

“Being Mortal: Medicine and What matters in the End” by Atul Gawande

WEEK 2 – Chapters 3-4

Opening Prayer:

God, Creator and Lover, you see everything you have made, and all you have made is good. Your goodness is at the center of our lives, reaching out to you, creating wholeness within. We give you thanks for this time together and invite you to guide our reflections this evening. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. The author writes, “It is not death that the very old tell me they fear. It is what happens short of death...” (p. 55)
 - a. What do you fear most about the end of life?
 - b. How do you think your family would react if you told them, “I’m ready”?
 - c. How do we strike a balance between fear and hope, while still confronting reality?
2. Chapter 4 describes the birth of the assisted-living facility concept (Park Place), designed by Keren Wilson to provide her disabled mother, Jessie, with caregivers who would not restrict her freedom. Key components included having her own thermostat, her own schedule, her own furniture and a lock on the door. What other components would you add.
3. What are some of the realities captured in the story of Lou Sanders and his daughter, Shelley, regarding home care for an aging and increasingly frail parent? What conflicts did Shelley face between her intentions and the practical needs of the family and herself? (p. 103-109)
4. A key concept this week is “home” as much more than just the place where you go to bed at night. Home evokes a set of values and freedoms for many as they face old age. As you consider the life you want to lead in old age, what does “home” mean to you?

Closing Prayer (Psalm 104)

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul.

O LORD my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with honor and majesty,

² **wrapped in light as with a garment.**

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

³ you set the beams of your^[a] chambers on the waters,

you make the clouds your^[b] chariot,

you ride on the wings of the wind,

⁴ **you make the winds your^[c] messengers,**

fire and flame your^[d] ministers.

⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,

so that it shall never be shaken.

⁶ **You cover it with the deep as with a garment;**

the waters stood above the mountains.

⁷ At your rebuke they flee;

at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

⁸ **They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys**

to the place that you appointed for them.

⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass,

so that they might not again cover the earth.

¹⁰ **You make springs gush forth in the valleys;**

they flow between the hills,

¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal;

the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

¹² **By the streams^[e] the birds of the air have their habitation;**

they sing among the branches.

¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains;

the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

¹⁴ **You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,**

and plants for people to use,^[f]

to bring forth food from the earth,

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now, and will be for ever. AMEN