



Post-Pandemic:

- Faith
- Friendships
- Family
- Flourishing

APRIL 2021



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Have you ever watched a gopher emerge from a gopher hole? First, the tentative head-bob. Now you see him, now you don't. Second, said gopher gets more comfortable and scurries out, only to quickly retreat. Another head-bob or two. Then, it becomes a full-bodied experience. He is out! The gopher ventures beyond his den and out into the world.

Our Pandemic experience is not unlike this. After months of Shelter in Place and Safer at Home a post-pandemic world beckons us outward. We tiptoe out trepidatiously. Is it safe? Is it open? Should it be open? The fear and anxiety are more intense than they were when we were asked to retreat into our dens. In March of 2020, there were not many decisions to make: "Just go inside. We will tell you when it is safe to come out." But now it seems that every step away from "home base" involves calculation, risk, and calculated risks--uncertainty, fear, and anxiety.

However, I have fears and anxieties that plumb much deeper! I fear that after a few weeks of tiptoeing back into normalcy, I'll quickly return whole-hog (or, to retain the analogy), whole-groundhog. I am anxious that I will snap back to normal so quickly that I may return to a life where my faith is mere accessory, my family gathers only long enough for fast-food inhalation between sports fields, my friendships are scattered and unintentional, and my sense of flourishing only extends as far as fun, hobby, and leisure will take me.

Before I become over-extended and thereby under-committed I need to push the Reset button. I need to spend some time thinking wisely and praying fervently about how I will show up in this Post-pandemic world. And I am inviting you to join me...

In the heart of Christian Scripture is a book of Proverbs, a collection of aphorisms compiled around 3000 years ago—ancient wisdom that speaks with head-turning and heart-stirring deftness. In a cultural moment deluged with information, awash with knowledge, submerged in lifehacks and level-ups, we could use some ancient wisdom that cuts through the tweets and trivial pursuits, grabs our attention, and shows us how to live.

These four weeks we will explore several proverbs that speak to Faith, Family, Friendship, and Flourishing. If we are open to it, these proverbs will serve as Reset buttons that invite us into a life worth living. And, the wisdom of each proverb ultimately flows from Jesus, the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), the One who saw fit to revive us back to life through His death and to rescue us to eternal life through His resurrection. Because of who Jesus is and what Jesus did, this Reset exercise is not the pure grit of sheer determination. Instead, it is Christ working in us that instills us with the power and hope to live a life worth living.

This booklet is designed to be a journal for you personally as well as a conversation guide for each of our community groups. Each Sunday in our worship service, you are invited to journey with us through the Proverbs, and then, Monday through Friday, use the booklet to prayerfully and thoughtfully consider who you want to be and how you want to live in the weeks, months, and years to come. Journal personally each day, and then converse with others in a WCPC community group each week. Families with children and/or students are also encouraged to use this booklet as a family devotional or conversation starter around the breakfast or dinner table.

Would you push Reset with me?

-Pastor Bart

Post-Pandemic: Faith

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On Sunday, starting each week with the Wisdom of God, the Word of God, and the Will of God.

The Wisdom of God

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

-Proverbs 1:7

⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or turn away from them.

⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.

⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

-Proverbs 4:5-7

¹¹ for wisdom is more precious than rubies,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

-Proverbs 8:11

The Word of God

⁵ "Every word of God is flawless;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

-Proverbs 30:5

¹⁸ Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint;
but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.

-Proverbs 29:18

The Will of God

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

-Proverbs 3:5,6

³ Commit to the Lord whatever you do,
and he will establish your plans.

-Proverbs 16:3

⁹ In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the Lord establishes their steps.

-Proverbs 16:9

²¹ Many are the plans in a person's heart,
but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

-Proverbs 19:21

⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops.

-Proverbs 3:9

¹⁶ Better a little with the fear of the Lord
than great wealth with turmoil.

