

## **"Faith and Trust"**

**Lesson Text:** Proverbs 3:1-8 **Background Scripture:** Proverbs 3:1-12

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 56

### **Proverbs 3:1-8 (NIV)**

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

### **TODAY'S LESSON AIMS**

- **Learning Facts:** To identify principles that lead to a blessed life.
- **Biblical Principle:** To explain why fear of the Lord is foundational to other proverbial principles.
- **Daily Application:** To make a plan to identify and change an area of life to align more closely with the God's will by application of a proverbial principle.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Whose Influence?**

Who do you regard as an authoritative voice? Perhaps you consider a particular writer, podcast host, or teacher as such an influence. When I think about the voices that influence me, I immediately think of my professors from Bible college. After graduation, I kept and organized all my notes from their classes for future reference. These notes even went with me during my time as an overseas missionary! I trusted the expertise and wisdom of those professors and wanted to ensure that I would not forget their teachings.

One of the earliest authoritative voices in a person's life is a parent. Most parents want to see their children flourish. Therefore, they will teach their children to become kind, thoughtful, and intelligent people. Parents who follow Jesus will also desire that their children seek God's wisdom and experience a personal relationship with Jesus.

The book of Proverbs invites us to hear the teachings of a father to his son regarding God's wisdom. We can learn from this father figure and apply his wisdom to our lives as well.

### **LESSON CONTEXT**

The book of Proverbs is generally attributed to King Solomon (see Proverbs 1:1). His wisdom was renowned (examples: 1 Kings 4:30-31; 10:24), and over 3,000 proverbs originated with him (4:32), so he was an ideal person to write this book of wisdom literature. Additionally, the text attributes two other sections to Agur (Proverbs 30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1). However, we know nothing about these two men.

Proverbs importance is in how it communicates what makes up a life of wisdom. All people can learn and apply the wisdom taught in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is divided into five sections: an introduction to wisdom (Proverbs 1-9), the proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27), the words of the wise (22:17-24:34), the words of Agur (Proverbs 30), and the words of King Lemuel (Proverbs 31).

The first section begins with an explanation of the importance of wisdom (see Proverbs 1:1–7). After the introduction, most of that section is written from the perspective of a father advising his son on the importance of seeking wisdom from the Lord.

With one exception (see Proverbs 3:5), the poetic order of each pair of verses in today's Scripture follows the same pattern. First, the father gives his son a negative command (example: 3:1a). Second, the father gives a positive command (example: 3:1b). Finally, the father concludes that section with a promise for the son (example: 3:2).

## **One Law: Proverbs 3:1-2**

Although the text leaves the speaker unidentified, we know that a father is instructing his son (see Proverbs 4:1). This is the voice of a godly father, urging his son to listen to wisdom and obey what he hears. The book of Proverbs presents wisdom from God as a quality that can be passed from generation to generation through teaching (4:3–7). The commands of a father and the law of a mother are understood to be one of the most influential voices for a child in this regard (see 1:8, 6:20).

Frequently in the Old Testament, the "law" refers to that given by God to His people (examples: Exodus 24:12; 2 Kings 17:34–37). However, the qualifier *my* indicates that this particular *teaching* consists of a father's instruction to his son. Such instruction is a prominent theme in the first section of Proverbs (see Proverbs 1:8; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2).

The son is told not to *forget* his father's law because of possible risks that such forgetfulness might incur (compare Proverbs 4:5). Similarly, the Israelites were warned the same regarding God's law and His covenant with them (see Deuteronomy 4:23).

Most modern-day perspectives consider the *heart* the emotional center of a person. Such views believe this emotional center lacks the capacity for rational guidance or direction. In the Old Testament, however, the heart refers to a person's inner being. Among other aspects, this inner being includes a person's volition (will), see examples: Genesis 6:5; Exodus 25:2; Proverbs 16:9), emotions (examples: Isaiah 30:29; Nehemiah 2:2), and knowledge (example: 1 Kings 3:9, 12). The centrality of the heart led the father in Proverbs to warn his son regarding its safe keeping (see Proverbs 4:23). The son must be willing and able to receive his father's exhortations and apply them to his life.

