



SEEK WISDOM • PROVERBS 3:1-12 • 6/19/2022

## MAIN POINT

Wisdom is attained through the knowledge of God and the love of His Word. On this Father's Day, Chuck will be going through selected passages including Proverbs 1:7, 29; 2:3-12; and 3:5-6. We have chosen to focus on Proverbs 3:1-12 as a general discussion on wisdom.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some examples of life situations we face that aren't moral choices? (Exs: decisions about love, marriage, family, career, leisure, etc.) Why is wisdom important when we face decisions like these?**

**Other than from God and His Word, what are some places people might look for wisdom on how to face the situations mentioned?**

The Book of Proverbs deals with many of life's basic concerns. The book stresses the value of wisdom and the benefits we gain from following wisdom. Although the world offers many "answers" to our quest for wisdom, our first stop should always be to consider God and the wisdom in His Word. All of life is to be submitted to God's direction.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 3:1-4.

**What are the commands given to the young man in verses 1-4? What is the promised result of each of those commands?**

Verses 1-4 teach us that wisdom is attained through the mastery of God's Word. Scripture is the center of all we do as the body of Christ, and it is the Book by which we live the Christian life. The Bible is from God, reveals God, and teaches truth. Only through the study and application of God's Word do we learn how to live for God and share His love with the world.

**Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. What words emphasize the importance of studying Scripture?**

**In what areas of your life does Scripture prove profitable? How? Have you noticed a change in these areas when you haven't been actively consuming God's Word?**

**What does Scripture equip us to do? How does this work?**

The Bible is a guide that teaches us how to grow in our faith and how to live as disciples. David called it "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). It's profitable to teach, so it's profitable to learn from. Rebuking and correcting also make it useful for preventing—there's no need to be rebuked or corrected if you never did something in the first place. The Bible, when actively consumed, provides us all we need to mature in our faith, a process that God designed to happen in the community of His church. Committing ourselves to the discipline of study is a sure step toward attaining wisdom. In the second command from these verses (vv. 3-4), the writer instructed his son to pursue love and faithfulness, with the result being a good reputation with God and man.

**Why are love and faithfulness important (v. 3)? What specific actions and attitudes reveal that we value love and faithfulness?**

**Why would these two traits be associated with being wise? What connection do they have to knowing God and His Word?**

In verses 1 and 3, the writer of this proverb mentioned the child's "heart" as being involved in keeping these commands. The Hebrews viewed the heart as the center of personality. Keeping commandments with the heart means totally dedicating oneself to obeying them. For the wise Christian, love and faithfulness should be a part of our very beings. If we follow God's wisdom, we will experience the benefit of favor in our relationships with God and man. We will have a good reputation.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 3:5-8.

**What three items did the author of Proverbs 3:5-6 suggest would improve a person's relationship with God? What would be the result if believers committed themselves to**

**this type of living?**

**What does it look like to trust in the Lord with all your heart? Why is this so challenging for us to do?**

**What are some specific areas of your life in which it is easy to trust God? In which is it harder?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 3:9-10

**What would it mean for a believer to honor the Lord with the “firstfruits” of the harvest today?**

**What’s the difference between giving to the Lord from the first portion of your income rather than the last?**

The word “firstfruits” emphasizes that we are to first give our best to God from all we produce. This is close to the subject of tithing. Many people consider tithing often only after the other needs are met. Giving the tithe requires that this amount be set apart at the first. We don’t serve God with just 10 percent on Sunday. We can honor God with all of our money and possessions.

**What do we communicate to God when we live for His kingdom rather than the world?**

**What do we communicate to the world?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 3:11-12.

**What are the commands given to the young man in verses 11-12? What is the promised result of each of those commands?**

The writer of this proverb challenges us to accept God’s discipline with patience, knowing its purpose is for our greater good. To ask God to refrain from giving us discipline would be to ask Him to love us less.

**Read Revelation 3:19. Why does God rebuke His children? How does the Lord’s discipline relate to His blessing?**

Typically when we hear “discipline” we think about the relationship between a parent and a child. It could mean a time out, a spanking, or a stern conversation, but it carries with it the idea of helping the child grow and become a better person. As with any loving parent, God’s discipline is often painful and never fun, but the brokenness it brings is necessary for change. Being open to His discipline for the sake of spiritual growth and renewal shows wisdom on our part.

# APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How are you pursuing wisdom in your life right now? What step can you take this week based on our discussion?**

**How can our group help one another treasure and submit to God's Word?**

# PRAYER

Close your group meeting in prayer. Praise God for who He is and how He is working in your midst. Ask Him to give your group and our church a recognition of dependency on Him and His wisdom.

# COMMENTARY

## | PROVERBS 3:1-12

3:1-4. As in all introductions to discourse exhortations in Proverbs, the passage opens with an appeal for the young man to heed parental teaching (v. 1). Furthermore, as is also common in Proverbs, long life and prosperity are held out as the rewards of obedience (v. 2). "Prosperity," however, should not be taken as a crude financial enticement to righteousness.

"Wholesomeness" would in fact be a better translation here. The person with wholesomeness is not necessarily rich but is healthy physically, fiscally, and in relationship with others.

Verse 3 actually shows how far removed Proverbs is from an ethic of external obedience and reward. The command to maintain love and faithfulness demonstrates that the internal character of the heart is in view here. The general nature of this command ought to be preserved as well—the verse does not speak specifically of fidelity to the covenant or in some other particular arena of life but looks for inner integrity that manifests itself in all interactions with God and people. In this respect, Proverbs is different from earlier non-Israelite wisdom.

The command "to bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart" (NIV) further indicates that the character of the student is in view rather than just his behavior. Some have suggested that the binding of love to the neck means that it is here a kind of necklace that beautifies the individual. But the parallel between "neck" and "heart" here implies that fidelity is more than an ornament to the neck. The neck houses the throat which, in Hebrew anthropology,

is the very life of the person. Love and faithfulness are to become part of the student's heart and life. The influence of Deuteronomy here is evident. The translation "a good name" (v. 4) means that others will recognize the competence and intelligence of the wise individual.

3:5-12. This section emphasizes piety toward the Lord rather than devotion to the abstractions of wisdom or righteousness. True piety manifests itself as intellectual humility (vv. 5-8), submission of material wealth to God's rule (vv. 9-10), and patient acceptance of divine discipline (vv. 11-12). Formally, each section is an admonition composed of commands or prohibitions followed by an explanation of the reasons for the commands (motive clause).

3:5-8. The command to trust God with all your heart means that the total personality is to be committed to God's care, although it emphasizes the mind and volition. The prohibitions against depending on one's own understanding and against intellectual pride (vv. 5b, 7a) implicitly reject a "secular" search for wisdom and look back to the thesis of the book (1:7). The commitment of the heart to God means that all the beliefs and decisions of life are to be submitted to Yahweh. Even very practical decisions are in view here, and not just matters of academic pursuit. But the text is no more opposed to academic research per se than to any normal activity of life. Also, "understanding" implies not just intellectual capacity but one's own moral standards. One's private vision of right and wrong must be submitted to God.

The motive clause of v. 8 promises physical health. Health naturally proceeds from the peaceful and well-ordered life that is submitted to God. Having grounded his readers in the value of a personal relationship with the Lord (see Proverbs 2), Solomon challenged them further. Ethical teaching alone can not provide what complete trust in the Lord ultimately offers. Solomon wanted to show what would happen if readers enthrone God and His Law in their heart. The word for "trust" carried the image of lying helpless in a prone position. It depicted a servant prepared to meet a master's command or a conquered soldier prostrated before his conqueror. Therefore, to trust in the Lord means a person submitted himself to God's authority.

3:5. Throughout the Bible, the heart stands for the person as a whole. When Solomon called for trusting God with all your heart, he summoned the total personality of our commitment to the Lord. Anything less would insult God—duplicity in the heart spoils the relationship, resulting in no trust at all. "Rely" served as a synonym for trust. "Do not rely on your own understanding" set up a clear comparison of the options for the source of our trust. A person could either rely upon the wellspring of God's infinite wisdom or foolishly draw from his own thimble of knowledge and moral discernment. Although this passage condemned academic arrogance, Solomon did not suggest believers should ignore their intelligence and common sense. However, he clearly

clamped down on the human tendency to rely solely on one's own intelligence, experience, or insights.