-Proverbs 15:16

Personal Journal

Practicing Christian Faith via Worship during the Pandemic typically involved screens and isolation. It may have also involved pancakes and a latte. Perhaps you found yourself enjoying some aspects of it while missing (and loathing) others. God has created us to be worshippers and giving God thanks and praise typically involves being around the People of God, the Word of God, and the Table of God. And so, as we push reset, when the time is right for you, it will be important to venture back into worship together with your worshipping family.

When Christ was resurrected, the traditional Sabbath Day shifted from the week-ending Saturday to the week-beginning Sunday. Let us not miss the theological point! If the Sabbath is a day given to us by God for the deep rest of worship, then we do not work for rest, but we work from rest. This means that we do not work ourselves to exhaustion, and then catch up with sleep over the weekend, but instead, we enter into the presence of God, where we learn of God's Wisdom through God's Word that helps us better understand God's Will.

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

Wisdom in Scripture has been described as “the art of skillful living.” It is not sheer information. It is not mere knowledge. But it is the regular exercise of living in alignment with the way that God designed you to live. It is hard fought through many years of walking with God. And our understanding of wisdom gets cultivated on Sundays as we sit under the Word of God together with the People of God.

- **Where do I go for wisdom? Who do I talk to? What do I read?**

- **What messages do I hear from our culture today that are considered by others to be wise or true?**

- **What voices or outlets speak with authority?**

- **What “worldly wisdom” have I adopted in my life given the unrelenting exposure to the wisdom of the world?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

- **What did my Sundays look like during the Pandemic?**
- **What did I like about them?**
- **What did I not like about them?**
- **If cultivating a Post-pandemic faith involves worshipping collectively, what will it cost me to make gathering on Sunday with the people of God a priority again?**
- **How might I be a contributor to Christian faith rather than just a consumer of it? (At WCPC, we talk about "Worship + 2." That means being involved in worship on Sundays as well as a community group and a ministry team. If you aren't currently growing (in a community group) or serving (on a ministry team), what might that look like for you?**
- **What do I need from the "Family of God" right now? How might I receive it?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

The Word of God is called the special revelation of God while the rest of creation is often referred to as the general revelation of God. And so, in Psalm 19 we learn from the first half of the Psalm that “the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies reveal God’s handiwork,” while in the second half, the Psalm exalts the Word of God as “more precious than gold.” It is a “from lesser to greater argument,” meaning that while creation is generally revealing who God is, the Word of God is especially revealing who God is! That is why Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that Scripture is inspired by God and we learn in the proverbs above (30:5; 29:18) that God’s Word is flawless and revelatory. After all, the Word of God also reveals to us the Word of God--Jesus who is the Word made Flesh (John 1). And through Jesus, we learn more of God as creator, redeemer, sustainer, and ultimate restorer.

- **How much time did I spend in Scripture during the Pandemic?**

- **Was this more than normal? Less than normal?**

- **What would it look like to be deeply committed to Scripture as I reset my Post-pandemic faith?**

- **How much time do I listen to podcasts or audible books? Could I spend have of that time listening to Scripture or reading Scripture?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

The will of God is shrouded in mystery. Here is what we know about the will of God: It is God's will to take our best interest at heart. God has plans for us that will ultimately prosper us and not harm us (Jeremiah 29:11-14). These Proverbs for the week teach us that God's purpose and direction for us will prevail. Proverbs 3 even goes so far as to suggest that God will make our paths straight (even though they may seem winding to us).

- In Christian circles, much ink has been spilled on "finding God's will for your life." And yet, much of God's will for each of us has been revealed to us. Try to jot down 10 things that God wants for your life.

- What is missing from this list? (Try to jot down 5 more things.)

- And yet, again, there is mystery around God's will. What aspects of God's will for you do you feel like you still have uncertainty in?

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

The will of God has been parsed theologically for over two thousand years. Some theologians refer to the *decretive* will of God (what God ordains will come to pass), the *preceptive* will of God (what God commands should be obeyed), and the *permissive* will of God (what God mysteriously allows in the grand scheme of things). These categories are helpful and constructive while not being completely neat and tidy. Still, we know a lot more about God's will than we think we do. Again, the *Word of God* cultivates our understanding of the *Wisdom of God* which brings us closer to clarity on the *Will of God*.

