

Lifeworld.org

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

A Father's Counsel

Lesson Subject: A godly father will lead his family to trust God.

L29. Date: June 1984. **Text:** Proverbs 3:1-12.

Topic: Wisdom; Father: Counsel of; Stewardship: Of Money.

A father who loves his children expresses his love by praying for them, providing for them, disciplining them, and counseling them. True parental love is affection plus action. A father who loves his children will lead them to trust God.

Much of the book of Proverbs is a father teaching the precepts to life to his son. "*Son*" occurs forty-three times and "*my son*" occurs another twenty times in the book. This week's text (Proverbs 3:1-12) is typical of the passages where a father counsels his son in an upright life.

The twelve verses of this week's lesson text fall into six divisions of two verses each. Each division expresses a principle and then promises a blessing to one who lives by it. The Subjects covered are law, integrity, guidance, piety, stewardship, and discipline.

Those are subjects which need to be taught today. It is amazing that words written in the Hebrew language nearly three thousand years ago are modern as today's newspaper; however, that is the way the Word of God applies. Thank God for the relevance of the Bible to our needs today.

I. COUNSELING CONCERNING LAW (Proverbs 3:1, 2).

A. Principle: Hide the Word of God in your heart that you might meditate on it and obey it (verses 1, 2). The command is twofold: to "*forget not*" God's Word and to "*keep*" (obey) His commandments. The first speaks

of meditation which is based on a knowledge of what God has said.

God repeated that principle over and again. *"This book of the law: shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein"* (Joshua 1:8). The psalmist responded to such a command, *"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11). When the heart keeps God's Word, the actions will obey.

B. Blessing: A long and peaceful life comes to one who lives by the Word of God (verse 2). God has promised an extension of days to one who lives for Him (Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 9:10, 11; 10:27).

Life could be a curse under some conditions; therefore, God promised life in its fullest sense. He gives years of life worth living. Such a person will *"love life"* and *"see good days"* by God's provision (I Peter 3:10). The peace which is tranquility of mind plus spiritual serenity will accompany one though all the years and even to death. It gives assurance, *"having promise of life that now is, and of that which is to come"* (I Timothy 4:8). '

C. Application: The text challenges you to know God's Word by personal study. Apply its principles to daily life. Live by applying eternal principles to practical affairs, and you will personally reap the benefits of God's approval. *"It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones"* (Proverbs 3:8).

II. COUNSEL CONCERNING INTEGRITY (Proverbs 3:3, 4).

A. Principle: Live in the spirit of mercy and truth (verse 3). That places life in two relationships. *"Mercy"* is manward. It is pity plus help to one who is in need. God takes delight in the merciful person, promising him mercy also (Matthew 5:7). He requires that quality in His people (Micah 6:8) and sets the example for us. *"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful"* (Luke 6:36).

As *"mercy"* is manward, *"truth"* is Godward. It is that which is in agreement with the person of God. God is truth.

The qualities of mercy and truth are to be worn as a signet to identify the person who serves God. They are to arise from one's inmost personality (the heart) because they are to be written there. They make every action agree with the holy nature of God and provide loving aid to mankind.

B. Blessing: Mercy and truth are pleasing to both God and man (verse 4). To God it is *"favour"* — pleasant in appearance and good in reputation.

To man it is *"good understanding,"* indicating that one knows God and is serving God.

C. Application: The Christian should live as a citizen of two worlds and fulfill his obligation to each. He must be *"the salt of the earth"* and *"the light of the world"* (Matthew 5:13-16). He must consider character and conduct, for both are important as he lives for God.

III. COUNSEL CONCERNING GUIDANCE (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

A. Principle: Follow God's direction (verse 5). That principle seems so simple; yet, it is most profound. So the Lord expresses it in a positive and a negative form. The positive statement is, "Trust God completely." It means to commit your way to the Lord (Psalm 37:5), to keep His testimonies (Psalm 119:2), and to seek God with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). The negative statement is, "Do not trust yourself at all." God warns, *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool"* (Proverbs 28:26). *"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man"* (Psalm 118:8). Therefore, trust God in everything. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him"* (Proverbs 3:6).

B. Blessing: God will guide your steps (verse 6). What a promise that is! If you trust God in all your ways, He will guide your step in all your ways. *"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye' in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left"* (Isaiah, 30:21).

C. Application: God's guidance is offered to you. Ask Him to guide you. Expect Him to guide you. Look for signs of His guidance in providence, provisions, inner impressions, the Bible, and the counsel of mature Christians. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (verse 6).

