

NEW HOPE SERMON | Inner Jogging

I have a fun, free group called the Good Clean Funnies Network that I belong to. This week I got “20 Rules of Wisdom.” They are pithy one-liners and it sparked my thinking and direction for this week. Sort of like Solomon’s Proverbs from a contemporary perspective!

INNER JOGGING

I have titled the sermon “Inner Jogging” because of one of these one-liners: *Laugh every day; it's like inner jogging.* Inner jogging. Hmm. Experts say jogging:

Helps You Maintain a Healthy Weight. . .
Strengthens Your Immune System. . .
Boosts Your Mood. . .
Makes You Smarter. . .
Helps You Sleep Better. . .
Helps You Live Longer. . .



In the same way when our inner life is on track with the Lord, it will help us physically, boost our mood, help us sleep better and even help us live longer! All these facts are also sound Biblical teaching!

So here are a few other wise sayings to help us stay on track with the Lord. I will connect them with similar teaching from the Bible as we go along.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Several sayings focus on thinking positively: *“You do the math. Count your blessings.”*

In this hard time for so many people, I have appreciated this discipline to keep our minds focused on positive things. As the Bible says:

- “Whatever is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think on these things...and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil. 4:8-9
- “My eyes are fixed on You, O Sovereign Lord; in You I take refuge.” Ps. 141:8
- “My heart is steadfast (fixed) O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and make music!” (Ps. 57:7)
- “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race that is marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:1-2)

To do that, I recommend we make it a habit to count our blessings at the end of each day. It helps us focus on the goodness of God and not the problems that we are facing.

TURN YOUR ANXIETIES OVER TO GOD

Instead, we turn those burdens over to the Lord (1 Peter. 5: 6) and leave them there. We let God carry them.

- “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens” (Ps. 68:19)

- “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on the Lord because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).
- “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Mt. 11:28-30)

BE STILL

As the wise words say: *“When we get tangled up in our problems, be still; God wants us to be still so He can untangle the knot.”* When we are still before the Lord, we are better able to hear His voice.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea...Come and see the works of the Lord...He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth...Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty (the Lord of hosts) is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (Ps. 46:1-2, 8-9, 10-11).

CHOOSE HAPPINESS

Another good axiom: *There is no key to happiness. The door is always open.*

I have particularly resonated with this fresh way to express an eternal truth. How easy it is to lament or be frustrated with our current circumstances. But we have a choice. The door is always open.

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted (tested) in every way just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb. 4:15-16)

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

“It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will....But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way...Christ is preached and because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.” (Phil. 1:15, 18-19)

COURAGE IN RISK TAKING

One final maxim: *Surviving and living your life successfully requires courage. The goals and dreams you're seeking require courage and risk taking. Learn from the turtle, it only makes progress when it sticks out its neck.* (GCFN 7/27/20 Received from FranCMT2.)--



When Hanny and I were out walking at Leu Gardens yesterday, we stopped at a



bench under a large spreading Florida tree. There was a plaque to Myra Martin attached to the back of the bench. It summarizes the ethos of these sayings. “Myra believed the true joy of life is in the trip...She lived for the journey.” That’s true.

But Hanny’s observations about this give us the proper context for this “adventure.” “We can’t see what God can see. We are finite human beings; God is infinite. [And so we put our hand in the Lord’s and trust Him as we go forward]} But we need to have a community of believers to journey with. I am spiritually drained at Western Michigan because none of my colleagues share my faith. I need to be with people who have the same values and goals and direction that God has put in my life.”

Amen. This is why it has been such a gift to have her here for these three weeks while Bruce and Becky are away. We celebrated the fellowship and strength of one another as we go forward in the same direction, with the same Lord, marching to the same drumbeat. I hope there will be many others of you who can come and stay for a time (still working full time via the internet if needed) so we can encourage one another and journey together.

In the meantime, may we all choose this inner jogging of a walk with God, choosing happiness, choosing to fix our hearts on Him as we count our blessings, choosing to turn our anxieties to the Him, and be still as we trust His goodness and care, choosing to have His courage in the risks ahead. Our song of response captures that spirit.

SONG OF RESPONSE: STILL

Hide me now under Your wings. Cover me within Your mighty Hand.

Refrain: When the oceans rise and thunders roar, I will soar with You above the storm.

Father You are King over the flood – I will be still and know You are God.

Rest my soul in Christ alone. Know His power in quietness and trust.

Refrain: When the oceans rise and thunders roar, I will soar with You above the storm.

Father You are King over the flood – I will be still and know You are God.

I will be still and know You are God.

(words and music: Reuben Morgan)

PRAYER

Lord, keep our feet courageously on Your path and our hearts rejoicing in Your amazing grace, no matter what risks are ahead. Then we can soar with You above the storm.

For Jesus's sake. Amen.

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