

September 4, 2022

“Pursuing Righteousness”
Lesson 1 of Unit

Proverbs 3:1-12

Intro

Today’s passage is one of 10 fatherly appeals / lectures in the first 9 chapters of Proverbs. This is the third of those appeals. It has 6 basic principles (the odd verses) and the benefits that come from following those principles (the even verses). Principles are commandments; they are lifestyle choices and attitudes that if adopted, produce benefits. And these benefits aren’t always immediate. But they will come as the principle is employed regularly.

Read Proverbs 3:1-12

1. vs. 1: The first principle is to remember the father’s teachings / commandments
 The Hebrew words for teaching and commandments are often connected in the OT
 Therefore, their meanings are essential synonymous
 The father is passing down the teachings/commandments of God—His principles
 The son is cautioned to keep them, to obey them
 The father doesn’t seek obedience for his own sake
 He wants the son to obey for the son’s benefit
 The father says to keep these “in your heart”
 The heart refers to the core personality of a person
 Their mind, emotions, and will
 Keeping the commands in one’s heart affects one’s inner being
 All our actions stem from our heart
2. vs. 2: The reward to the first principle is long life (many years)
 The father asks his son to obey his teachings because they will produce long life
 A healthy, full life is the result of the various actions taken in living
 Good diet, proper rest, right attitudes
 “Whoever finds wisdom finds life” says Prov. 3:16 and 8:35
3. vs. 3: The second principle is to “bind (love and faithfulness) around your neck”
 The word translated “love” is frequently connected to “covenant”
 The leads to the idea of love as “covenant loyalty” (see Deut. 7:9, 12)
 The word “faithfulness” carries the idea of *reliability*
 Covenant loyalty and reliability are two of God’s attributes
 If they are part of God’s character, we should be striving to develop these qualities
- Secondly, the command is to “write them on the tablet of your heart” as well as to “bind them about your neck”
 Rebellious people are described as “stiff-necked” (Ex. 32:9; Jer. 17:23)
 They are also described as having hard hearts (2 Chron. 36:13, Matt. 19:8)
 It seems important to learn characteristics to prevent stiff necks and hard hearts

Two of these qualities are love and faithfulness

We should desire Godly qualities to be at the core of our being.

4. vs. 4: The benefit of developing and maintaining love and faithfulness is *favor* and *a good name*

Favor implies acceptance

Good name implies being known for prudence or good behavior (or both)

Having these two things results in a good reputation with God and with man

A good name / reputation takes time to develop, leading to favor/acceptance

5. vs. 5: The third principle has three parts to it

First, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart”

Second, “and lean not on your own understanding”

Trusting “in the Lord” is an active concept; it’s something we are to **do**

Again, the word “heart” is used

We are to trust in the Lord with the entirety of our being

We would be wise to never trust our own understanding above or before God’s

We know we are fallible people, but God is wise and unchanging

A spiritually mature person allows the Word to direct their path (see Col. 3:16)

Third, in vs. 6a, we are to acknowledge God in everything we do

To know God means to have a close, intimate relationship with Him

We will practice His presence in every aspect of our lives (see Phil. 3:7-11)

6. vs. 6b: The benefit of trusting God more than ourselves and acknowledging Him in everything?

God will make our paths straight

This suggests several things for our lives

God will make our life choices clear

God will make difficult times easier

God will remove (occasionally) things that might trip us up

Having a smooth straight path before us, directed by God, is the way to go!

7. vs. 7: The principle here is the same as in vs. 5

“Do not be wise in your own eyes” = “lean not on your own understanding”

To this is added, “fear the Lord and shun evil”

It is near impossible to fear God if one is arrogant in their self-understanding

To fear the Lord is **the** key concept of Proverbs

It is the bookend idea in chapters 1 and 9

Fearing God will help us to shun evil

It’s important to note that Christians are to fear God as well

See Acts 9:31, 2 Cor. 5:11, Heb. 12:28-29, and 1 Peter 2:17

8. vs. 8: The benefit of humility and fearing God is health

This verse refers to “health to your body” and “nourishment to your bones”

There is a physical benefit to fearing God

“A merry heart does good like a medicine” Prov. 17:22

Humility, fear of God, and turning from evil also bring health spiritually / psychologically

There is a clear connection between a person's spiritual well-being and one's physical and mental well-being. Each one influences the others.

9. vs. 9: Principle # 5 is give back to the Lord a portion of what He has blessed you with
We generally refer to this as tithing
This originally comes up in Deut. 14, as the way the people support the priests
This is an act of faith, as the people are to give "the first fruits of all your crops"
The first fruits are almost always the biggest and the best
This requires God's people to have a generous heart, a quality of God's
There are several NT passages that use the concept of the fruit fruits
See Rom. 8:23 and 11:16, 1 Cor. 15:20 and 23, and James 1:18

10. vs. 10: The benefit here is an abundance
This is not a "health-and-wealth" gospel idea
Malachi gives God's challenge to Israel to give the "whole tithe" so that He could bless them "abundantly"
God's desire for His people is to bless them
Those who are faithful, generous, and give sacrificially always have enough
Keep in mind also Jesus' parable about the greedy farmer in Luke 12:16-21

11. vs. 11: The final principle is to accept God's discipline in our lives
Only a fool despises discipline, says Prov. 1:7 and 15:5
God's discipline comes to children through Godly parents

12. vs. 12: The benefit to accepting God's discipline is knowing how that relates us to God
"the Lord disciplines those **he loves** as a father the son he delights in"
What kind of a parent never disciplines their child?
One who doesn't care about the child's growth and future
That's not the kind of parent God is to us!
When God disciplines us, or we suffer affliction, we know that He loves us

Application: Think about these six principles and benefits from today's study:

1. Obey the instruction of both parents and God, in order to have a long successful life
2. Be committed to God's truth, and you will win a good reputation with God and man
3. Trust in the Lord, not yourself, and He will make your paths smooth
4. Have great reverence for God and avoid evil, so you will live a very healthy life
5. Put God first in your giving your best, and He will bless you immensely
6. Accept God's discipline and life's sufferings, knowing that a loving God is shaping you

Living a lifestyle that embraces these six principles will produce the best kind of life: one that pleases God.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for giving us Your wisdom and instruction in the Bible. Help us to put into practice daily the principles that please and honor You, and that will give us the best of lives here. In Jesus' name, Amen.