IV. COUNSEL CONCERNING PIETY (Proverbs 3:7,8).

A. Principle: Make God, not yourself, the center of your world. That involves three things. (1) Acknowledge your limitations: *"Be not wise in thine own eyes."* (2) Reverence God: *"Fear the LORD."* (3) Be holy: *"Depart from evil."* Those requirements are logical for one who would walk with an infinite and holy God. That is a practical way to obey the counsel, *"In all thy ways acknowledge him."*

B. Blessing: God will give you health and strength. As the umbilical

cord provides resources for life and growth to the infant in his mother's womb, so the provision of God provides for the needs of His children. *"It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones"* (verse 8). That is God's way of saying, *"As thy days, so shall thy strength be"* (Deuteronomy 33:25). *"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19).

C. Application: Whom do you trust? Do you walk by faith or by sight? To be wise is to walk with God. "It is better to walk by faith in the dark than to walk alone in the light" (anonymous). *"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

V. COUNSEL CONCERNING STEWARDSHIP (Proverbs 3:9,10).

A. Principle: Honor God as the giver of all material resources (verse 9). Faithful stewardship of material wealth is an act of reverence which every person owes to God.

(1) All belongs to God as creator (Genesis 1:31). *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:3). Therefore, *"the earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof"* (Psalm 24:1).

(2) Ten percent of what man receives should be given to God in acknowledgment of God's ownership. *"All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD"* (Leviticus 27:30). *"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase. . . year by year"* (Deuteronomy 14:22).

(3) All material wealth is to be brought under God's authority. Look again at verse 9 of the lesson text. *"Substance"* refers to capital on hand. *"Increase"* is revenue from labor or investments. Both are to be used with a sense of stewardship before the Lord.

B. Blessing: God will increase the resources of a faithful steward (verse 10). *"The LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers"* (Deuteronomy 30:9). God will be no one's debtor. He rewards faithful stewardship.

C. Application: Three things must govern the Christian's control of his earthly wealth. (1) *Ownership:* What I have is not mine; it belongs to God. (2) *Stewardship:* I am responsible for how I use what I have while I have it. (3) *Accountability:* I will answer to God for how I use what I have while I have it. Stewardship includes judgment. Be faithful.

VI. COUNSEL CONCERNING DISCIPLINE (Proverbs 3:11, 12).

A. Principle: God will discipline His dear children, and they must receive His discipline correctly (verse 11). To "*despise*" God's chastening means to receive it with loathing, disgust, vexation, and weariness. It is to suffer under it with impatience, to fret and chafe as He disciplines. Such an attitude is sinful rebellion against Him. Let us learn to accept suffering as under the hand and watch-care of God. "*Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee*" (Deuteronomy 8:5).

B. Blessing: Divine discipline is proof of God's loving interest in you as His dear child (verse 12). It testifies in a twofold way. (1) He loves you. He who loves his child disciplines him consistently (Proverbs 3:24). God loves and disciplines His children (Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19). (2) You are His child (Hebrews 12:3-13). "*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. . . . But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons*" (Hebrews 12:7, 8). What an assurance God's discipline brings to the believer's heart!

C. Application: Trust God to be with you in all trouble and to deliver you in the midst of it. Know that God knows. He who notes the fall of a single sparrow, and numbers the hairs of your head is fully aware and concerned about what happens to you (Luke 12:6, 7). Know that all that comes is temporary and write upon it, "This too shall pass." Know that God's discipline is always tempered with mercy as He makes "*a way to escape*" with every trial (1 Corinthians 10:13). Do not rebel, therefore, but look for the benefit which comes from divine discipline. "*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (Job 23:10). Endure the trials and honor God through them by your faith and submission to His good will.

Here is the way of wisdom: to obey divine law, to live in a spirit of mercy and truth, to follow God's directions, to make God the center of life, to honor Him by faithful stewardship of resources, and to submit to Him in His discipline. That is wisdom. "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding*" (Proverbs 3:13). That is a basis for joy (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).

QUESTIONS

1. How can you apply the principle expressed in verse 1?

2. How does the promised blessing of verse 2 apply to you?
3. How can you apply the principle expressed in verse 2?
4. How can you know God's will in order to follow it?
5. How can you "*acknowledge*" God in all your ways (verse 6)?
6. How can you "*fear the LORD*" as required in verse 7?
7. What is the meaning of the term stewardship?
8. In what sense are we stewards of all we possess?
9. What blessing for faithful stewardship is promised in verse 10?
10. What is the proper response to divine discipline (verse 11)?