### **1. What command did the father give his son? (Proverbs 3:1)**

#### **What Do You Think?**

How do you ensure you do not forget the wisdom others have given you?

#### **Digging Deeper**

What steps will you take to pass along wisdom to younger generations?

When a child honors his or her parents, the days of that child "may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). The promise of a long life stands in contrast to the promise that whoever "pursues evil finds death" (Proverbs 11:19). The wicked person does not follow the commands of God. Such a person "will not remain in the land" (10:30). As a child follows and honors his or her parents, that child is entering a life of wisdom. Later, the father describes wisdom as a woman who holds "long life ... in her right hand" (3:16, not in our printed text). While a long life is not inevitable, a flourishing life begins with seeking wisdom from godly parents.

The Hebrew understanding of *peace* sometimes does imply an absence of conflict (example: 1 Samuel 7:14). However, the Hebrew word for peace can also encompass ideas of flourishing (see Jeremiah 29:6, 7), relational harmony (Isaiah 57:18–19), or the completeness of God's work (54:10; Nahum 1:15). It is the first two aspects that this father is most concerned about for his son.

### **2. What promise did the father give his son if he kept his laws and commands? (Proverbs 3:2)**

## **Two Virtues: Proverbs 3:3–4**

*Love* and *faithfulness* are key words in the Old Testament, especially regarding the attributes of God. *Love* frequently refers to God's loyalty and commitment toward His people (example: Psalm 136). *Faithfulness* conveys the idea of reliability (examples: 71:22; Isaiah 61:8). God's love is rooted in his faithfulness and promises (see Deuteronomy 7:9, 12; 1 Kings 8:23; Psalm 26:3). His love seeks redemption and safety for God's people (example: Exodus 15:13).

So here the father's concern is not only his son's behavior; but also desires to see the son's heart transformed. A transformed heart will result in changed behavior (see Matthew 15:19). A life that appears righteous but lacks a rightly ordered heart is full of hypocrisy and sin (see 23:28). The heart's deception will someday be exposed (Proverbs 26:24–26). The father wants his son to do good actions—actions that come from a heart transformed and oriented toward the virtues of mercy and truth.

So a heart filled with love and faithfulness should be the foundation for the son's behavior. A life seeking God's wisdom results in that life developing mercy and truth that will bear fruit through righteous and wise actions. These attributes are part of God's character, so they should be part of the character of His people (compare Proverbs 16:6; 20:28). This *inner* and *outer* appreciation for the character of God in oneself will produce good success before God and men (verse 4 of today's lesson). This happens when we *write* love and faithfulness *on the tablet of our heart*. A figurative language which means to internalize God's character and apply it to all areas of life. Then a life of character will not only be pleasing in the sight of God, but other people will also recognize it (compare Luke 2:52).

The apostle Peter admonished believers to live in a way that would lead unbelievers to glorify God (see 1 Peter 2:12; compare Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 3:7). A good name and good reputation take time to develop. Not only do these things provide a personal benefit, but they are also avenues to honor God and reveal God to other people.

### **3. What two virtues did the father stress to his son to keep possession of? (Proverbs 3:3-4)**

#### **What Do You Think?**

How will you continue to "write" these virtues "on your heart"?

#### **Digging Deeper**

What steps do you take to ensure you are attentive to the Spirit's leading in this regard?

### **One Trust: Proverbs 3:5-6**

We tend to place trust in things and people other than God (examples: Psalm 52:7; Isaiah 42:17; Jeremiah 17:5). At best, this misplaced trust can lead to futility. At worst, however, it can lead to destruction (see 13:24–27; 49:4–5). Misplaced trust does not lead to any lasting and eternal wisdom.

However, the father's efforts were intended to result in his son's developing *trust in the Lord* (compare Proverbs 22:19). The Lord is worthy to be trusted because, among other things, He is the source of salvation (see Isaiah 12:2). When people trust the Lord, they experience blessing from Him (see Psalm 37:3–7; Jeremiah 17:7–8).

To display trust *with all your heart* implies a total commitment. As with showing love and devotion to the Lord (see Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12), this kind of trust is an all-encompassing act; it requires the totality of a person's being.

