

September 5, 2021

“Pursuing Righteousness”  
Lesson 1 of Unit

Proverbs 3:1-12

**Intro**

Discipline and wisdom. We can sometimes see these as two separate elements. But according to Proverbs, either disciplining yourself, or being disciplined by another, can and should lead to wisdom.

Today’s passage is the third of 10 “fatherly appeals” in the book of Proverbs. It breaks down easily for our study. The odd-numbered verses are principles to be followed, and the even-numbered verses are the benefits that will come from applying those principles. They are dealing more with attitudes, which is where all our behaviors start.

**Read Proverbs 3:1-12**

1. vs. 1: The speaker addresses his son

Most education in ancient Israel was father to son / mother to daughter  
An early version of “home schooling”!

The words “teaching” and “commands” are used in the first half of the verse

Putting them early shows an emphasis on them, on their importance  
The Hebrew actually puts the words earlier in the sentence than English does  
“My teachings do not forget, and my commands let your heart keep.”  
The two words are essentially synonyms, meaning the same idea or concept  
We could develop distinctions, but the words are the same in meaning

The teachings/commands are likely referring to those from God, not from the father himself

The word “heart” usually means the core part/personality of the person being talked to  
Heart usually includes the mind, the emotions, and the will  
Keeping the commandments affects the inner being of a person  
Our thoughts (mind), emotions, and our will direct our outward actions

2. vs. 2: What’s the benefit of following the teachings/commands of verse 1?

“Prolong your life” and “bring you prosperity”  
Obeying/following the Word of God is the best way to live a full and healthy life  
“For whoever finds me (wisdom) finds life.” Prov. 8:35  
Prolonging life could refer to the time here on earth, but likely refers to eternal life as well  
Prosperity also has a dual possible meaning  
could imply material benefits here on earth  
also has a spiritual side, the prosperity of living rightly and being content with a Godly life

3. vs. 3: The second principle deals with love and faithfulness

They are never to leave us

They are to be wrapped into our very being (“around your neck”, “your heart”)

Love is translated in Scripture many ways

Here means “kindness”, but also “covenant loyalty”

Faithfulness refers to staying true to something, to being reliable

Both of these qualities are attributes of God

He is always loyal to the covenant He made with us, even when we aren’t loyal to it

He is always reliable—we can be sure of His actions

We are to become more like God as we grow into spiritual maturity

“Bind them about your neck” and “write them on the tablet of your heart”

Both are figurative phrases, indicating how important these qualities should be to us

Rebellious and disobedient people are described as “stiff-necked” (Ex.32:9, Jer. 17:23)

They also have hardened hearts (2 Chron. 36:13, Matt. 19:8)

What can we do to prevent having stiff necks and hardened hearts?

Cultivate an attitude of love and faithfulness

That attitude will manifest itself in our words and actions

4. vs. 4: The benefits of an attitude of love and faithfulness

“will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man”

If our character has these two attributes, God is pleased with us

These qualities also bring us a favorable response from man

Most people, even non-Christians, respond favorable to a person who acts kindly

We also gain a “good name”, a positive reputation with God and with man

A reputation is the result of the same behaviors over a stretch of time

If our reputation gets us a “good name”, we are displaying God’s character

This takes time, and a commitment to develop a Godly character

5. vs. 5: Two principles go together in this verse

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart”

“Lean not on your own understanding”

Trusting in the Lord is an active idea; it’s not passively hoping

This is a decision to commit to God completely

Mind, emotions, will, and body (see vs. 1)

Leaning on God’s wisdom instead of our own understanding is part of “trusting in the Lord”

In our better moments, we realize that our understanding is less than God’s

When we trust in ourselves more than God, bad situations usually result

If we think we have it “all figured out”, we might want to stop and ask God’s view

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” (Col. 3:16)

6. vs. 6: The verse starts with a continuation of vs. 5

“in all your ways acknowledge Him”

This repetition in vs. 5-6 shows how important knowing God is

Knowing God suggests being on intimate, close terms with Him

It suggests practices His presence in all we do

The benefit: “He will make your paths straight”

God is actively involved in people’s lives, especially those of His people

Jer. 10:23 says, “I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in  
man who walks to direct his steps.”

When we acknowledge God’s wisdom and His care for us, it is easy to follow the path He  
has set before us.

7. vs. 7: The principle here is very similar to that in vs. 5

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil”

The first part warns against glorifying one’s self-knowledge over God’s wisdom

Being arrogant and conceited about one’s abilities prevents connecting to God

Also, one cannot fear God until one realizes they aren’t “all that”

Fearing God helps us to shun evil

Knowing who He is and His wisdom and power enable us to avoid evil

Fearing God and the benefits of doing so are a major theme in Proverbs

8. vs. 8: The benefit of fearing the Lord and avoiding self-conceit is physical health

The connection between the body and the mind

There is a clear connection between physical health and spiritual health

When a person is following God conscientiously, their body is in the best health

It is a circular connection—each half, done well, enables the other’s health

9. vs. 9: The principle here is that of giving joyfully and of one’s best

The OT system of tithing involved giving the “firstfruits” of one’s crops

Giving God the best of what one has

This giving comes from a joyful, grateful, and faithful heart

2 Cor. 9:7 says, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or  
under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

10. vs. 10: The benefit is “barns...filled to overflowing” and “vats (brimming) over with new wine”

God loves to bless those who follow and obey Him

This verse says God will bless the faithful materially

This is NOT a “health-and-wealth” verse

God may choose to bless abundantly

He will always bless to meet our needs

Faithfulness and cheerfulness in giving are the requirements for God to bless

11. vs. 11: We go from blessing to discipline

“Do not despise the LORD’S discipline, and do not resent His rebuke”

It’s never fun to be corrected or disciplined

As we mature, we appreciate being corrected so we can do better “next time”

12. vs. 12: The benefit here is the understanding of why God corrects us—He loves us  
Only a fool hates to be corrected; the wise person sees correction as coming from love  
A parent who doesn't discipline a child doesn't seem to really love them  
They aren't helping them be the best person they can be  
So it is with God  
His discipline shows He loves us, and is helping us be the best follower possible

Application: A little review here of the six principles:

1. Obey the instructions of parents and God
2. Be committed to God's truth
3. Trust only in the Lord, and not yourself
4. Have great reverence and awe (fear) of God
5. Put God first in your giving
6. Accept the discipline of God as love

Living a life that embraces these six principles produces the best kind of life—one that pleases God!

Prayer: Father God, thank You for providing us wise principles that help us follow You and grow to be more like you. Help us to trust You more, and put You first more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

.