

June 4th, 2006
“Continuing Education”
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Proverbs 2:1-8

2My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you, 2making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; 4if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures— 5then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. 6For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly, 8guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones.

This morning, as we celebrate our graduates, and all of the ways in which God has gifted them I want to share just briefly some thoughts on a very important part of our Christian life – that is, our call to continue our education’s throughout life. The words read just a couple of minutes ago from the book of Proverbs are words that call us all as Christians to take seriously the need to be lifelong learners. Hear again the calls that exist within these words – we are to make our ears attentive to wisdom, to incline our hearts to understanding, to cry out for insight, to raise our voices for understanding, to seek wisdom like it is silver, and to search for understanding. We are called by God to seek wisdom and understanding today and when we do this we can begin to understand the knowledge of God.

This morning as we talk about our calling as Christians to be lifelong learners, we also need to keep in mind that today is not just Graduation Sunday in our church calendar. Today, with Christians around the world, we celebrate Pentecost, the Christian holiday that commemorates God’s gift of the Holy Spirit to the early followers of Christ

who were beginning to come together and set the ground work for what we know of today as the church. Both of these things then are very important today – Graduation Sunday and Pentecost – because our calling as Christians to be lifelong learners is intricately connected to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To The Graduates: In the coming months and years your horizons will be expanded in ways you can't even imagine! You will be trained to ask questions and to develop your critical thinking skills as you look at and learn about the world around you. This will be encouraged in classroom settings by the lectures the professors offer, by the readings that are assigned, and by the group projects that are required. These critical thinking skills will also be encouraged out of class as you find creative ways to problem solve those big questions that all college students face. What do you do when you are out of clean underwear and are craving taco bell and have just a few dollars left until pay day?

Through both the in classroom and out of classroom experiences that you have, you will be encouraged to use your brains and to think critically about the world around you. And this is a good thing! Education and knowledge of the world that surrounds us are vitally important. In fact, the abilities to think and reason and critique are gifts from God, gifts that can be aided and assisted by the Holy Spirit working in our lives. However, many Christians in the world today are not engaging these gifts with our lives of faith.

The biggest problem is that these skills of critical thinking and reasoning are rarely encouraged within the church and are in fact, often discouraged. It is as if we are afraid to apply our skills for critical thinking to our faith lives. Often within Christianity

people aren't given the space to wrestle with God and to ask questions. They are encouraged to ask questions and wrestle with the way things are in every other aspect of their lives, and then just told to accept and believe and have faith when it comes to matters of religion.

Now, when people begin to think critically about the world around them, but feel as if they are not allowed to engage their brains with their faith or to ask any questions at all, what is it that you think typically happens? All too often young adults turn away from their faith when it ceases to make sense with all that they are learning about the world around them. All too often, when they are discouraged from wrestling with God and asking questions people begin to discount the church and God as irrelevant in their lives.

So, this morning I want to celebrate and lift up all of the gifts that this year's graduates have. You are a phenomenal group of young people who are amazingly gifted! And I want to give you all permission, heck even encourage you, to spend the next years incorporating all of the things you learn in school and in life into your relationship with God. Ask questions, wrestle, debate, ponder, and know that God is big enough to handle it. In fact, God has given us the gifts to do all of these things, to pursue wisdom and knowledge and understanding. When you get to school in the fall find a campus ministry or a mentor or a local church who can partner with you on that walk. Seek out other people who are asking questions and wrestle with them. And know that God is with you always, giving you all of the gifts that you have and seeking to live in relationship with you as you journey through life.

And I challenge all of you who are a part of the congregation this morning to do these same things. To engage your brains, to wrestle with God and the world, to ask tough questions, and most importantly know that God is a constant presence who will be with you as you wrestle and journey through your lives.

God has given us all the gifts that we need to navigate through life in this world and God has called us to use those gifts, to wrestle, to grow, to learn, and to know that God is with us always and that the Holy Spirit, the gift we celebrate today, guides us on our way.