### **4. Who did the father advise his son to place his trust in? (Proverbs 3:5)**

#### **What Do You Think?**

What steps do you take to ensure you trust the Lord with all your heart?

#### **Digging Deeper**

How do you establish personal guardrails when you want to lean on your own knowledge and expertise?

The father told his son to always *submit* to (acknowledge) God. To acknowledge God means to know Him and give Him proper recognition for His activity in a person's life (compare Proverbs 2:1–5). It involves intimate knowledge of God and a willingness to submit to His will. When people submit to God, they do not forge ahead as though God does not exist. Instead, they recognize God's power and presence (see Philippians 3:7–11).

Those who submit to God can be assured that He will *make their paths straight* (compare Jeremiah 10:23). God is all-knowing (omniscient), all-present (omnipresent), and all-powerful (omnipotent). Therefore, we can trust that He will provide His people with a wise and righteous path (see Psalm 16:11; Proverbs 2:8). This is not a promise of an easy life—trials are inevitable (see James 1:2–3; 1 Peter 4:12). However, God has provided us with an avenue of peace through Jesus Christ (see John 16:33). Through Jesus, we can trust that God will guide and deliver us, no matter the nature of that path.

## **5. What did the father say to his son would happen if he continued to acknowledge God in his life? (Proverbs 3:6)**

### **What Do You Think?**

How do you overcome obstacles that prevent you from fully submitting to God?

### **Digging Deeper**

Who will you recruit as an accountability partner in this regard?

## **Two Actions: Proverbs 3:7–8**

The opposite of trusting in and submitting to God is to consider one's wisdom as the final say. To be *wise in your own eyes* is to be sure that one's own wisdom is superior and ultimate. When God's people depend on their own wisdom and do what seems right to them, they could be in danger of missing God's will.

God is the source of wisdom (see Proverbs 2:6) and desires to give His people wisdom through His Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:6–16; James 1:5). As a result, God's people should avoid lives of pride and arrogance (see Romans 12:16) and seek out wisdom from God (see James 3:13–16).

The example of King Solomon provides us with a warning based on this verse. He received wisdom from God (1 Kings 3:5–14). However, he failed to follow God's wisdom (11:1–8). As a result, he experienced heartache and the promise of consequences that would extend past his lifetime (11:9–13).

## **6. What did the father have to say about humility? (Proverbs 3:7a)**

The father told his son to *fear the LORD and shun evil*. In this verse, however, to fear the Lord involves having an attitude of reverence, awe, wonder, faith, and trust in the Lord. Those who fear the Lord come to have true wisdom (see 1:7), which leads to an avoidance of evil (14:16). God delights in those who show humility and fear Him (see Psalm 147:11). Christians are commanded to live in a way that reflects their fear of the Lord (1 Peter 2:17; example: Acts 9:31).

However, fearing God also requires actively turning from evil when tempted (see Psalm 34:11–14), and turning to God in faith and obedience.

A life of humility, fear of the Lord, and obedience to Him results in the complete spiritual *health* wholeness of a person who is in a state of dependency. And while people may experience wholeness and health physically in part while on earth, Scripture promises a time in the future when "God shall wipe away all tears ... and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4).

## **7. What two directives did the father give his son? (Proverbs 3:7b–8)**

## **CONCLUSION**

## **Voices of Authority**

A 2022 study showed that most people spend about two and a half hours daily on social media platforms. While this may not seem like a lot of time, it is a significant increase from 10 years prior, when the average daily usage hovered around one hour per day. Social media has become a “voice of authority” for many people, regardless of the actual knowledge, expertise, or wisdom of that voice.

It is easy for believers to say that we are seeking the wisdom of God when in actuality, other voices influence our lives and shape our perspectives. If we’re filling our lives with human ideas rather than the wisdom of God, which will have more influence?

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, thank You for the inspired wisdom You have revealed to us in Scripture. Help us to listen and follow Your Word. Show us how we can be more attentive to the direction of Your Spirit so that we might have lives of wisdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

## **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

God’s children seek the wisdom of their heavenly Father.

## **ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

Next week’s lesson is “**Faith and Encouragement**” where we will see how one person’s reassuring words and faith helped many get through a difficult circumstance. Study 2 Chronicles 20:13–20.