

EQUIP NIGHT

“GENTLE & LOWLY/WISDOM PYRAMID”

Tuesday Sept 23, 2021 | 6:30pm-8:30pm

College Park Church

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DEVOTION: Gentle & Lowly

Where is the only place in the Gospels that Jesus tells us his “heart”?

Matt. 11:28-30--Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- **“gentle”**: “Meek. Humble. Gentle. Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated. He is the most understanding person in the universe. The posture most natural to him is not a pointed finger but open arms” (Dane Ortlund, *Gentle And Lowly*, p.19).
- **“lowly”**: “The point in saying that Jesus is lowly is that he is accessible. For all his resplendent glory...no one in human history has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ. ... The minimum bar to be enfolded into the embrace of Jesus is simply: open yourself up to him” (p.20).

A pastor once noted to me the “4 Greats” in Matthew:

GREAT COMMANDMENT: “Love...God...neighbor” (Matt 22:36-40)

GREAT COMMISSION: “Go...make disciples” (Matt. 28:18-20)

GREAT JUDGMENT: “sheep...goats” (Matt. 25:31-46)

But we can’t fulfill the GREAT COMMANDMENT or the GREAT COMMISSION, without the “GREAT INVITATION”: “Come to me...” (Matt 11.). Jesus gives us a “yoke” that is light—and ironically gives us “rest”!

DISCUSSION:

Let's spend 15 min at our table applying this verse to where we are at and where our groups are at.

- What word/phrase in Matt. 11:28-30 do you most need to year tonight? Why?
- What does your group need to hear? Why?

LESSON: WISDOM PYRAMID

What words would you use to describe our culture right now (incl Christians)? Probably not: **"Wise"**!

Why not!? We have more information than ever before at our fingertips? Why is this not translating into making us wise? Brett McCracken pulls out an old image: of the 1990s Food Pyramid. And argues that it's because we have our "information eating habits" way out of whack that we're not growing wiser.

He offers this picture: A **Wisdom Pyramid**—for Christians to build a life of intake that should lead them to wisdom.

But let's start at the current reality of what we all feel. What are the 3 Habits that are Making Us Sick? (He intros these in his Introduction, and he also has a chapter diving into each of them.)

1. Eating Too Much

"In the competitive landscape of the digital age, the 'food' of information is not getting more nutritious; it's veering in the direction of junk food. Doritos and Skittles will always get more clicks than spinach. And so we walk down the buffet line of social media snacks and online junk food, daily gorging ourselves to the point of gluttony. Unsurprisingly, it is making us sick." (p.19)

2. Eating Too Fast

"Whether in hot-take clickbait or well-timed Twitter threads, fortune favors the fast on the Internet. It doesn't favor wisdom. Such a pace has no time for critical thinking." (p.19)

Another problem: "Over time our skepticism about all sources leads us to turn inward, trusting only in ourselves—which brings us to our third major bad dietary habit." (p.20)

3. Eating Only What Tastes Good to Me

“If we only ever ate our favorite foods, most of us would be sick or dead. ... So it is with our information diet. We might be tempted to consume only material we like and have a taste for...

The Internet is built around *you*. Google search; social media algorithms; recommendations from Siri, Alexa, Netflix, and Spotify; ... all of it is tailored to *you*.”

Problems:

(1) “First, when everything revolves around you and your tastes, it’s only going to be awesome if you know exactly what’s good for you. And we usually don’t.”

(2) “The second problem is that when every individual is living a totally unique, customized, perfectly curated ‘i’ life, it is harder to find commonality with others. We start losing the ability to be empathetic...” (p.19-20)

So, what’s the solution? Stop using the Internet? No. But we do need to drastically reorder our intake if we are going to grow in wisdom.

Here’s the “Wisdom Pyramid” in detail:

1. THE BIBLE

I was struck this past week with the verse *right before* our “gentle & lowly” verse.

Matt. 11:27

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

And I was struck. “NO ONE knows the Father. NO ONE!” Except the “Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him!”

I had to pray “Thank you Jesus for choosing to reveal the Father to me!

God is ever-ready to speak to us: How much of his words are we listening to? How often? How deeply?

And—for us and those in our group: Are we letting Scripture define our paradigm (and not the other way around): It sets the terms, the definitions, the way the world works, what our hope is in. Not us.

>What habits or rhythms have worked for you in making Scripture more central in your day-to-day life?

2. THE CHURCH

Are Christians and church people just too difficult to deal with?
Can't I just focus on the individualism of my faith?

“The church, the *people* of God, is second only to the Bible, the *word* of God, as a source of reliable and transformative wisdom.” (p.88)

Why?

Wisdom of... (Ch.5)

1. Community > Individualistic
2. God-centered Rhythms > Me-Centered
3. Limitations > Limitless
4. Embodied Community > Ethereal
5. Continuity > Constantly Changing

>How would you respond to a group member who said, “If I have my Bible, why do I also need the church?”

3. NATURE

“Nature reminds us there is a world bigger than the one we’ve made.” (p.101)

“Scripture itself tells us that wisdom can be found in God’s creation[!]” (p.102)

Prov. 8:27—Wisdom says: “When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep”

Prov. 6:6—“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.”

