

1 Kings 3:5-12

- As a sidenote, the apocryphal book of Wisdom has a central section (chapters 7-9) that expands this prayer of Solomon for wisdom as he begins his reign:
*⁷ Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me;
I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
⁸ I preferred her to sceptres and thrones,
and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her.
⁹ Neither did I liken to her any priceless gem,
because all gold is but a little sand in her sight,
and silver will be accounted as clay before her.
¹⁰ I loved her more than health and beauty,
and I chose to have her rather than light,
because her radiance never ceases.
¹¹ All good things came to me along with her,
and in her hands uncounted wealth.
¹² I rejoiced in them all, because wisdom leads them;
but I did not know that she was their mother.
¹³ I learned without guile and I impart without grudging;
I do not hide her wealth,
¹⁴ for it is an unfailing treasure for mortals;
those who get it obtain friendship with God,
commended for the gifts that come from instruction. (Wisdom 7:7-14)*
- This story about Solomon establishes his reputation for wisdom and justification for his wealth, power, and success. It does so by grounding all he does within a pursuit for wisdom as found only with God. How might we pursue wisdom as Solomon did?

Psalms 119:129-136

- Psalms 119 – the longest chapter/psalm in the Bible – is an extended meditation on the law, with each stanza beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Note how the law – that part of the Bible we as Christians tend to ignore or discount – is treated by the psalmist as something to be treasured and pondered and filled with. How might we do the same?
- Notice the bodily images that occur throughout this section: “I open my mouth and pant ...”, “Order my footsteps in your word ...”, “let your face shine upon your servant ...”, “my eyes shed streams of tears” We are called to have God’s word be so much a part of us that it bodily affects us.

Romans 8:26-39

- These verses from Romans are the pinnacle of Paul’s proclamation of God’s grace and love. When I approach these words, I find myself saying with Paul, “What then are we to say about these things?”
- Verses 26-27 provides incredible comfort when we go through the depths of grief and suffering. Even when we do not know how to pray, God’s Spirit prays within us; God hears and understands us. Have you ever had an experience when your struggles overwhelmed you and you did not know how to ask for help or even know how to pray? What helped you through that time? Even when we do not know the way, even when we do not know how to pray or what to pray for, God’s Spirit prays within and for us.
- One of the most misused verses is verse 28: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Some use it to explain suffering– which is not helpful to the ones who hear it and which is irresponsible for those who say it. Is there a better way to understand the verse? One way is to look beyond us as individuals and see what Paul is about to do in Romans 9-11. There he seeks to comprehend why Jews rejected Jesus and what God will do with that rejection. Romans 8:28 grounds that discussion by saying that God worked and is working good: the rejection of the Jews means that the good news of Jesus came to the Gentiles. Paul will conclude that similarly God will bring about good by somehow bringing the Jews back in.

- The highlight of this passage comes in its conclusion: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” The answer? Absolutely nothing, no one, no how! Whenever we feel overwhelmed, whenever we feel discouraged or in despair, whenever we feel God’s absence, claim these words. God’s love is always there! If you want verses to memorize, Romans 8:31-39 expresses the heart of the Christian faith better than anything else.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

- Following the parables of the sower and the wheat and tares, Jesus puts forth six images of what the kingdom of God is like:
 - A mustard seed that grows into an incredible tree
 - Yeast mixed into dough
 - A treasure in a field
 - A pearl of great value
 - A fish net full of fish of every kind
 - A master who brings out both new and old treasure

Jesus uses these different images all in an effort to have one of them stick with the one who hears. Which image “sticks” the most with you? Which image makes the least sense to you?
- Note how Jesus uses images that anyone can understand, rich or poor, male or female. Similarly, we are called to find different images for the gospel in today’s language. If you were to envision what the kingdom of heaven looks like using a modern image, what would it be?