

PROVERBS 3

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

Wisdom Brings Well-Being

If anyone ever had reason to trust in himself, it was Solomon. He was king, he was wise and there would never be anyone like him ever again. 1 Kings 3:5,12. But Solomon understood where his wisdom came from. As much wisdom as Solomon had been given, God's wisdom was far greater. His understanding is beyond measure (Psalm 147:5) the depth of his wisdom is unsearchable (Roman 11:33-36) he knows us better than we know ourselves.

Even the wisest among us don't know what to do sometimes, and it's important to acknowledge that. That's why Proverbs 3:5-6 gives us 2 practices and a promise. The first practice is to trust God. We can't trust in the Lord with our whole hearts and also lean on our own understanding. Trusting in the Lord involves a change in posture from thinking we know what to do to understanding that while we don't know what to do, God always does. God has a plan for our lives broadly, and He also has a plan for every detail of our lives. We are safe and secure when we rely on Him to carry out those plans. We can trust God with everything!

The second practice reveals whether or not we are doing that. When we truly trust God, we know Him in all our ways. Other translations use the words acknowledge or follow here. The point is, wisdom invites God into everything. It is through relationship that God speaks into our lives. You can't compartmentalize that relationship and expect to know what to do when you don't know what to do.

Here's the promise when you trust God and follow Him in every part of your life, He will make your path straight. God will lead you in the direction you need to go and provide everything along the way. This means it's OK to not know what to do. We don't need to be consumed with knowing all the answers. Instead, we need to be consumed with knowing God. He will faithfully direct us and accomplish His will through our lives.

I. KEEPING THE COVENANT

Proverbs 3:1-12 is about being in a faithful covenant relationship with God. Israel was in a covenant, marriage-like relationship with the Lord that was established at Sinai during the exodus from Egypt. Covenants involve commitments that are to be upheld

by each partner. In our Scripture, the odd numbered verses give the obligation of the human partner in the covenant, and the even numbered verses give the obligations of the divine partner.

¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, ² for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. ⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Deuteronomy 4:6 says that keeping the laws is the wisdom of Israel. Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to teach the law to their children. The law must be internalized in order to be obeyed. There has to be an inward transformation. There must be regeneration - God brings a person to new life (that they are "born again") from a previous state of separation from God and subjection to the decay of death - spiritual renewal or revival; renewal or restoration of a body. The Ten Commandments were written on stone tablets, and the people did not obey them. But Scripture promises that a day is coming when the covenant will be written on the tablet of the heart so that one can obey. Jeremiah 31:33-34.

Wisdom begins with recognizing that you don't have it and looking to God in humility for it. We think that what is best for us is autonomy and the power to choose what to do with our own lives, but Proverbs says that is suicidal.

There is the wisdom of God, and there is the wisdom of humans. The world says that it's wise to live together before marriage, but God says that you can't practice true intimacy without a covenant commitment where you're actually connected to each other. The world says it's wise to hoard your possessions, but Proverbs 11:24 says, *"One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor."* The world says that it's OK to hold a grudge-after all, how will the person know that what they did hurt you if you let it go? But the Bible says forgive your enemies. Here's the key: don't be wise in your own eyes.

Proverbs 3:7 says *repent – turn away from evil*. Solomon gives one practical example of how inward devotion leads to outward obedience to the law. Verse 9 speaks of generosity: honor the Lord with your possessions and your first produce (cf. Lev 23:10; Deuteronomy 18:1-5). Again, this is covenantal language (i.e., obedience to the law). Give back to Yahweh out of what He has provided for you. Give the firstfruits; give your best and your first to God, not the leftovers. This means giving should be set out at the top of your budget, not at the bottom "after everything else is covered."

II. GOD BLESSES THE COVENANT KEEPERS

Wisdom is the return to paradise. The idea with Proverbs is living a life that is a return to Eden – to the way things are supposed to be. A place where there is complete harmony with God, other people and the world around you. Verse 6 gives the promise that the Lord will make our paths straight. He will give divine direction and divine protection to our daily lives on the right path. Verse 8 gives the reward for fearing the Lord and not being wise in our own eyes. Leviticus 26:16 teaches that a broken covenant leads to disease. Proverbs show that faithfulness to the covenant leads to the blessing of health.

Proverbs 3:10 gives the reward for generosity to the Lord, and that reward is full barns and vats that overflow with new wine. Obedience leads to God giving us more. That should not surprise us. Good stewards can be trusted with more and a bad steward will lose what he has been given. So obey God by doing the odd verses of Proverbs 3 and in return you will get the rewards of the even verse.