When we trust in God, it means we have submitted all our beliefs and life decisions to Him—even the very practical decisions in life. Often we tend to segment our lives with rigid boundaries. We make career decisions, social decisions, family decisions, and spiritual decisions. We often fail to see all of life as a whole, partially trusting the Lord and missing what He desires for us. God alone knows the right way to the right ends; it makes no sense make decisions without fully trusting Him. Therefore, we would do well to study God's Word to find His guidance and direction for life's decisions. We show our trust in God by not only studying His Word but also by doing what He says. Recognizing God knows and desires what is best for us, we demonstrate complete trust in Him.

3:6. The writer tacked on to this exclusive vow, an exhaustive commitment—"in all your ways." Unfortunately, the word translated as "think about" or "acknowledge" does not fully capture the nuance of the Hebrew word. Rather than a mere academic nod given to God, the word included personal knowledge through intimate experience with God. Therefore, the writer urged a personal relationship with God. A road-building metaphor, "will guide you on the right paths," served as the payoff of that personal relationship. Figuratively, "right" could denote honest conduct that does not go astray or out of bounds. Therefore, a personal relationship with God would keep a person on the right path. But the word could also include the idea of smoothness or success in an undertaking or action, so committing one's life to God would provide ultimate success.

3:7. The writer hammered out another warning against thinking too highly of one's own wisdom. When a person considers himself to be wise, he will head down a pathway that ultimately leads to trouble. Know-it-all individualists set themselves in utterly hopeless situations; for without the "tester of hearts" (Proverbs 17:3), man's wisdom ceases to be wisdom. The antithetical parallel, "fear the Lord," complemented the phrase, "trust in the Lord." Proverbs agrees with Psalm 111:10—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The positive command "fear God" coupled with the negative "turn away from evil" presented the sum total of godliness and goodness for authentic followers of the Lord.

3:8. To the spiritual and ethical benefits of trusting in the Lord, the writer tallied the physical value of "the healing for your body" as well. However, he did not suggest that trust in God would lead inevitably to permanent physical health. Yet by fearing the Lord and turning away from evil, we can experience refreshment for our spirit, alleviating stress that causes ailments.

3:9-10. The next section is a quatrain composed of a command (v. 9) followed by the motive (v. 10). The word "honor" means "to make important." The verb thus emphasizes how we must

make a conscious choice to show the importance of our relationship with God by investing our possessions in ways that honor Him. Whenever we buy gifts for others, we give careful thought to what will please them. We should likewise give careful thought to what we give the Lord. The word “wealth” can also be translated “possessions” or “sufficiency,” and describes the resources of those who have enough to live on. Indeed, with its subtle suggestion that we are wealthy when we have enough, the proverb challenges the world’s thinking that we always need just a little bit more. Advertisements today constantly promote “must have” items or “must see” movies, but we really need very little of them.

The expression “firstfruits of all your produce” reminded farmers to recognize God’s blessing for each harvest. According to the law of Moses, the first produce from the field were brought to the house of the Lord (see Ex. 23:19; 34:26). These offerings helped to support the priests (see Num. 18:12; Deut. 18:4) and insure that their place of worship was dedicated to the Lord. Though the expression focuses on the agricultural imagery, it is broad enough to denote any kind of revenue that comes from the work of our hands.

3:10. In a very real sense, the promise that “your barns will be filled with plenty” was something those who gave generously had to take on faith. The expression “your vats will be bursting” also emphasize the generous provision God would supply as people faithfully brought Him their offerings. Much of Israel’s territory supports the growing of grapes, some of which the people made into new wine. Other summer crops such as olives, dates, figs, and pomegranates were also common. People were to dedicate a portion of each of these to God as He provided the harvest. He in turn promised to bless them for their faithfulness.

3:11-12. These verses are cited in Hebrews 12:5-6. While the idea of punishment is certainly present (cf. Job 5:17-18 and 2 Sam 7:14), discipline primarily involves teaching or training rather than punishment for wrongdoing. It is analogous to military training, in which, although the threat of punishment is present, even stern discipline is not necessarily retribution for offenses. Hardship and correction are involved, however, which are always hard to accept.