- Look back at your journal from yesterday. Of the 10 to 15 revealed aspects of God's will for your life, how many of them involve curated and cultivated habits, practices, or disciplines that you engage regularly? Which ones?
- If habits become practices become patterns become rhythms, how might you develop deeper rhythms by starting with a few practices? What are they?
- Annie Dillard once wrote, "How we spend our days is how we spend our lives." What two or three practices each day (for good or ill) have begun to shape your life? How might you mitigate them (the "bad" one) or maximize them (the "good" ones)? Perhaps some practices are not "bad," but simply demand too much attention. What might those be?
- Habit Stacking- What habits do you already have that might become opportunities for "habit stacking," for placing a couple of habits together? (ex. Brushing your teeth, driving the work, cleaning the dishes, walking the dog, folding laundry). What might you add to those pre-existing habits? (ex. Praying while brushing your teeth, listening to Scripture while community, praying for neighbors while walking the dog, praying for specific needs of others while folding laundry).

Community Group Conversation Guide

Introduction:

- Read this week's Proverbs two times through.
- Pray: Ask God to illumine your heart and prepare your mind for discussion.

Questions for Exploration:

- What stands out to you / disrupts you / grabs your attention in the Scripture? (Everyone who would like to, share. Please take less than 1 minute per person to share as this section is intended to be brief.)
- How is God's Word connecting to your life / your work / your neighbors in this moment? (Read this question and then read the Scripture passage again for a third time. Take a moment to ponder the passage. Then, take 1 minute each to share.)
- Have each participant share some observations from their journal. What did the journaling reveal about your life?

Questions for Discernment:

- What themes are arising for the group? How might the Holy Spirit be raising something to your collective awareness?
- In light of this week's passage and theme, what action or spiritual practice is God calling you to that you can commit to individually or collectively this week?
- Pray for the person on your right.

Notes

Post-Pandemic: Family

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The Family of God is our first family.

Family

¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

-Proverbs 15:1

¹⁷ Better a small serving of vegetables with love
than a fattened calf with hatred.

-Proverbs 15:17

¹⁹ A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city;
disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.

-Proverbs 18:19

Wisdom For Parents

¹³ Whoever spares the rod hates their children,
but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

-Proverbs 13:24

⁶ Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

-Proverbs 22:6

Blessing Our Children

25 May your father and mother rejoice;
may she who gave you birth be joyful!

-Proverbs 23:25

22 "The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old.

-Proverbs 8:22

Men and Women

16 A kindhearted woman gains honor,
but ruthless men gain only wealth.

-Proverbs 11:16

22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

-Proverbs 11:22

22 He who finds a wife finds what is good
and receives favor from the Lord.

-Proverbs 18:22

10 A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.

-Proverbs 31:10

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

-Proverbs 31:30

Commending Wisdom to our Children

¹ 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.

-Proverbs 2:1-5

¹⁵ My son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths.

-Proverbs 1:15

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.

-Proverbs 4:20

⁴ The father of a righteous child has great joy;
a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him.

-Proverbs 23:4

Personal Journal

The word, family, originates from the Latin word, famulus, which means “servant.” This word found its way into English around the 15th or 16th century and became associated with the “household.” The household, in that era, as well as in Bible times, was not the “nuclear family,” as we might conceive it today, but instead, was a larger structure including multi-generational families, friends, servants, and employees. It is important to begin here because Scripture’s references about the household of God and the family of God are too numerous to count, and when we come across them, it is helpful to have these larger family dynamics in mind. When we are “adopted” into the family of God (Galatians 4 and other places), we are adopted into a family of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, friends and co-workers. The family of God is multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and multicultural. In the church, sometimes it is easy to feel left out of the “family of God” when all the talk about family is about the nuclear family: marriage and parenting. While these Proverbs do center on these topics, I hope that you will experience this week on “family” as much broader and more all-encompassing. As Jesus said, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:48-50).

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

The church would be great if it were not for all of the people in my church! My family would be wonderful if it were not for all of the members of my family! Today, focus on the first three Proverbs (15:1, 15:17, 18:19) as commendations for how to live as a member in the Family of God, our church (WCPC).

