

Wisdom to Live By

Proverbs 3:1-12

Women's Bible Study
Rosanne Griffith
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Wisdom is the message woven throughout the book of Proverbs. Teaching from this book is as relevant today as when it was written in 700 B.C. Times have changed since then, but people are essentially the same. We all need God's wisdom and guidance to make righteous choices and live in a manner that pleases our Lord. God inspired the authors of Proverbs to write what they did, making the wisdom of this book timeless.

Proverbs 3:1-12 (NKJV)

- 1 My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
- 2 For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.
- 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart,
- 4 *And* so find favor and high esteem
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 acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
- 8 It will be health to your flesh,
And strength to your bones
- 9 Honor the LORD with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
- 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.
- 11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor detest His correction;
- 12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights

Verses 1-4 encourage us to obey God's word.

- 1 My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
- 2 For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.
- 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart,
- 4 *And* so find favor and high esteem
In the sight of God and man.

First we are told, “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands.” Solomon warns his son to never forget God's word (**my law**). God wants us to always remember His word; to do this we need to know His word, internalize it, and make it personal. Choosing not to **forget** God's word is more than just a mental exercise of memory. We need to live not only in outward conformity to God's commands, but have a **heart** that meditates on God's word and loves and obeys Him.

Deuteronomy 30:16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

Verse 2 says, “For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.”

This verse reveals a principle, a general guideline as a result of positive behavior, not a promise. Making life choices through prayer and knowledge of God’s word, obedience to God, can result in a **long** peaceful life. We need to remember that length of days could be a curse without the blessing of **peace**.

Psalm 91:16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation.”

Verse 3 states “Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” Here Solomon tells his son, and we are told by God, to hold God’s undeserved kindness and compassion, which is mercy, and truth close to our hearts. According to Mathew Poole, **mercy and truth** can be understood as God’s mercy and truth to us and as the mercy and truth that is our duty to show to others. Both are important and should never be forsaken. The virtues of **mercy and truth** (or love and faithfulness) are often paired in the Old Testament to indicate the making and keeping of commitments.

Psalm 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

We are to “bind them around our neck.” Love and faithfulness (**mercy and truth**) are to be held close and carried with us wherever we go so they will not be forgotten. It also says to “write them on the tablet of your heart.” These

virtues are not merely to be outward rules to live by, they must be embedded in our hearts and minds so they are where our thoughts go first and become part of our very nature.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Jeremiah 31:33 But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Knowing God’s Word and keeping it close to our hearts will lead us to a life of faithfulness and obedience to God, we will then “[find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man,](#)” (verse 4). Striving to live a righteous obedient life can bring the blessings of joy and peace as well as the knowledge that God is pleased with us. Concerning “[favor of man,](#)” John Trapp states, “It is God that gives credit; he fashioneth men’s opinions, and inclineth their hearts.”

Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*. His praise endures forever.

Verses 5 and 6 encourage us to walk rightly with God by trusting Him completely and relying on Him.

- 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Solomon advises his son to “Trust in the Lord.” We are to trust God, not ourselves, not worldly recommendations, not even our best friend. Our Lord is completely worthy of our trust.

Warren Wiersbe said this about trust, “The word translated ‘trust’ in Proverbs 3:5 means ‘to lie helpless, facedown.’ It pictures a servant waiting for the master’s command in readiness to obey, or a defeated soldier yielding himself to the conquering general.”

We need to consciously place our **trust in the Lord** in every circumstance.

Psalms 37:3&5 3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring *it* to pass.

“Trust in the Lord” must be given “with all your heart.” True trust in God must be complete and total trust. We fail to trust the Lord when we put half our trust in God and half our trust in ourselves or someone else.

John Trapp stated, “They trust not God at all that do it not alone. He that stands with one foot on a rock, and another foot upon a quicksand, will sink and perish as certainly as he that stands with both feet on a quicksand.”

Charles Bridges described trusting with all your heart in this way, “This trust is not the mere cold assent of enlightened judgment. It is trust...with all your heart. It is a childlike, unwavering confidence in our Father’s well-proved wisdom, faithfulness, and love.”

How can you trust in the Lord with all of your heart?

-Study God’s Word daily

-Pray without ceasing

-Surrender your need for control to God

You must “**lean not on your own understanding.**” Trusting the Lord with all of your heart means you need to rely on God completely instead of depending on the knowledge you have.

Adam Clarke in his commentary on “**lean not on your own understanding**” stated, “It is on GOD, not on *thyself*, that thou art commanded to *depend*. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.... *Self-sufficiency* and *self-dependence* have been the ruin of mankind ever since the fall of Adam. The grand sin of the human race is their continual endeavour to *live independently of God.*”

Jeremiah 9:23 Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

Next, verse six says, “**In all your ways acknowledge Him.**” Trusting God with all of our heart means that we acknowledge Him in everything we do. We should invite God into every aspect of our daily lives and every choice we make. If we can pray without ceasing we’ll get closer to acknowledging Him

in all of our ways.

Being able to, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him,” gives the result that “He shall direct your paths.” This is the great principle of our Lord’s response to all who fully trust Him as described above. When we **acknowledge Him** in all our **ways**, He will **direct** our **paths** in the fulfillment of His will, into what is right before Him and pleasing to us.

