

Five Lessons for Living from Proverbs

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Day One

I want to share five lessons for living from Proverbs chapter three. This chapter gives us five important principles that will benefit you greatly if you intentionally apply them to your life, and each principle has a corresponding benefit.

Today let's look at the first one, which we find in verses 1 and 2:

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity (Proverbs 3:1-2).

First, Solomon says: "do not forget." Are you prone to forget what you should remember? Learning happens because of repetition—that's how our brains work. So, if you want to remember what you should remember—specifically, remember God's principles—then you need to repeat them, reread them, memorize them, reinforce them in your mind frequently. That's why reading your Bible systematically and daily will create pathways in your brain to help you to remember God's truth.

This principle for living goes on to say "keep my commands in your heart." Again, we see the importance of repetition—keeping God's principles stored in your heart. That's why memorizing Scripture is so important to your spiritual progress. For example, I memorized Ephesians 4:29 years ago, which says: *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* I recognized I needed control of my tongue, and after memorizing that verse, the Holy Spirit would bring it to my mind very often and stop me from saying something I shouldn't say or didn't need to be said. Because I keep that command in my heart, it helps to control my words.

The benefits of keeping God's Word in your heart are long life, peace, and prosperity. Keeping in mind proverbs are principles, not promises, by living in obedience to God's Word and his principles, your life is going to be much fuller and far more peaceful, and your soul will prosper. That's a pretty good deal, if you ask me.

Day Two

I'm pointing out five principles for living from Proverbs 3 and the incredible benefits that are ours when we apply these principles to our lives. Remember proverbs are not promises, but they are principles—principles that hold true almost all the time. Let's consider the second principle from verses 3 and 4 of Proverbs 3.

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man (Proverbs 3:3-4).

Solomon uses a word picture here to help us understand how to implement these truths. He says to bind love and faithfulness around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. I picture wearing

love and faithfulness like a necklace or a scarf, bound around my neck so I don't forget how important it is to be loving and faithful.

Love and faithfulness are two truly beautiful characteristics. When you are a loving person, you show compassion and mercy to people around you—even people who aren't living the way they should, even people who don't do their work like they should. The Bible teaches us love never fails—love never fails to change a situation, improve a relationship, soften a heart. When you show God's love to others in practical ways—by being patient and kind and forgiving—you have bound it around your neck and it's beautiful.

Faithfulness seems to be lacking a lot these days, have you noticed? It seems often people just don't live up to what they promised or follow-through on commitments they've made. We read in 1 Corinthians that *it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful* (1 Corinthians 4:2). Ask yourself if you wear faithfulness around your neck? Are you a person who can be counted on—at work, at church, in your family?

With love and faithfulness written on your heart, you will win favor with people, and you will have a good name—a good reputation with God and people. That's a powerful good reason to take this lesson for living from Proverbs very seriously, don't you think?

Day Three

If someone offered you advice that was guaranteed to help you, to give you a better life, to win you favor with people, would you be willing to take their advice? That's exactly what we find in Proverbs in the Bible. It is full of very practical and powerful advice, if you and I just know and live by its principles. I'm pointing out five lessons for living from Proverbs 3, and the third one is found in verses 5 and 6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

This is one of the more familiar passages from Proverbs and it gives us such an important lesson for living our lives. Three things you need to do:

- Trust in the Lord with all your heart
- Lean not on your own understanding
- In all your ways submit to the Lord

This is a lesson I must learn again and again because I am prone to trust in myself or someone else instead of trusting in the Lord. Trusting in the Lord means you simply believe his Word is true, his promises never fail, and his plans for you are the best. You trust in good times and bad; you trust when things are going well and when you can't understand what's happening or why. You trust with all your heart. And to have this kind of trust, you have to know God well through his Word and prayer and fellowship with other believers.

Then you must learn to be skeptical about your own wisdom—your own understanding. Often, we are influenced by the world's way or by other people, and what looks like a good idea can be a disaster. God's ways are frequently not our ways, and so don't put your trust in your own abilities, your own experience.

Then submit to the Lord in every decision you make. Seek first his way. Who do you go to first when you need help or advice? Seek first the Lord and submit to his ways. When you do, your way will be clear and straight and will not take you down the wrong road.

I encourage you to put this passage in your heart and recite it often. It is one of the most important lessons for living that you will ever know.

Day Four

There are lots of people giving all kinds of advice for being healthy and strong. But what is the most important thing you can do to achieve good health? I am exploring lessons for living from Proverbs 3:7-8:

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones (Proverbs 3:7-8).

This lesson for living gives us three important steps for healthy bodies:

- Don't be wise in your own eyes—in other words, be a truly humble person, not a know-it all. Be teachable and willing to learn from others.
- Fear the Lord. That means have a holy fear and reverence for God, and fear doing things that displease him or bring shame to his name. Can you remember as a child having a fear of being punished by your parents or your teachers? That fear of the consequences of your wrong behavior probably kept you from a lot of unhappy experiences, right? It's not the kind of fear that makes you afraid of the other person, but the kind of fear that makes you want to please them and make them proud of you. That's the kind of fear we need when it comes to obeying the Lord and living by his principles.
- Then, the third thing is to shun evil. The Bible teaches us there is always a way of escape from any temptation we encounter. We just have to look for the escape route. Shunning evil means not taking that first step in the wrong direction. Not entertaining that first impure thought which could lead to an impure action.

If you want health for your body and strong bones, be humble, fear the Lord, and shun evil. That doesn't mean you'll never be sick. Remember, proverbs are not promises but principles. But if you practice these three things, you are far more likely to have good health and just plain feel good!

Proverbs offers such practical help and advice, and you are wise and smart when you pay attention.

Day Five

I've been sharing five lessons for living, which are found in Proverbs 3. Here is the fifth lesson for living, from verses 9 and 10:

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Now this one is close to home, because it talks about money, and if anything is close to our hearts, it's our money—right? But please believe me when I tell you your avenue to financial security begins with your willingness to make this lesson a part of your life.

And what is that lesson? It is to give God the first part of your money. You may be thinking, But I'm not wealthy and I barely have enough now to make ends meet. I understand that feeling, but this lesson has nothing to do with whether you have lots of money or not. It simply says to give God the first part. Honor God by giving money to him, and then pay your bills. If you wait to give God the left-overs after you've paid your bills and used your money for your own desires, you'll discover you just never seem to have much left-over. The enemy of your soul will see to that!

It takes a step of faith to begin this practice of honoring God first with your money, but this is truly the first step to financial stability for a Christ-follower. How much should you give? Think of what you think you can afford and then double it. That's a good starting place. Give God more than you think you can. It's the one place God invites us to test him. In Malachi he says, *test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it* (Malachi 3:10).

God is not promising us financial wealth, but he is promising financial stability and security if we will honor him first with our money. Start where you are—and the sooner the better—and see if this lesson for living is not one of the best principles you've put in place in your life. As my dad said to me so often, "Honey, you can't out give God," and I promise that is true.