

Dear Friends in Christ:

February is a strange month. It is the shortest month of the year (usually with 28 days) but every four years, such as 2012, it takes a leap to 29. It has great holidays (Washington's and Lincoln's Birthdays and Valentine's Day) and a very silly one (Groundhog Day). It is Black History Month when we recognize the accomplishments of African-Americans. And it is often a very cold, wintry one that flirts with record temperatures and snowfalls.



I see February as a catch up month, the time to catch up on people I have not seen, projects I have put off, and reading I have let go. I like to start some new books and to revisit some old ones. One treasured work is a gift I received years ago entitled, *The Minister's Little Instruction Book: Timeless Wisdom and Practical Advice for Ministers and Lay Leaders*. The author is a clergyman, Dr. Stan Toler, who collected insightful and humorous proverbs that pastors and lay leaders can use as guidelines for ministry. I share some of them with you:

*A good life is the best sermon.*

*Feed your faith and doubt will starve to death.*

*Be like a postage stamp – stick to one thing until you get there.*

*If you can laugh at it, then you can live with it.*

*God will not look you over for medals, degrees, or diplomas – but for scars.*

*Few sinners are saved after the first twenty minutes of a sermon. (Mark Twain)*

*Faults are the easiest things to find.*

*God will either lighten our loads or strengthen our backs.*

*Real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination.*

*One of the best ways to get on your feet is to first get on your knees.*

*Work for the Lord. The pay isn't much but the Lord's retirement plan is out of this world.*

*The person who rows the boat generally doesn't have time to rock it.*

*A true friend walks in when the rest of the world walks out.*

These instructions are quite meaningful. They remind me of the wisest teachings of all in *The Book of Proverbs* that came from King Solomon and the scribes in his royal court.

*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. (16:3)*

*Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper, and happy are those who trust in the Lord. (16:20)*

*One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend. (17:9)*

*A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones. (17:22)*

I have recommended that you read and reflect on the Scriptures like *Proverbs* each day to receive God's comfort and strength, teaching and wisdom. Proverbs are small lessons that sustain us and bring us to a great new world where we find God's purpose. May God bless you this year in your reading and reflection.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Chris