- **When did you deliver a harsh word that stirred up anger? What did you say? How was it received?**

- **When did you receive a harsh word that stirred up anger within you? How did you respond?**

- **When have you witnessed a gentle answer turning away wrath? What was that experienced like?**

- **Describe how hatred for another person has eaten you alive on the inside? Have you done anything to address this?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

Marriage is a wonderful thing. God blessed marriage. Jesus celebrated marriage. The Holy Spirit conjoins flesh in marriage. And yet, in the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no marriage. Jesus said that! The beauty, intimacy, love, fidelity, and companionship exhibited by marriage as a mirror to the world of God's covenant relationship to us will no longer be necessary. We will be so at one with God and with one another that marriage won't even be an afterthought. In a sexualized culture and in a time when the church can be a bit marriage-centered and family-focused, it is necessary to adjust our vantage point.

- If you are single, how have you experienced the church being a true family for you? How has the church failed in this regard? How can you help us be more helpful?

- If you are widowed, how have you experienced the church being a true family for you? How has the church failed in this regard? How can you help us be more helpful?

- If you are divorced, how have you experienced the church being a true family for you? How has the church failed in this regard? How can you help us be more helpful?

- If you are married, how can your marriage become a generative, safe-haven for others in our congregation who may not be married?

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

Did you know that your family has “family values”? Whether or not your children are two and four or twelve and fourteen, when they are thirty-two and thirty-four they will talk to their friends, neighbors, their therapist, and their children about the family values endowed by you. The Proverbs can be for us a trellis to train our “values vines.”

- What blessing are you bestowing upon your children?
- If your child were asked to share a “family motto” what might they say?
- What character qualities do you hope your children will grow up to possess? How are you leading them toward these qualities on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis?
- If you don’t have children, how might you think about yourself as an aunt or uncle via our children’s ministry? What role might you play?

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

Proverbs 13:24 and 22:6 are two of the most misunderstood. The first one has been used to espouse corporal punishment or spanking. Here is not the place to take up the to spank-or-not-to-spank argument. I would simply suggest that this proverb is more about a principle than a practice. Good parents aren't too strict or too permissive. Instead, they are both firm and warm. Applying the right combination of firmness and warmth allows a child to experience his or her parents as loving and kind as opposed to authoritarian (firm with no warmth), indulgent (warm with no firmness), or absent (not much of either). Proverbs 22:6 is often misunderstood as a Math-Problem-for-Parenting: Put in all the right stuff and your kid is destined to turn out just right. Proverbs are proverbs because they are generally true--they are rules of thumb. The point is to be thoughtful and prayerful when it comes to parenting. You are wholly reliant upon the grace of God as you raise your children and you are wholly responsible to endeavor to raise them well.

- Were your parents too strict, too permissive, or just about right? How has that shaped you? If you are a parent, how has that shaped your parenting?
- Do you have a child who "didn't turn out as you thought they should"? What does that do to you as a person? Do you have regrets? Guilt or Shame? What would it look like to take responsibility for what you should but not for what you shouldn't? Have you ever taken those emotions to God? To a therapist? Should you?
- If you are an older (and wiser) parishioner at WCPC, how might you be a blessing to some young parents?

Friday

April 23, 2021

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

For today's journal entry, write a prayer thanking God for what it means to you to be a son or daughter in the Family of God.

Community Group Conversation Guide

Introduction:

- **Answer the question: How did the practice or collective action committed to last week draw you closer to Jesus and more deeply into His mission?**
- **Read this week's Proverbs two times through.**
- **Pray: Ask God to illumine your heart and prepare your mind for discussion.**

Questions for Exploration:

- **What stands out to you / disrupts you / grabs your attention in the Scripture? (Everyone who would like to, share. Please take less than 1 minute per person to share as this section is intended to be brief.)**
- **How is God's Word connecting to your life / your work / your neighbors in this moment? (Read this question and then read the Scripture passage again for a third time. Take a moment to ponder the passage. Then, take 1 minute each to share.)**
- **Have each participant share some observations from their journal. What did the journaling reveal about your life?**

Questions for Discernment:

- **What themes are arising for the group? How might the Holy Spirit be raising something to your collective awareness?**
- **In light of this week's passage and theme, what action or spiritual practice is God calling you to that you can commit to individually or collectively this week?**
- **Pray for the person on your right.**

Post-Pandemic: Friendships

BIG Finding friends that lift, lower, and
IDEA love you.