This is Generally True Now & Will Prove True Later (v 11-12)

¹¹ My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Sometimes you can believe and obey, and things still go bad. You may not receive your best life immediately but your best life later and forever. While the Lord certainly disciplines his children by holding their sin accountable to remove it from their lives, not as a punishment for sin but rather to produce maturity in their lives. We let the hard things in our lives prep us for something much better even when that much better comes later in our lives.

God loves us and wants to make us like Jesus so God disciplines us. He allows the suffering to produce holiness. God will reward us but He does not give us what we want when we want it. Instead, He gives us exactly what we need when we need it. The

problem with prosperity preachers is that they assume godly people will never suffer in this life. That is unbiblical.

Jesus Kept the Covenant For You. No one has been perfectly obedient to the Lord other than Christ. None of us have perfectly trusted God, sometimes we doubt Him. None of us have perfectly turned from evil or been as generous to others as God has directed. But Jesus is the reason that we are able to keep our covenant with the Lord. Jesus represents us before the Father in this covenant relationship. He is the one who has lived up to our obligations for us, and then He took the curses of covenant breaking in our place.

The problem with the prosperity gospel is not that it wants us to be physically blessed. God has promised that we will be. The problems with this false gospel are: (1) it misunderstands life in a fallen world where the righteous suffer; (2) it bypasses Jesus who is the only one who has fulfilled these obligations; and (3) it does not promise enough prosperity. Wisdom is a treasure that is superior to all that we can set our hearts on. If we set our supreme desire on things – even good things – it proves disappointing.

Wisdom Will Give You An Abundant and Eternal Life

13 Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. 17 Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

Proverbs 3:13 -18 is a poem or a hymn about the supreme value of wisdom. It is bracketed by a blessing at the beginning and at the end. Wisdom's profits are better than silver, gold, or jewels. Wisdom is better than money and stuff. Wisdom is better because it cannot be lost or destroyed. Matthew 6. Wisdom shapes you into the kind of person who can enjoy these things in the proper context. Money can put food on the table but cannot create fellowship around your table. Money can buy a house, but it cannot make it a home. Money can provide the funds to buy another nice jewelry but it cannot make the person love you.

Wisdom gives physical, spiritual and relational blessings. Proverbs teaches us that wisdom creates happy homes, loving marriages and other life treasures that are

invaluable. Riches won't make you happy but wisdom will. Getting wisdom will add long life, riches, a good reputation, and a pleasant source of life.

Wisdom Will Gove You a Perception of How the World Works (v 19-20)

19 By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; 20 by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

God created the world through His wisdom. In this verse, the heavens, earth, and the depths are mentioned and through it, God communicates His wise order for the entire world. The earth (ground) and the heavens (the sky) are used to talk about the whole of creation. So when Psalms 103:12 says that *God has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west*. That is complete because it is as far as our sins could possibly be removed from us.

The wise order of God is Christ-centered. God created the world through Jesus (John 1; Colossians 1) and Jesus is the one who upholds the world right now by His Word. Hebrews 1. All things are being united in Christ. (Ephesians 1), so all things are centered on him, including the created order. For example, there is a reason God created the seasons to work in such a way that flowers and plant life die in the winter and come back to life in the spring. That reason is Jesus of Nazareth – to point to His death and resurrections.

Wisdom Will Give You Peace of Mind (v 21-26)

21 My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; 22 they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. 23 Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. 24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. 25 Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, 26 for the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared.

Solomon's point is that wisdom keeps you safe from sudden trouble. You will walk safely during the days of your life, and you will sleep peacefully at night without worry. You will sleep well because have not done the foolish things that cause you to stay awake worrying. You won't be afraid you will get caught or found out. Walking in wisdom and avoiding the foolishness of sin will keep your conscience clear and your mind free from

worry. And if you get wisdom, you will ultimately be safe because God will watch over you all day long.

Wisdom Will Give You God's Blessing Instead of His Judgment (v 27-35)

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"—when you already have it with you. 29 Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you. 30 Do not accuse anyone for no reason—when they have done you no harm. 31 Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. 32 For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence. 33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. 34 He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed. 35 The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame.

Solomon mentions two types of sin. Sin of omission which is failing to do good – what you know you should do. Sin of commission is doing something bad. Do not delay in doing good if you have the means. Don't put it off. Failing to do good to your neighbor when it is your power is foolish, wicked and sinful.

Do not plot evil. Do not accuse your neighbor of evil if they have not done wrong. It is ok to seek justice where there is an appropriate cause but do not do it out of spite or to get even.

Wisdom has its rewards but judgment will fall on those who do not act with wisdom. Our actions will affect more than us. The sins of the parents will affect the children and the righteousness of the parents trying their best to walk after Jesus will affect them positively. There is a choice between blessing (life) and curses (death) in obedience and disobedience.