

Faith Formation Resource - Week of 7/26

Note: There is no Children's Church resource this summer. Instead, you are invited to check out our summer storytimes on Youtube!

Based on the results of our survey of families, we are experimenting with the Faith Formation resource - gearing it to better serve teens and adults, rather than young children. Please continue to let us know what you think!

The daily readings in the lectionary this week tell of the cleverness of Jacob and the wisdom of Solomon. So this week's Faith Formation Resource is about wisdom!

Something to read:

"Rabbit's clever," said Pooh thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit's clever."

"And he has Brain."

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit has Brain."

There was a long silence.

"I suppose," said Pooh, "that that's why he never understands anything."

— A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*

One of the most entertaining explanations I've read about the difference between cleverness and wisdom comes from Benjamin Hoff's book, *The Tao of Pooh*, in the chapter about Rabbit, "Bisy Backson." You can access a pdf of the book here. (Rabbit's chapter starts on page 91.)

<https://biggsrbr.weebly.com/uploads/8/7/4/4/8744974/the-tao-of-pooh-by-benjamin-hoff1.pdf>

You will find books of cleverness and books of wisdom in the Bible. Need a little cleverness? Try Proverbs, full of little sayings ready for quoting or hanging on the wall. Proverbs has lots of clever answers. Need wisdom? Try Ecclesiastes or Job - not a lot of answers in these books, but many wise questions.

Something to watch:

A two-part set of videos about the book of Proverbs and its probable Egyptian predecessor, The Instruction of Amenemope.

Part One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7YHOCZqV2E>

Part Two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzRGFzw9tcM>

A six-minute explanation of the book of Ecclesiastes, from the Bible Project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeUiuSK81-0>

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Something to listen to:

The Byrds' "Turn, Turn, Turn" - one of the most famous musical settings of a wisdom text - in this case, from Ecclesiastes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ga_M5Zdn4

For those who prefer classical music, here's Ralph Vaughn Williams' music for the ballet Job, A Masque for Dancing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlGjFynWFUw>

Something to do:

Folks have been embroidering proverbs on samplers for at least a couple centuries. If you're handy with a needle, here's a site with a lot of patterns for verses, or you can custom order the proverb of your choice: <https://www.joyfulexpressions.us/HTML/BibleVerses.html>

Not sewing-friendly? How about coloring a proverb instead?

<https://www.amazon.com/Color-Proverbs-Adult-Coloring-Bible/dp/0736968555>

<https://www.amazon.com/Adult-Coloring-Book-Proverbs-Inspiration/dp/1543177050>

Something to pray:

A very wise prayer from Teresa of Avila, about growing older:

Lord, You know better than I myself
that I am growing older and will someday be old.
Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking
I must say something on every subject and on
every occasion.

Release me from craving to
straighten out everybody's affairs.
Make me thoughtful but not moody;
helpful but not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom,
it seems a pity not to use it all;
but You know, Lord,
that I want a few friends at the end.
Keep my mind free
from the recital of endless details;
give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips on my aches and pains;
they are increasing, and love of rehearsing them
is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

I dare not ask for improved memory,
but for a growing humility and a lessening
cock-sureness
when my memory seems to clash with the
memories of others.
Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I
may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet, for a sour old person
is one of the crowning works of the devil.
Give me the ability to see good things in
unexpected places
and talents in unexpected people;
and give, O Lord, the grace to tell them so. **Amen.**

A prayer practice to try: The Daily Devotional!

Need a little daily wisdom, or a structure to your prayer practice that makes you come back every day? (We all need a nudge sometimes...) Daily Devotionals are a way to get a steady supply of wisdom and spirituality, broken down into manageable daily chunks.

There are SO many devotionals to choose from, and they range all over the theological and spiritual spectrum. There are books, there are apps, there are podcasts - you can pick your delivery device. And you can do a devotional for a certain season - either the ones in the calendar or the ones in the liturgy - or a certain theme, like creation care or community organizing.

Here are just a few of the hundreds of devotionals that are available:

The UCC will send a devotional to your email box every morning - sign up here:

https://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional_sign_up

The UCC also has a book of devotions specifically written for the social justice worker:

<https://www.thepilgrimpress.com/products/rise-up-spirituality-for-resistance>

d365 is a popular free devotional for teens - also available as an app: <https://d365.org/>

This book got in this list on the strength of its title alone: *I Pray Anyway: Devotions for the Ambivalent*: <https://www.amazon.com/I-Pray-Anyway-Devotions-Ambivalent/dp/0986338605>
(I promise I read farther than the title - it's quite good...)

Have a favorite spiritual writer? Google their name and "devotional" and books will appear.

Here's one of the works of Teresa of Avila, author of the prayer for this week:

<https://www.amazon.com/Little-Daily-Wisdom-Teresa-Avila/dp/1557256977>

And of course, devotionals are not just something Christians do. My favorite devotional - falling apart from years of use - is by writer Katrina Kenison and Yoga teacher Rolf Gates. The wisdom readings come from the *Tao te Ching*, the Yoga Sutras, Sir Francis Bacon, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, etc. Wisdom, after all, can be found almost anywhere you choose to look!

<https://www.amazon.com/Meditations-Mat-Daily-Reflections-Path/dp/0385721544>