¹³ A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

-Proverbs 11:13

²⁰ Walk with the wise and become wise,
for a companion of fools suffers harm.

-Proverbs 13:20

¹⁷ A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

-Proverbs 17:17

²⁴ One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

-Proverbs 18:24

⁶ Do not eat the food of a begrudging host,
do not crave his delicacies;

⁷ for he is the kind of person
who is always thinking about the cost.

“Eat and drink,” he says to you,
but his heart is not with you.

-Proverbs 23:6,7

**17 As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.**

-Proverbs 27:17

**13 Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper,
but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.**

-Proverbs 28:13

Personal Journal

Sometimes we use the word relationship because it is more generic than friendship. Friendship implies a bond. It comes at the cost of time and resources. Some friendships come more naturally than others. And yet, every abiding friendship involves intentionality. And the best friends we can have, according to these Proverbs, will lift, lower, and love us. When we struggle and suffer, our best friends are there to lift us out of the mud and muck; this usually also involves sitting with us in the mud and the muck. When we conceive of ourselves as “all that,” as “too big for our britches,” our best friends are there to lower us back to reality. They’ve seen us at our worst. They know our embarrassing moments. They can tell stories of our past that others may not know. These best friends don’t use any of this against us, but they do remind us that life is not a story in which we are always the main character. And when we come and go, rise and fall, cry, and laugh, our best friends are always there to love us well.

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

- **Read Proverbs 13:20 and 18:24. Do you have friends who are dragging you down?**

- **What do they cause you to do or to feel? How is this detrimental to your health and well-being?**

- **What would it look like if you were to cut them out of your life or challenge them to be more of what they could and should be?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

Most everyone wants a mentor. A few people want to be mentors for others. And yet, few of us have mentors, and fewer of us are mentors. Mentoring (Discipling) is an important aspect of friendship. Let's think about that today.

- **Don't ask someone to mentor you. It is too overwhelming a prospect for most people. It is also probably ill-defined in your mind. Instead, write down three people that you respect. Perhaps they are in your three concentric circles. Reach out to each of them with this overture: "You know I admire you. Can I take you to lunch and ask you three questions?" At the end of the lunch, ask: "Could I take you to lunch again in a few weeks and ask you some follow-up questions?" All of a sudden you have a mentor!**

- **Why do you admire the three people you wrote down? (How might they be good mentors for you?)**

- **What three questions would you ask?**

- **Would you consider doing this for someone else who might admire you? Who might that be? How might you reach out to them?**

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Post-Pandemic: Flourishing

BIG God truly wants you to flourish in
IDEA mind, body, and soul.

23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.

-Proverbs 4:23

12 There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

-Proverbs 14:12

22 A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

-Proverbs 17:22

1 A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

-Proverbs 22:1

19 Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain;
it takes away the life of those who get it.

-Proverbs 1:19

8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

-Proverbs 31:8

Personal Journal

Over the years I have sat across the table from many different people who want to talk about their “job” or “occupation.” I take the opportunity to pull out a pen and on the napkin that should be in my lap I write the word, vocation. This word, vocation, from the Latin, *vocare*, means calling. And to have a calling is to have a caller. God has called each one of us to a specific, unique calling. Under the word, vocation, I draw five overlapping circles and label them: Church, Family/Friendships, Career, Finances, and Leisure/Hobby. Our vocation, our calling, encompasses all five of these spheres. Over the last three weeks, we took up the first two (church, family/friendships). This week, we will briefly explore the last three (career, finances, leisure/hobby).

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

As you consider the following questions regarding your career and/or current job, be mindful of Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."

