

## “Curiosity” *Excerpt from Proverbs 2*

### **Curiosity and Faith**

During this season of Lent, we’ve been training ourselves to see the beauty and awe in our daily lives through *Visio Divina*—the practice of seeing with intention. How’s it been going for you?

When we pause, really look, listen, and feel, we begin to notice things we might otherwise miss. We can marvel at wildflowers stretching and waking from their deep winter slumber. We can hear the forsythia—the bright yellow messenger of spring—shouting with all its might, “*Spring is here!*” But it all starts with a simple mindset: waking up each day with a sense of expectation, with curiosity.

You know, when children start learning to speak, their curiosity about the world explodes. And what’s the question they ask the most? “*What is this?*” Many of us have been on the receiving end of that endless string of questions! But we were all once that child—wide-eyed, full of wonder.

Yet, as we grow older, something changes. Not everyone, but for many of us, curiosity starts to fade. Learning something new begins to feel like a chore. We get set in our ways. And if we’re honest, sometimes we just don’t want to be bothered. Or is that just me?

Why does this happen? Well, life gets busy. Responsibilities pile up—work, family, all the things that demand our attention. We start focusing on what’s practical, what’s necessary, and we stop paying attention to the things that don’t seem immediately useful. Over time, our curiosity shrinks. And then there’s another reason: we start believing that we *already know enough*. We’ve gathered experience, we’ve studied, we’ve learned—so we stop asking questions. We stop wondering.

And you know what? This happens in our faith, too. The longer we’ve been Christians, the easier it is to fall into patterns—worshiping the way we’ve always worshiped, thinking the way we’ve always thought, believing in a way that feels familiar. Have you ever heard someone say in church, “*I love it when we sing hymns I’ve never heard before!*”? Probably not. We like the songs we know. They’re comfortable. They feel safe.

But here’s the challenge: when we sit in the same place, sing the same songs, and go through the motions of faith without curiosity, we risk losing something vital—our sense of wonder, our desire to discover more of God. And isn’t that what faith is supposed to be? A journey of endless discovery?

### **Living Without Easy Answers**

One of the biggest dangers of losing curiosity is that we start turning faith into a set of formulas. Pastor Kim Hyung-Ik wrote a book called *Living Without Answers, Loving Without Answers*. In it, he talks about how we often try to simplify faith into neat, predictable patterns.

You’ve probably heard phrases like: “Prayer changes everything.” “If you obey God’s Word, you’ll be blessed.” “Success is a sign of God’s favor.” These are faith formulas—short, simple answers that make faith feel easier, safer, and more predictable.

And let’s be honest, we like formulas. When life is uncertain, formulas give us a sense of control. They tell us, “If I just do this, then God will do that.” They keep things simple. If you’re struggling, and you believe “Prayer changes everything,” then the answer seems clear: just pray

more. No need to wrestle with difficult questions—just pray harder, go to church more, and trust that everything will work out.

But this way of thinking is dangerous. First, because life doesn't work that way. And second, because when things don't fit the formula, we start drawing the wrong conclusions—about ourselves and about others. Take the idea that "Success and wealth are signs of God's blessing." If that's true, then what does that mean for those who are poor or struggling? The logic leads to a harsh conclusion: "They must have done something wrong. Maybe they didn't have enough faith. Maybe God isn't blessing them." This is exactly how Job's friends responded to his suffering. They saw his pain and assumed he must have sinned. "Job, just repent, and God will bless you again." But was that true? No. And we know that even today, so many people work hard, do everything "right," and still struggle—not because of some personal failure, but because of injustices beyond their control.

Remember the 2008 financial crisis? Banks and corporations made reckless, greedy decisions, and millions of ordinary people lost their homes, their jobs, their life savings. But what happened to the ones responsible? They got bailed out. They kept their wealth. Some even got bonuses. Was their success a sign of God's blessing? No. It was a product of greed and injustice. The problem with turning faith into a formula is that it doesn't just give us bad theology—it distorts how we see God, how we see others, and how we see ourselves.

### **Faith, Curiosity, and Mystery**

Faith isn't a formula—it's a mystery. And mystery invites curiosity. When we come face to face with the things we can't fully understand—whether in life or in faith—we have a choice. We can either settle for easy answers, or we can approach with humility, admitting we don't know everything, and with curiosity, asking 'What more can I discover about God?'

The writer of Proverbs puts it this way: "Incline your ear to Wisdom, and take her truth into your heart. For if you yearn for insight and cry out for understanding, if you search for it as you would for silver, and dig for it as you would for buried treasure, you will understand what [awe] of YHWH is, and discover how to truly know God."

Did you catch that? Incline, yearn, search, and discover! Faith isn't about having all the answers—it's about searching, questioning, and growing. And when we approach faith with curiosity, we realize something important: what we know today isn't the final word. It's just the beginning.

The medieval mystic Meister Eckhart once said, "Be willing to be a beginner every single morning." Think about that. Every morning when you wake up, don't assume today will just be another predictable day. When you come to church, don't come as someone who already has all the answers. Every moment is new. Every day is a chance to learn something more about God.

That's why today, I want us to take a moment to learn more about this church. Today marks the 95th anniversary of Asbury UMC. How much do you know about the church you're sitting in right now? Some of you have been part of this church for decades. Some were even married here, raising your families and worshiping in this very space for over 60 years. Frank Rose and Carl Bishop, who once ran through these halls as mischievous Sunday School kids, are now retired—though, of course, they still have their moments of childlike playfulness. And yet, Asbury is still a church that is learning, growing, and becoming. So today, Becky Arnold is going to share a bit of our church's history—stories you may not have heard before. Listen with curiosity. Listen as a beginner—open to discovering something new about the community we are part of, the faith we share, and the ways God is still leading us forward.