

Proverbs 3:1 ¶ My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

Proverbs 3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

This is the first of the many wisdom sayings, or proverbs, that compose this chapter. Solomon urges his son not to forget what he has taught him; the Hebrew implies that this teaching is from the first five books of the Bible and the ten commandments. He wants his son to memorize what he's been taught and make it part of his being. If he will do this, it will contribute to his living a long and happy life.

Proverbs 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

Proverbs 3:4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Mercy makes reference to kindness and good deeds. Truth references being trustworthy and faithful. Solomon tells his son to find strength in mercy and truth and make them part of his being. If he will do this, he will be respected for his wisdom and good sense both by God and man.

Guzik points out that Solomon is teaching principles from God's word—not absolute promises. I understand why he says it, and I agree to an extent. I am sure we have all known those whom we considered to be godly people not live to a ripe old age. In our culture today, to follow God in faith and obedience does not always give one favor with man. This all happens under the permissive will of God for His own purposes which are often beyond our ability to understand.

Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

The following two verses, however, are promises you can take to the bank—though we might not always like God's direction. Again, it is because His ways are often beyond our understanding. Whether principle or promise, it always benefits the child of God to live according to His will as recorded in His word—whether we fully understand the why and wherefores as they play out in life or not. The primary benefit is eternal in nature—not the here and now.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

These are powerful verses that I memorized as a young girl without fully comprehending their significance. It is important to understand the word trust. It includes the ability to take refuge in the LORD with confidence and without doubt. Solomon urges his son to trust in the LORD, the self-existent eternal God, with ALL his heart, a reference to his whole being, including his feelings, will and intellect. He should never rely on his own understanding apart from God. Solomon wants his son to consider and respect the LORD in how he chooses to live his life. If he will do this, the LORD will always lead him to do what is right and beneficial to him.

The advice is simple and straightforward, but oh so hard to follow. It means that we have to take self off the throne of our life and yield to God's authority. Personally, I have a quick trigger. I walk fast, I think fast, I react fast; and that has led to many poor choices in life. Learning self-control to stop and think what Jesus would do or say has been a difficult journey for me. Thankfully, I have made great progress; but I still have a long way to go to become the person God would have me be. I truly want to do and say what Jesus would do or say in every circumstance. That is one reason I so long for Jesus to return and take us home. I so long for my new body with no taint of sin!

Chuck Smith: "How can I know the will of God? A question so often asked. Three steps. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Two: lean not to your own understanding. Three: in all your ways acknowledge Him. The result? He shall direct your path."

**Proverbs 3:7 ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.
Proverbs 3:8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.**

Compliance with the counsel the father gives in this verse will naturally follow if the son heeds the counsel of the previous verses. He warns his son not to consider himself to be wise apart from a fear of the LORD and the determination to avoid evil of any kind. If he will heed this advice, he will be healthier and stronger—physically and spiritually.

Ironside: "It is impossible to have fellowship with God while walking in that which His word condemns. The path of blessing is the path of obedience. If He has spoken, the submissive soul will not stay to question but obey implicitly."

Proverbs 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

Proverbs 3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

In these verses, the father encourages his son to honor the LORD with his tithes and offerings. If he will do this, he will be blessed with abundance. Reminder: This was an important part of temple worship and obedience to God in Israel.

I could not help but think of the words of Malachi as I read these verses.

Malachi 3:8–10 “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Tithes and offerings were commanded by God under the old covenant. It is no longer a commandment under the new covenant; it is a privilege. God only wants what we cheerfully want to give to further the spread of the gospel and provide for the needs of the body of believers.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Luke 6:38 “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

It is important to note that the LORD attaches a blessing to one who gives. You can't "outgive" God. He always responds by giving us far more than we give Him.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

Proverbs 3:12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

This is another very important truth. Solomon tells his son not to despise the LORD's rebuke, correction or instruction or let it grieve him. Why? The LORD corrects us because He loves us, just like every father that loves his son. So, the life of one that is

striving to follow God will not always be a bed of roses, in part because of God's loving chastening.

The writer to the Hebrews provides some more insight on these verses.

Hebrews 12:7–10 "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

I have often told my children and grandchildren that if I didn't love you, I would just let you have your own way and suffer the consequences. Though I have always tried to do what is best for my children, I've made many mistakes and bad choices along the way. The LORD never makes mistakes. He is never affected by cultural norms or expectations. He never gets tired or frustrated to the point that he has a lapse in judgment. He always does what is best for us.

I thought it was interesting to note that the Hebrew included no reference to punishment with regard to chastening. It is all about warning, instruction, correction and discipline.

Proverbs 3:13 ¶ Happy is the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.

