

The Grace Lutheran

Newsletter of Grace LCMS – Greenwood, Arkansas

August 2026

From the Pastor's Pen

KNOWLEDGE VS. WISDOM

This month I will celebrate my 52nd birthday, and as I find myself growing older, I also find myself being a lot more introspective. Maybe this is just something you do as get older. One of the things I've been thinking about quite a bit, especially as time marches on, is the concept of knowledge vs. wisdom. While often used synonymously, the two words are actually different from each other. The primary difference between the two words is that *wisdom* involves a healthy dose of perspective and the ability to make sound judgments about a subject while *knowledge* is simply knowing. Anyone can become knowledgeable about a subject by reading, researching, and memorizing facts. Knowledge is acquired through education. It's wisdom, however, that requires more understanding and the ability to determine which facts are relevant in certain situations. Wisdom takes knowledge and applies it with discernment based on experience, evaluation, and lessons learned. Knowledge knows what to say. Wisdom knows when to say it, or if it's even appropriate to say at all. A more lighthearted example says that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing to not put it in the fruit salad.

But this gets me thinking more. Many a young person comes out of high school or college *full* of knowledge, but short on the wisdom that comes with experience. They know it all... and yet they really don't know that much at all, do they? They're full of "book smarts," but don't have the life experiences that have learned how to apply such knowledge. They're smart, but they're not wise. That wisdom only comes with time and experience.

It should come as no surprise, then, that as we search the Scriptures, we find, again and again, how wisdom is used to describe the faithful. To be wise is to be faithful. To be faithful is to be wise. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple"* (Ps 19:7). *"One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless"* (Prov 14:16). Those who are wise in the faith do as St. John says in his first epistle. They discern. They "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). That kind of faithful discernment is the wisdom of faith.

Conversely, those who aren't wise (faithful) are fools/foolish. They don't discern the wisdom of God... and that never ends well. *"The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace"* (Prov 3:35). Sure, those fools may be full of knowledge, even Biblical knowledge. They may know the Scriptures better than anyone, and yet they're still undiscerning. They don't apply (or don't know how to apply) the wisdom of God to their lives. From God's perspective, then, they're not wise; not wise in faith; not wise unto eternal life.

So... how does one acquire this wisdom? How does one become wise in the way/will of the Lord? The immediate, knee-jerk response would be "time and experience." Well... there is, no doubt, truth to this. Time and experience immersed in the Word and promises of God does endow one with a wisdom that so many others lack in our world today. *"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life."* (Pro 16:31). Although that wisdom is often referred to as "foolishness" by those who scoff at such faith (ref 1 Cor 1:22-24). However, those who've "been around the block a time or two" know and hold fast in faith to the wisdom of God... even when others consider it foolish.

But... this gets me thinking even more. What about all those times in Scripture that Jesus Himself calls us to have the faith (wisdom) of a little child? Remember, too, that He's speaking this

Continued on next page...

Pastor's Pen, continued...

to people who were considered “mature” in the faith; i.e., the apostles and disciples. These folks had “been there and done that.” And yet Jesus holds up the nursing infant as the prime example of faithful wisdom. How can this be?!

Well... it's really not that difficult to discern. The infant trusts whole-heartedly. In fact, that's all they can do, right? The infant, unlike the adult who's “been there and done that” and “knows how the world works,” isn't jaded with doubt. The adult has all that “real-life experience” to contend with, and that “real-life experience,” whether we want to admit it or not, often has a way of corrupting our faith. Sure, we may be knowledgeable of what God says. (*So is the devil, I might add.*) We may even be foolish enough to believe that we whole-heartedly believe it, but our words and our deeds often reveal the fact that we're not as wise (faithful) as we think we are.

“I believe. Help me in my unbelief!” The older I get and the more I mature in my faith, the more I've come to realize how these words, confessed by the believing man who came to Jesus to heal his daughter, are some of the wisest words ever spoken by a believer on this side of eternity. I have knowledge of what God says. In fact, as a pastor with years of formal education in theology and the Scriptures, I'd say I have a great deal of biblical/theological knowledge; certainly more than many other Christians. That's not a boast. It's just fact. But... the older I get and the more I mature in my faith, the more I come to recognize my foolishness. It's strange, isn't it? The wiser you become, the more foolish you realize you are.