- **Does your career or job cause you to compromise integrity, leading to spiritual death? Do you have the agency to change this compromising position, or, should you find a new job?**

- **Do you overwork regularly? How is this leading you and your family to spiritual death? What would it look like to take a Sabbath? To work a "normal" workweek? Do you have the agency to make this happen, or, should you find a new job?**

- **If you oversee others at work, are you leading them to spiritual death? Are you too demanding or exacting? Do you overwork them or ask them to cut corners? OR, do they feel humanized as they report to you? Do they feel called to become better people?**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

As you consider the following questions regarding your finances, be mindful of Proverbs 22:1, 1:19, and 31:8.

- **Read Proverbs 22:1. If someone explored your checkbook, would they find that your expenditures pointed to your “good name”? If so, how so? If not, why not?**

- **Read Proverbs 1:19. When you think about how you’ve acquired your income and accumulated your wealth, would it seem to a Christian financial advisor that you had gone after ill-gotten gain? If not, praise God for the life financial integrity is bringing to you and those around you. If so, how is it robbing you of life and vitality? How might you clean up the mess and move forward with integrity?**

- **Read Proverbs 31:8. Do you use your money to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves? Do your finances fight for the rights of the destitute? The church should leverage her resources to help the spiritually, morally, physically, emotionally, and relationally destitute. Do you give extravagantly to the work of the church? If your friends at church knew what you gave to support this Good News ministry, would they give you a high five or a thumbs down? How might your giving begin to shift moving forward? (Remember, you can’t run a marathon tomorrow, but you could in three months! You can’t change your giving patterns tomorrow, but you can incrementally and intentionally over several months and years!)**

Read the Proverbs for the week. Ask God to open your heart.

As you consider the following questions regarding your leisure time and hobbies, be mindful of Proverbs 4:23 and 17:22.

- **“A crushed spirit can dry up our bones, but a cheerful heart is good medicine.” Have you found a life-giving hobby? What is it? What do you love about it? If not, what might you take up that will be good medicine for your weary bones? (It is never too late to try something new.)**

- **We are called to “guard our heart because everything we do flows from it.” Our heart, in Hebrew understanding, is the deepest seat of who we are. The flow of the heart goes in both directions. It flows outward to all we do, but all we do also flows inward and into the heart. Our hobbies and leisure time can protect and nourish our heart or they can damage and calcify our heart. Write out the four or five things you spend most of your spare time doing. Beside each one, write a “+” if it nourishes your heart or a “-” if it damages. And some activities might have the potential to do both. How might you train your leisure time and your hobbies toward nourishment rather than detriment?**

Community Group Conversation Guide

Introduction:

- **Answer the question: How did the practice or collective action committed to last week draw you closer to Jesus and more deeply into His mission?**
- **Read this week's Proverbs two times through.**
- **Pray: Ask God to illumine your heart and prepare your mind for discussion.**

Questions for Exploration:

- **What stands out to you / disrupts you / grabs your attention in the Scripture? (Everyone who would like to, share. Please take less than 1 minute per person to share as this section is intended to be brief.)**
- **How is God's Word connecting to your life / your work / your neighbors in this moment? (Read this question and then read the Scripture passage again for a third time. Take a moment to ponder the passage. Then, take 1 minute each to share.)**
- **Have each participant share some observations from their journal. What did the journaling reveal about your life?**

Questions for Discernment:

- **What themes are arising for the group? How might the Holy Spirit be raising something to your collective awareness?**
- **In light of this week's passage and theme, what action or spiritual practice is God calling you to that you can commit to individually or collectively this week?**
- **Pray for the person on your right.**

After months of Shelter in Place, a post-pandemic world beckons us outward. As we tiptoe back into normalcy, I fear snapping back to normal so quickly that I'll return to a life where my *faith* is mere accessory, my *family* gathers only long enough for fast-food inhalation between sports fields, my *friendships* are scattered and unintentional, and my sense of *flourishing* only extends as far as fun, hobby, and leisure will take me. Before I become over-extended and thereby under-committed I need to push the reset button. And I am inviting you to join me...

- Pastor Bart

