



Week 1 – Be a Goldfish

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... since we're using a comedic tv show as the backdrop for this series, what is your favorite SitCom? Are you a classics fan, with something like "The Honeymooners"? Or do you wish you were at Central Perk with the "Friends"? Maybe you can do the entire theme song to "Fresh Prince"? Discuss!

Opening Prayer

God of Provision, when we worry, remind us that you care for us, and though we might not see the way forward, you hold our futures.

Introduction

One of the most popular and acclaimed SitComs of the last five years is Apple TV's, Ted Lasso. If you've been living under a rock, (and by that, we mean... not wanting to pay \$6.99 per month to the Malevolent

Macintosh Monopoly,) here's the set up. Ted is an American collegiate football coach who has made international headlines for his positive clubhouse culture and positive attitude. Back in the Old Country, English professional soccer club, AFC Richmond, is struggling. They're losing matches and the power couple that own the team has gone through a messy divorce, leaving full control of the club in the hands of the wife, Rebecca Welton. To spite her jerk of a husband, she plans to destroy the only thing he's ever cared about... his precious soccer team. Her plan? Hire an American football coach who doesn't know a goalie from a goalpost. Enter Ted Lasso, and comedy ensues. Okay, but what does a tv comedy series about soccer have to do with faith? We'll get to that. First...

Convo starter: What is your experience with soccer? Are you an avid "football" hooligan watching Manchester United matches at 3am? Or is your attitude more, "I don't get it. No sport should end in a 0-0 tie after an hour and a half."

Scripture & Reflection

Back to the question... what does a tv comedy series have to do with faith? Well, Ted proves himself a fantastic gaffer, (that's what they call a coach,) and not just of this English soccer team on the pitch (that's what they call the field.) Off the pitch, Ted becomes a coach and mentor of the *lives* of the people in his care. The show is funny, sure, but there are also brilliant life lessons woven through the plot lines, and the whole thing leaves you wanting a Ted Lasso in your life. But here's the thing, his ideas weren't new. Much of Ted's wisdom began

with a different gaffer of a much different team. Maybe not quite as funny and hopefully with a lot less foul language, Jesus was the ultimate coach. And so, in this series, through the parallel wisdom of Ted Lasso and Jesus, we'll look at their life lessons and see how they apply to our lives.

Our first lesson comes from Ted's first day on the job and Jesus's first sermon. We'll start with Ted. He's at training, (that's what they call practice,) day 1. An up-and-coming, young player named Sam, is getting embarrassed on the pitch by the star of the team, Jamie. And after one particularly awful piece of defending, Sam ends up on his back, with Jamie mocking him mercilessly. Sam is visibly frustrated, so Ted calls him over. He says, "Do you know what the happiest animal on Earth is?" Sam shakes his head. Ted continues, "It's a goldfish. You know why? Because it's got a 10 second memory. Be a goldfish, Sam." Sam looks understandably confused, but soaks it in, and goes back to practice... sorry, training.

"Be a goldfish." This line becomes a theme and pops up now and then throughout the show. It's a phrase that comes to mean, "Focus on what's important. Don't dwell on your failures. Concern yourself with what's ahead of you. Don't worry so much." Simply, be a goldfish. Now, ignoring the fact that MythBusters proved that goldfish actually have decent memories and can be trained to remember things up to a month later, the line is a powerful one. How often do we find ourselves worrying about the past, dwelling on our mistakes? Worry affects us in so many negative ways. Just as it did for Sam, it changes our mood,

wrecks our health, rocks our self-confidence, and leaves us questioning everything we do. Taken to the extreme, worry can begin to define us. Our past becomes our identity, and we worry that we'll be judged for what we've done, for who we've been, for what we've struggled with. And our memory capacity for these things isn't goldfish level... it's chiseled-in-rock, locked-in-an-iron-safe level memory. Our pasts, our mistakes, our failures, our struggles, the day-to-day grind of life... eat away at us, and we are so mired in the bog of it all, it breaks us down.

Question 1: What do you find yourself worrying about most? Are you a parent stressing over your kids' schedules and making sure they grow up to be contributing members of society? Maybe it's your work or friendships or future that brings on the anxiety? Share.

A little concern is okay... even healthy. But worry, unchecked, can be truly damaging. So, Ted offers this bit o' wisdom... be a goldfish. But, Ted wasn't the first one to offer this sentiment. Now, as far as we know, there were no goldfish in Jesus's time. So, he used different words.

Read Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25 to 34.

Don't worry... be a goldfish. Now, whereas Ted Lasso leaves Sam to figure out what he means on his own, Jesus goes into a little more detail, hinting at 3 things that cause worry and offering a solution to each. First, in verse 30, Jesus calls his listeners "Confidence-lackers." (It sounds better in the Greek.) But he's suggesting that we worry

because we don't believe God will care for us. Second, Jesus suggests that his followers don't believe they are valuable to God... and thus don't believe they are worthy of God's provision. And finally, Jesus hints in verse 34 that we dwell too much on our past failures. And as our own toughest critics, we don't offer ourselves the grace to mess up and move forward, leading us to hold on to our mistakes, worrying about how they affect us and others. Whether caused by a lack of confidence, a lack of value, or a lack of grace, the worry piles upon the worry.

Question 2: Which of these three would you say you have the most difficult time with? Do you struggle with the confidence that God will provide for you? Do you believe you are worthy of God's provision? Or are you hardest on yourself, holding your past mistakes against you? (This is such a difficult thing... "all three" is an acceptable answer.)

Closing

But there's good news... Jesus spends this scripture answering those worry-producers. We can have confidence in God's provision by simply looking around us and taking stock of all for which God cares. And if God cares for even the smallest thing, God cares for us, as well. Then, Jesus tells his followers that we are the most valuable thing to God. And even though it sometimes feels like we are on our own, we are worthy of God's love because we are God's children. And finally, he suggests that we can let go of our past mistakes because we have a

God who holds our future. Worry can debilitate us. It robs us of being present and living the life God has in mind for us. So, remember the wisdom of Ted Lasso and Jesus... forget your lack of confidence, lack of value, and lack of grace. And remind yourself of trust and worth and a God who holds your future. Be a goldfish.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.