I know there is so much more we could say on all this. As I said earlier, Scripture is *FILLED* with discussion on wisdom, knowledge, and the difference between the two. However, in this case, there is much wisdom in the reality that sometimes *“less is more.”* We have enough to chew on. May our wise and loving God grant us all the faithful wisdom of the child. May His wisdom enlighten us and empower us to confess our foolishness, holding fast in the wisdom of repentant faith to the all-wise, all-knowing, and all-loving mercy and grace of our heavenly Father, which He shows us to for the sake

of Jesus, who is the very wisdom and love of God in the flesh. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Prov 1:7). May this verse not just be words that we can cite on command (knowledge), but wisdom we live by and confess, day in and day out as we show forth the wisdom of God; i.e., Christ crucified for our sins and the for the sins of the world. *“Because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”* (1Cor 1:30-31). Wise words indeed.

As for acquiring this wisdom? Be in worship. Be in Bible study. *“Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord”* (Psalm 107:43). *“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm”* (Prov 13:20). May the wisdom of these words translate into a repentant, Christ-centered life lived wisely in a world full of fools. May we be wiser today than we were yesterday, and may this wisdom be shown forth in all that we say, think, and do.

Your aging fool (but trying more every day to be wise in the Lord),

Pastor Zirbel

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*Joyful, joyful we adore Thee, God of glory,
Lord of love!*

*Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee,
praising Thee, their sun above.*

*Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the gloom of doubt away.*

*Giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.*

Lutheran Service Book, 803

Remembering in Prayer:

Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! Psalm 141:2

For the sick—Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, look with favor upon those who suffer illness and infirmity. Assure them of Your mercy, deliver them from the temptations of the evil one, and give them patience and comfort in their illness. If it please You, restore them to health, or give them grace to accept this tribulation with courage and hope.

For those who grieve—Heavenly Father, into whose keeping we entrust our loved ones, help us to look to You in our time of sorrow, remembering the cloud of faithful witnesses with which we are surrounded, Grant that we may one day share in the joys of those who now rest in Your presence.

For the joy of the resurrection among us; for the fruit of faith nourished by the Word and the Sacraments.

For faith to live in the promises of Holy Baptism; for one's calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.

For those outside the Church that all would repent and live. Merciful God, take away their iniquity, and turn them from their false gods to You, the living true God. Gather them into Your holy Church to the Glory of Your name, through Jesus Christ.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God!

August Birthdays

- 8 Marilyn Rice
- 9 Pastor Jason Zirbel
- 12 Lee Fry
- 18 Wendy Cotner
- 23 Tiffany Willadsen



No Anniversaries in the month of August

Life in Christ...

Wednesday Bible Study—Join in as we study the book of Haggai on Wednesdays at 10:00am. Currently in the 1st chapter, in these next weeks, Pastor Zirbel will lead an exegetical journey through Haggai's words which illustrate the "blessings that God's people certainly need today as they consider how to prioritize their life and work together. Also do not miss how the word to Zerubbabel anticipates the coming of Christ's Kingdom" (TLSB, pg.1519). All are encouraged to attend!

Grace's LWML: The first regular meeting of the year is planned for September 1, but be on the lookout for more details of upcoming events hosted by the LWML. Please remember mites are always welcome! Your donations through a Mite Box extend our hearts and hands to support missions throughout the world.

Joyful Blessings and New Beginnings!

Thanks be to God for the *upcoming*: The arrival of Valentin Frasier! Parents-to-be Armstrong & Abigail are excited as they anticipate the birth late August. You can view their needs list at www.babylist.com.

Thanks be to God for *July* surprise: Congratulations and blessings on the marriage of Eric Picazo and Carley Zirbel on July 12th!

"Oh blest that house where faith is found and all in hope and love abound; They trust their God and serve Him still and do in all His holy will!" (LSB 862:2)

Let us rejoice with these young families!

Serve the Lord with gladness

Psalm 100:2



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Bible Study & Worship Opportunities:

Sunday Worship Service 8:00 & 10:15 AM

Adult Bible Study & Sunday School 9:00 AM

Wednesday Adult Bible Study 10:00 AM

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