Opening Prayer
Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Bless and guide us as we study Your Word to grow both in knowledge and in faith, that we may use our learning to be a blessing to Your created world and to those around us. Amen.

Opening Discussion
Is all learning good? If not, when is it bad?

Benefits of Learning and Knowledge
The Bible has much to say about learning, both directly and in rich examples of how learning enriches the lives of God’s people. How can learning help us grow in faith?

Deuteronomy 6:4–9
Psalm 119:73
Luke 10:38–42
Luke 2:41–47
Acts 8:26–35

Drawbacks of Learning and Knowledge
While the Bible provides many examples of the ways learning and knowledge can enrich the lives of God’s people, it also points to examples of the ways learning makes living a faith-filled life difficult. How can learning impede our growth in faith?

Exodus 14:9–14
Numbers 13:17–33; 14:1–4

Wisdom vs. Learning and Knowledge
The word “wisdom” appears over 200 times in the Bible, while “learning” appears just over 50 times. What is wisdom, and how is it different from learning or knowledge?

Psalm 111:10
Job 28:12–28
1 Corinthians 2:6–13

Wisdom is different from knowledge, especially godly wisdom. Wisdom comes not just from observation and knowledge of the world around us, but from the Word and the Spirit of God. How do wisdom and learning work together to help us grow in faith?

1 Kings 4:29–34

Exodus 31:1–7
Colossians 1:9–10

We live in a culture where education is not only a foundational part of our daily lives, but also a commodity that we generally value highly. We require all children to attend school because we believe education is essential for society to flourish and thrive. We encourage our grown children to go to college to better themselves and prepare themselves for the world of work. We promote lifelong learning as a way to stay active and sharp in retirement. There is even talk of the new “knowledge” economy where companies make knowledge or data rather than steel pipes, washing machines, cars, or clothes. We are conditioned to see knowledge and learning as ways to advance ourselves personally, financially, and socially.

But where does this narrative come from? Where do we get these ideas about learning and knowledge? And more important, what does the Bible have to say about learning and its roles in our lives?

By Alison Witte

More Precious than Silver, Better than Jewels: The Gifts of Knowledge and Wisdom
God is the ultimate source of knowledge, wisdom, and faith. He blesses us with curious minds to seek out information and new ideas.

This desire for knowledge can help equip us to lead faithful lives and to be blessings to others. Knowledge can also help us grow and mature in our own faith. But we must always remember that knowledge only goes so far and that we should also seek godly wisdom.

Godly wisdom reminds us that we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) and, therefore, must rely on God’s Word and His wisdom above all else.

By putting faith first, we can then put our knowledge and learning to the best possible uses: service of others and the sharing of the Gospel. When we show the joy we find in learning about the miraculous and awesome God we have and when we eagerly share our discoveries, we can be a blessing to the people around us.

Closing

Read 1 Kings 3:5–9.

Closing prayer: Lord, You have given us minds to learn about the wonders of Your creation and Your Word. Grant us hearts to seek not only knowledge but wisdom as well, and bless us richly, as You did King Solomon. Help us to use Your gifts of wisdom and knowledge to grow in faith and trust in You, to learn how better to serve in Your world, and to share with others the precious gifts we receive through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Most people, especially those outside the church, have a certain picture of a pastor's wife: how she acts and, most important, how they should behave around her. Telling people I am a pastor's wife tends to make them more guarded around me. But I have found that the one thing people are more uncomfortable around than a pastor's wife is an English professor, especially in the rural community where we live and my husband serves.

People generally have one of two memories of English teachers. A few remember them fondly as those who encouraged their love of reading or their creative talents in writing. But most remember them as drill sergeants who forced them to suffer through the classics and who gave endless lessons about nouns, verbs, and punctuation. Thoughts of English class invoke feelings of frustration, disappointment and shame, including the fear of seeing red pen liberally scrawled over their papers.

I always loved and excelled at English, but I never envisioned myself as a teacher. Any time someone suggested that teaching might be a career path for me, I scoffed at the idea. But after a few miserable months working in an office while my husband was at seminary, the Lord made it clear that my calling was not office work. He further blessed me by making my path through a Master’s degree and a Ph.D. smooth and easy, despite moving twice (for vicarage and our first call) and having three children.

The more I pursued this work, the more obvious it became that academia and college teaching was my niche. It allowed me to use my talents in meaningful ways that also help me bless others.

One thing I have come to see so clearly through my studies, continued research, and teaching is that words have great power. Words written years and years ago in red pen still have the power to thwart the thoughts and imagination of many students and many who have not roamed the school halls for years. It is my goal that every student see in some way that words have the power to make positive change; they have the power to bring healing, to lift up the downtrodden, to change minds and hearts.

I often think of Isaiah 55:10–11 (ESV): For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

In my vocation as an English professor, I can take what I know about the power of words and teach students how to read and write so they take and use their words to be blessings to the people around them in their workplaces, families, and communities.