgression (First Timothy 2:14).

On almost every occasion, we lie for very selfish reasons—to take advantage, to cheat, to steal, to avoid responsibility. Even when we are lying to protect the feelings of another, we are usually more concerned with avoiding an awkward truth, choosing to perpetuate a lie instead. The notion that any lie is but little and chaste is self-serving and inaccurate.

Wednesday, November 22, 2023 (Proverb 12:22) continued...

Lies are sometimes told to protect oneself from excessive injury. We tell them to the Internal Revenue Service, the draft board, wives packing rolling pins and the policeman who just might be dumb enough to believe that my speedometer is more accurate than his radar.

It is amazing how infrequently one completely gets away with a lie. Even if his lie does stave off further injury, most still realize that he lied. Major League baseball players have perfected the process by which one lies to Congress and walks away contemptuously, but unpunished.

The judgment of God before the gates of heaven, however, should not be anticipated with such misplaced confidence. No barrister will argue your equivocations before the bar on high, nor will any degree of resume padding inscribe your name in the book of life after it is too late (Second Corinthians 5:10).

The apostle John warned “all liars” would find themselves sentenced instead to the second death—eternity in a lake of fire and brimstone we like to call Hell (Revelation 1:8).

Thursday, November 23, 2023 (Proverb 12:25)

Anxiety in the heart causes depression

What’s the good word? We use that expression from time to time, often without much thought, but sometimes when hoping for some positive news—almost ordering the bad news away or inviting the hearer to recast his message in the most advantageous terms. What’s the good word?

Wisdom suggests that the good word is one that allays the anxiety of a person who might otherwise allow his cares to become obsessions, his outlook to become pessimistic and his spirit to become depressed.

“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad” (Proverbs 12:25, ESV). While Jesus taught very forcefully against the harboring of worry, we prefer to make a distinction that permits us to meditate upon our “concerns.” Fair enough up to a degree. Paul even included his daily and “deep concern for all the churches” among the things that tried his body and mind. The key is determining at what point concerns become worries.

The command of Jesus is simple and its logic is reasonable and obvious. “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life ... Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature” (Matthew 6:25, 27)? He lists food, clothing and drink as examples, but if life is the category, then just about anything will fit. Which of you by worrying can shrink a tumor by even a centimeter? Which of you by worrying can quiet a playground bully even for a day? Which of you by worrying can mend a broken marriage, convert a stubborn child or send a rocket to the moon?

Friday, November 24, 2023 (Proverb 12:25) continued...

Worry is powerless to accomplish anything positive; it is worse than that, though, for worry accomplishes much ill. The heart that welcomes worry is bound for depression—all the negativity, pessimism and doom are like poisons, dutifully imbibed by one yet a little enslaved to the Adversary. Worry might express distrust in the Lord or overemphasis upon this life.

James begins his New Testament book by asserting that the very things we worry about can have the effect of strengthening our patience and completing our faith, but not if we ruin the affair with worry and doubt, “for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (7-8). Worry that stems from distrust is self-defeating, for it prevents God from pouring greater faith into our sealed hearts. And, my, isn’t that a depressing thought for your heart.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Saturday, November 25, 2023 – Consider the following questions from this week's readings:

1. Does believing something is right, make it so?
2. Why should we be cautious of lying at any level? Can we become so comfortable with lying that the truth eludes us?
3. What is worry powerless to do? In what areas do we allow worry to often set in?