Proverbs 3:14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Proverbs 3:15 She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Proverbs 3:16 Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour.

Proverbs 3:17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace.

Proverbs 3:18 She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is* every one that retaineth her.

Solomon wants his son to understand that the man who finds wisdom and understanding is a blessed man. He then proceeds to expound on that truth.

- It profits you more than silver or gold.
- It is more valuable than precious gems or anything else you might desire.
- It contributes to a long life.

- It contributes to prosperity and respect from others.
- It leads you in ways that contribute to your delight in life and safe welfare.
- It contributes to life and happiness.

Proverbs 3:19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

Proverbs 3:20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon is basically telling his son that creation was an outworking of the wisdom of YHWH. It was His wisdom that established the foundation that supports life on earth and ordered the heavens to function according to His laws. It was His skill and understanding that established the water cycle, breaking up the depths of the seas and bringing down dew from the clouds of heaven.

I am reminded of the words of Solomon's father, King David. The heavens give evidence of a great Creator and Designer.

Psalm 19:1-3 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

Guzik listed some interesting examples of this truth.

- "The universe has a just-right gravitational force. *If it were larger*, the stars would be too hot and would burn up too quickly and too unevenly to support life. *If it was smaller*, the stars would remain so cool, nuclear fusion would never ignite, and there would be no heat and light.
- The universe has a just-right speed of light. *If it were larger*, stars would send out too much light. *If it were smaller*, stars would not send out enough light.
- The universe has a just-right average distance between the stars. *If it were larger*, the heavy element density would be too thin for rocky planets to form, and there would only be gaseous planets. *If it were smaller*, planetary orbits would become destabilized because of the gravitational pull from other stars."

Proverbs 3:21 ¶ My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

Proverbs 3:22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Proverbs 3:23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

Proverbs 3:24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

I think that Solomon is referencing his counsel in the opening verses of this chapter. Wisdom and discernment are rooted in God's word. Godly wisdom and discernment contribute to a good life that includes honor, respect and safety. They keep you from making choices that will harm you. You will be able to go to sleep peacefully and enjoy sweet dreams, so to speak.

Proverbs 3:25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

Proverbs 3:26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Life is full of the unexpected—both good and bad. Solomon tells his son not to be afraid when bad things happen, which often happens in consequence of the actions of evil men. He tells him to keep trusting the LORD because He will protect him.

Proverbs 3:27 ¶ Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

Proverbs 3:28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Solomon counsels his son to always do good for others as godly morals dictate when you possess the ability to do so. Example, you shouldn't send your neighbor away without provision if you have the means to help him. It was interesting to note that the Hebrew for "neighbor" made reference to one of close association (e.g., brother, companion, friend, husband, etc).

James, the brother of Jesus, stated this principle in even stronger terms.

James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Proverbs 3:29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Proverbs 3:30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

Many of the proverbs seem unnecessary for one who is seeking wisdom through the fear of the LORD. Sadly, because of our sin nature, we are in need of continued exhortation to do good and avoid evil—even when we are trying to live a life honoring to the LORD.

Solomon warns his son against plotting any type of evil against one who is living without fear of harm from him. He shouldn't take advantage of their confidence to do evil. You should not create discord with someone who has done you no wrong.

Sadly, the truth is that many have suffered abuse at the hands of those professing to be followers of God, to be Christians—sometimes to an extreme degree of evil. I think of children in particular who have suffered the abuse of those in spiritual authority over them. Oh how that grieves the heart of God!

Proverbs 3:31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

Proverbs 3:32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

Proverbs 3:33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

Proverbs 3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

Proverbs 3:35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

The father goes on to warn his son against envy of those in a position to take advantage of others; be careful not to pattern your life after them in any aspect. Even in Solomon's day, it was natural to envy those with power and influence, even if obtained by abusing people through deceit or unscrupulous practices.

This type of man is froward, perverse; he has chosen to reject what is right according to God's law. The LORD looks on this type of man with disgust. On the other hand, he gives the righteous man understanding and wisdom. The LORD's curse is on the wicked, as surely as He blesses one who is righteous. He shows scorn to those who would scorn others, but He shows kindness to those who are humble. He will honor the wise and put fools to shame.

Things on this earth don't always seem to reflect the truths expounded in scripture. I am reminded of how Asaph struggled with understanding how God could allow evil men to prosper.

Psalm 73:2-3 "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

This is hard to understand from an earthly perspective. Asaph finally gained some understanding when he saw things from a spiritual perspective.

Psalm 73:16–18 & 21 “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction....Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.”

We need to remember that the LORD is always working with those that follow Him in faith and obedience in light of eternity—not just the here and now.