Believers often ask, “How can I know the will of God?” Proverbs 3:5-6, in principle, give a wonderful answer to this question. When we:

- Decide to put our trust in the Lord.
- Decide not to trust our own understanding, but give attention and priority to God’s revealed word.
- Decide to acknowledge and honor God in all that we do.

When we do these things, we can trust that God will **direct** our **paths**. We can go forward in peace, believing that through His word, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, through the counsel of others, through godly common sense, and through life circumstances, God will **direct** our **paths**. We will walk along our way of life and come to see that we have been on the path God intended all along.

Isaiah 45:13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward,” says the LORD of hosts.

Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

Verses 7 and 8 remind us we can walk rightly with God by living a humble and reverent life.

- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
- 8 It will be health to your flesh,
And strength to your bones

We can regard “Do not be wise in your own eyes,” as an explanation of what it means to lean on one's own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). We should never think of our wisdom as better or greater than God's.

Matthew Poole's commentary explains “Do not be wise in your own eyes,” like this, “Be not puffed up with vain conceit of thine own wisdom, as if that were sufficient for the conduct of all thine affairs without direction or assistance from God, or without the advice of others.”

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

A natural result of trusting God is to “Fear the Lord and depart from evil.” We come to know the Lord better as we trust Him more and more, leading to a natural reverence and awe of Him, which is **fear** of **the Lord**. As we trust Him, we are drawn closer to God and further from **evil**.

Job 28:28 And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’

Verse 8 tells us “It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.” A life of surrender and trust in God has real benefits to the **health** of the one who trusts in Him. It gives a greater sense of peace and **strength** that one would not have apart from a life of trust and surrender to God.

We are told to walk rightly with God in regard to our possessions in verses 9 and 10.

- 9 Honor the LORD with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
- 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.

Another practical way to show that you do **trust in the Lord with all your heart** is to “**Honor the LORD with your possessions.**” When we truly trust the Lord, we can **honor** Him with generosity that realizes He is the great provider who has inexhaustible resources. We also need to remember that all we have is the Lord’s and we are merely stewards of what He has given us.

You are to give from “**the firstfruits of all your increase.**” We should give to God the *first* and *best*. If we will truly **honor the Lord** with our giving, it won’t be with the last and leftovers.

Warren Wiersby in his commentary stated, “The Old Testament Jews brought the Lord the firstlings of their flocks (Exodus 13:1-2) and the firstfruits of their fields (Leviticus 23:9-14), and in this way acknowledged His goodness and sovereignty.”

Exodus 13:1-2 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.”

Leviticus 23:9-10 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, *10* “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

The result of **honoring the Lord with our possessions** is the wonderful principle, “your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be filled with new wine.” God ultimately controls and distributes all resources. He knows how to prosper and take care of those who honor Him with the resources He has given to them.

Proverbs 19:17 One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

Advice is given telling us that our heart needs to right when receiving correction from God in verses 11 and 12.

11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor detest His correction;

12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights

Solomon tells his son, “do not despise the chastening of the LORD.” Here we are being taught how to regard correction or discipline from God.

Adam Clarke’s commentary referring to verse 11 says, “The word *musar* [**chastening**] signifies *correction, discipline, and instruction*. Teaching is essentially necessary to show the man the way in which he is to go; *discipline* is necessary to render that *teaching effectual*; and, often, *correction* is requisite in order to bring the mind into *submission*, without which it cannot acquire *knowledge*.”

Christians should endure their own seasons of **chastenings** and the discouragement that may come with it. We must remember that discipline from God happens to those who are God's children.

We are asked not to “**detest His correction.**” God may bring or allow affliction or discomfort in the life of a believer for the purpose of:

- Exposing a sin or evil not previously seen.
- Showing the nature of the problem and the need to address it.
- Discouraging the previous embrace of the sin or evil.
- Guiding one to the rejection of sin or evil and the embrace of God's best.

Discomfort or affliction can come in many ways. God may do it through the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit. It may come through critics and adversaries. It may come through disappointing and sour circumstances. However it comes, it will not feel good, but it must happen before God can do much good in the life of the believer.

Duane Garrett explained the Lord's discipline like this, “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.”

Next we are reminded “**for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.**” God's correction of His people is a wonderful sign of His *love*. In our instinctive desire for ease and comfort we often wish God would not correct us. Yet because He **loves** and **delights** in us, according

to His wisdom He will deal with our sins, weaknesses, and failings.

A father who truly loves his children will correct them appropriately. Leaving sins and failings uncorrected is not a sign of love; it is a sign of indifference and selfish disregard that often accompanies indifference.

Warren Wiersbe's commentary on verse 12 tells us, "Sometimes He chastens because we have rebelled and need to repent; other times He chastens to keep us from sinning and to prepare us for His special blessing. No matter how much the experience *hurts* us, it will never *harm* us, because God always chastens in love."

Deuteronomy 8:5 Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

Recap

- Verses 1-4 encourage us to obey God's word.
- Verses 5 and 6 encourage us to walk rightly with God by trusting Him completely and relying on Him.
- Verses 7 and 8 remind us we can walk rightly with God by living a humble and reverent life.
- We are told to walk rightly with God in regard to our possessions in verses 9 and 10.
- Advice is given telling us that our heart needs to right when receiving correction from God in verses 11 and 12.