

## Questions for Group Study

### Based on Lessons 4–6

*Our only agenda is Jesus!*

#### WELCOME

- Openers (choose 1 or 2): 1. Share a time when you acted foolishly. 2. What plans have you made that the Lord has changed? 3. What is God doing in your life right now?

#### WORSHIP

- Choose some combination of: prayer, Psalms, responsive reading, singing, short devotional thought, guided prayer / meditation, etc.
- Spend some time praying for each other's specific hurts & needs

#### WORD

*In this section, each group is invited to bring in relevant cross-references from Scripture. To "dig deeper," any verse can be further contemplated using these questions: 1) What does it say? 2) What did it mean in the historical context? 3) How should it be applied today (in my/our life)?*

1. Read Ephesians 5:15-17
2. What kinds of things constitute unwise or foolish living?
3. What does it mean to make the most of your time?
4. Do you understand what the will of the Lord is?
5. Read Hebrews 11:8
6. Discuss what Abraham must have felt, being called to up and move to a place of the Lord's choosing.
7. What do you think it was like living in a foreign land? (being an alien)
8. How does the story of Abraham end? How does God bless him?
9. Does that help you trust God more for your future? Our Savior's?
10. Read James 4:14
11. What plans have you had fall apart?
12. Can you tell the future? Can the Lord? Who should you trust?
13. Why is it good to live under and in obedience to the Lord's will?
14. Do you know, understand and do the Lord's will for your life?
15. What might need to change to help that happen?

#### WORK

1. Pray for the Strategic Ministry Planning process...
- That obstacles to participation be removed
- That we would be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout this process
- That we would submit and surrender all that we have and all that we are to God's will for us

## Week 3 — January 21-27

### Lesson 7 — Seek Much Counsel

Read: Proverbs 15:22

Even in our simple, everyday human life, we recognize that it can often be quite foolish to jump into a project or task without having received ample advice. This applies to anything we do, even if we don't always recognize it. We have all received much counsel from our Parents, from school, from friends, from co-workers, even from other sources. Whether it's looking at a recipe when baking a cake or remembering how dad used to work the fields, the vast majority of time we rely on knowledge and expertise which we have received from others.

When it comes to doing work in God's Church, likewise, we are to receive advice and counsel from many, many others. We don't just jump off into the darkness and do as we think best when it comes to Church. Rather, we seek to walk in God's Light. Solomon here in Proverbs isn't just talking about going up to the fella next to you and asking, "So what should we do?" He's talking about prayer. He's talking about searching the Scriptures to learn and know what is good and pleasing in God's Sight.

I'm sure we would find it strange if someone simply stood up, without any training or Seminary coursework, and said, "I'm going to be the new pastor here!" We expect that training, that study from our pastors. Likewise, every Christian is to be trained well in God's Word, to constantly receive His counsel — starting with Sunday School and Confirmation and then continuing on through Preaching and Bible Studies all throughout our lives. This is how we get the wisdom and council to act with confidence — by the guidance of God.

**Prayer:** *Merciful Heavenly Father, stir up in us the desire to constantly learn Your counsel and seek Your wisdom to guide our actions. Keep us steadfast in Your Word, that in all our decision making we might not simply act on our own ideas or whims, but rather might gladly and willingly be Your instruments in doing Your Will. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*

**Lesson 8 — Everyone Should Serve**

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11

One of the worst, worst things we can do as Christians, is start ranking how important people are in the Church. Person X does this and this and this, they are SO important. Compared to who? Whenever we give an individual glory for what they do in God's Church, we completely miss the point.

Our value and worth is not determined by what we do. What do we do? We sin, and that's not a good way to determine worth. Rather, our worth is determined by what Christ Jesus has done. Upon each of us, Christ Jesus has lavished love beyond our ability to comprehend. How do we know our value? We look at the Cross and say, "Jesus did this for me." That's our value.

And this also explains how we are to approach our work in the Church. The God who has redeemed us in Christ also sanctifies us, gives us holy lives to lead. Each of us is given a different task by God, and thus we don't worry or compare ourselves to others and what task God has given them, but rather we seek to learn and understand how God is using us. We don't have to worry about proving ourselves valuable — Christ has done that already. Instead, we simply gladly do the tasks that God has given us to God's Glory and God's Plan.

**Prayer:** *Gracious Father, break and beat down our pride in our actions and our jealousy of others, and rather build up in us a true appreciation of the love that you lavish upon us in Your Son, Christ Jesus. Give us Your guidance, so that with joy we might live our lives according to Your Will and Your Plan in all things. In the Name of Christ Jesus, our Lord, Amen.*

**Lesson 9 — Peace, Calling, then Equipping**

Read: John 20:19-23

The disciples were quivering in fear the evening of Easter, simply waiting for the other shoe to drop. Jesus had been killed, and they were His chief disciples. They couldn't fade into the woodwork — they were known, and surely they would be next to get crosses of their own.

And Jesus appears to them, and Jesus is planning to put them to work. These are the Apostles, the ones who Jesus will send out to be the first pastors and missionaries in His Church. Jesus has great plans for them — but note one thing. Jesus doesn't just start chattering about His plan right away. The first thing Jesus does is announce His peace — in fact, He has to do it twice! Only then, when the disciples understand, when they are calmed, does Jesus give them their call and give them the Spirit, equip them for their task.

This is informative for us. The chief thing that happens at Church aren't any Planning sessions, aren't any committee meetings. The chief thing that happens in God's House is the proclamation of God's Word and the administration of His Sacraments — God is still worried about making sure His peace is known among us. Then, and only then, when we understand the salvation that He has given us, are we prepared for our vocations, our tasks. It is hearing that Word of peace which prepares us and equips us for the tasks which we do. This is how God handled the Apostles, this is how He handles us in this congregation. Thanks be to God that He always shows us His Peace.

**Prayer:** *Gracious Lord, always keep before our eyes the Peace that surpasses our understanding, that in all things that we do we might act remembering Christ Jesus' love for us. Inspire us by Your Word that we might have the strength to go and perform the tasks you have set before us, so that with Your calm and peace we might accomplish Your Plans. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.*