Ps. 19:1—“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above^[a] proclaims his handiwork.”

Luke 12:27—“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,^[a] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

And this includes Humans as a part of Nature too!:

Ps. 139:14—“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

“But even when nature is ugly, the beauty of God’s power and the promise of renewal are on display. The charred ground of burnt forests creates nutrient-rich soil, ready for rebirth. The pruning of dead branches and shedding of dead leaves prepares the way for new buds of life. Throughout nature these cycles declare the glory of a death-conquering Savior who makes all things new.” (p.107)

Nature points us to a bigger world, a bigger God, and a bigger rhythm—all of which we have to (and get to) submit to. That is a source of wisdom we need.

>When was a moment when something in nature illuminated an aspect of God or theology to you?

4. BOOKS

Prov. 25:2—“It is the glory of God to conceal things,
but the glory of kings is to search things out.”

“[B]ooks are vital in cultivating wisdom—not only for the truths they contain, but also for the way they help us *think*. In our distracted age, books give us perspective, focus, and space to reflect. Reading books—a wide variety, from different eras and places and worldviews, both fiction and nonfiction—keeps our anachronism and self-centeredness in check. They educate us, help us make connections across disciplines, and open up the world.” (p.117)

Do they help us address the 3 “eating habits” we mentioned at the beginning?
You bet they do!

1. TOO MUCH: “Books confront the ‘too much information’ problem by focusing our attention on one thing for a longer, deeper time.”
2. TOO FAST: “They confront the ‘too fast’ problem by forcing us to sit with one writer’s perspective for long enough to really grapple with it.”
3. TOO FOCUSED ON ME: “Books challenge the ‘too focused on me’ problem by putting us in another’s shoes.” (p.122)

These things are especially true when we read “old books”—They help keep us away from what C.S. Lewis called “chronological snobbery”—thinking the concerns of our time are the most important.

>How do you choose the books you read? How might you be more intentional about choosing books that are conducive to gaining wisdom?

5: BEAUTY

“Wisdom is more than just what we know in our heads; it also involves our bodies, senses, emotions. Beauty works on these levels. It engages and stirs our hearts. It reveals truth on the *affective*, often subconscious level. It forms our *loves*.” (p.132)

“Like other forms of beauty, music can help us *feel* something like eternity in ways the mind struggles to grasp.
Beauty gives truth a feeling, tone, and resonance.” (p.132)

“I love the moment right at the end of some beautiful display, when the audience is—for a brief moment—dumbstruck and silent.” (p.138)

Can you think of a moment like that.

Pause and remember it for a moment.

Was it at the moment the last bowstring went silent at the end of an orchestra performance?

Was it when the screen went dark at a film that deeply touched you?

Was it when you stopped in your tracks in front of an art piece that was much more than oil on canvas?

We could likely all share about a silence moment.

But:

“In today’s over-mediated age it’s possible to fill every spare moment with little flashes of beauty, but this only serve to eradicate the crucial component for gaining *wisdom* from the beauty we encounter—silence.” (p.138)

>What role does our heart and emotion play in wisdom? And what’s one way that we should allow beauty to shape those parts of us?

6. THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We've made it to the top of the Pyramid! But the top in this case doesn't mean "best"! It means least-important, and a "use sparingly" part of our wisdom diet.

Yes—There are ways that the Internet and Social Media actually benefit wisdom. And Brett McCracken discusses these—Particularly our "Access" to information, the "Platform" allowed to typically underrepresented voices, and the power of "Consensus" from reviews to help us vet what's a good selection (Ch. 9).

However, we need to develop some really important habits when it comes to our Internet use. Otherwise, our Pyramid will be upside-down, and we'll overwhelm our healthy sources with junk.

Brett McCracken offers 5 Habits, but I'm just going to mention 3 of them tonight:

1. GO WITH A PURPOSE. DON'T JUST "SURF"!

"The digital wanderer is asking for trouble. Don't go online without a plan. Go with a purpose, and stay online only as long as you need to." (p.151)

*See *Digital Minimalism* by Cal Newport:

"[A] philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value, and then happily miss out on everything else." (p.151, Newport, 29)

2. QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

How do we select what to read, watch or listen to online?

- Listen to the recommendations of trusted people in your life
- "[W]ait a bit and read the (usually better) cold takes." (p.152)
- Be happy to miss out on most of it

3. DIVERSIFY YOUR EXPOSURE

"Challenge yourself by actually giving attention to well-articulated versions of the 'other side' of arguments. ... Try to populate your social media feeds with sources representing a variety of perspectives... Take advantage of the Internet's platforming of voices you might not otherwise have opportunities to hear. One way to love your digital neighbors is to listen to them..." (p.153)

DISCUSSION:

1. Which section of the Wisdom Pyramid do you need more of? Why? Less of? Why?
2. Which section of the Wisdom Pyramid do your group members need more of? Why? Less of? Why?
3. What is 1 action you're going to take from tonight to begin addressing your/your group's practice of the Wisdom Pyramid?