

Proverbs Ch3v1-12 - Wisdom For Life

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[0 : 00] If we could turn to the book of Proverbs. We'll be looking at that together in just a moment. So Proverbs 3, 1 to 12, and Chris is going to read in just a moment.

And that's on page 636 of the Red Church Bible. Proverbs 3, 1 to 12. 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.

Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them round 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.

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 path straight.

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.

[1 : 55] Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops. Then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke. Because the Lord disciplines those he loves.

As a father, the son he delights in. Thanks so much, Chris.

Well, as we pray for ourselves, we're going to pray for the Sunday school as well. So let's pray and ask for God's help. Our father, what a privilege it is to be able to gather together, whether young or old, to hear your word, the word of life being spoken to us.

And so, father, we ask that your word would bring new and fresh encouragement to our lives today.

[3 : 16] Bless our Sunday school. We thank you for them. For our teachers. Father, encourage them today. And help us now.

As we hear your word to us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we've been looking at the book of Proverbs, and we know that Proverbs is all about wisdom.

We've been saying that wisdom is God's word to live God's way in God's world. God's word to live God's way in God's world.

You see, wisdom is not something we turn to in an emergency. It's not a 999 call. Help. What decision do I need to make now?

No. Wisdom is like oxygen. We can't live without it. Wisdom is life itself.

[4 : 18] So, we're going to look at the first half of chapter 3 this morning. And as we do, we're going to see that wisdom offers us a successful life, reveals to us a broken life, and then provides us with a love-filled life.

So, first, we're going to see how wisdom offers us a successful life. The father-son relationship theme continues in the beginning of Proverbs.

So, if you look back at chapter 1, verse 8, listen, my son, to your father's instruction. Then chapter 2, verse 1, my son, if you accept my words.

And then again in chapter 3, verse 1, my son, do not forget my teaching. This father-son relationship is in many ways like our relationship to God.

God is our father, and he's teaching us. In fact, he's offering us an abundant life.

[5 : 31] Look at verse 1 with me. 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.

Wow! Isn't that some offer? This is everything we could ever dream of. What the father offers us is life in all its fullness.

Long life with peace and prosperity. Who would want that? Not just long life, but get this.

Health and wealth to go with it. Look at verse 7. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord, shun evil, and this will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Any sore hips today? Well, don't be wise in your own eyes, and you will have nourishment in your bones. Or look at verse 9.

[6 : 48] Honour the Lord with your wealth. With the first fruits of your crops, or the first bit of your income. Then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Your bank account will be overflowing with the reddiees. Isn't that amazing? It's a simple path to a very successful life.

Sounds simple, right? Just obey, and you will enjoy long life. Just be faithful, and you will have health and wealth.

All I'm missing now is the white suit, and the gold rings, and the bling. You'll see me on the God channel. But the problem with what we're saying is, this is sounding a little bit like the prosperity gospel.

You've seen it. You've heard it. And it's not just people in white suits and gold bling. It can happen in all kinds of situations. The message goes something like this.

[7 : 59] Let me show you how you can have a prosperous life. An abundant life. Are you tired of poor health? Are you fed up with struggling financially?

Well, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your path straight.

Just obey, and you can have a successful life today. And by the way, just put in a few extra pounds into the offering.

Now that sounds great, but it's very wrong, and it's very dangerous. You see, before we start lifting promises out of the Bible, and just applying them directly straight to ourselves, we must remember that these are promises, as we'll see in a minute, that were first written to someone else in another time.

Promises that would ultimately lead to Jesus Christ. You see, in Christ, God's promises are all fulfilled in him, and they flow to us.

[9 : 20] All the promises of Scripture find their fulfillment in Christ, and from him they flow to us. You see, God is offering us a successful life.

In fact, through Christ, he offers us something far better and far greater than what Proverbs is even telling us.

Not just long life, but he offers us a new and eternal life. Not good health, but resurrection bodies that will never ever get sick again.

Not great wealth, but the offer of a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth that will never end, and we will never be in want, and we will have all that we ever need.

So first, wisdom offers us a successful and an abundant life. But how do we get this life?

[10 : 34] Well, second, there we go, wisdom reveals a broken life. You see, the picture we have in verse 1 is of a father instructing a son.

But we can also read this, and we should read it, as a king who is speaking to his people, to his subjects. So look at chapter 1, verse 1.

Chapter 1, verse 1. Look how it introduces us to the whole book. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

You see, Solomon, as king, is to rule God's people on God's behalf. Not least when it comes to the covenant relationship between God and his people.

The king has a responsibility to make sure that his subjects follow what God says. Deuteronomy reminds us of that covenant relationship.

[11 : 50] You can see it there on the screen. This is what God says. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commands I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you. Now the king has the responsibility to make sure the nation obey the covenant.

So look back at Proverbs chapter 3, verse 1. My son, so it's the king addressing the nation on behalf of God.

My son, do not forget my teaching. But keep my commands in your heart. Chapter 3, verse 3 rather.

Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them round your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Verse 5.

[12:54] Trust in the Lord with all your heart. He's reminding them, underlying time and time again. This is what we're to do, people.

Love God with all your heart. Just obey him. And you will be blessed. You will have a long life filled with peace and prosperity.

It will go well with you. You will have health and you will have wealth. But if you don't, then God will deal with you.

Verse 11. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline. Do not resent his rebuke.

You see, when we follow the story of the Bible, we discover and learn that neither the king, Solomon, nor the nation, loved God with all their heart.

[13:58] They failed.

Not obeying what they had promised to do. And Solomon reminds them that God's discipline, although hard, is for their good.

Verse 12. Because the Lord disciplines those he loves. As a father, the son, he delights in. God loves his people.

They're like a son to him. He treasures them. He's jealous for them. He delights in his children so much. He will do whatever it takes to restore them, to renew them, and bring them back into relationship with him.

You see, what the people need is a new beginning. What they need is new hearts to replace their broken hearts, which is exactly what God promised to do.

[15:23] Keep your finger there in Proverbs 3. And go forward to Jeremiah chapter 24. Jeremiah chapter 24.

It's on page 785. Jeremiah chapter 24.

Jeremiah chapter 24, which is on page 785. So God, through the prophet Jeremiah, is speaking to the people where they had failed over many years.

Jeremiah chapter 24. And God promises them, verse 7. I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord.

They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. Jeremiah expands on this to show us what this will mean.

[16:42] Jump forward to chapter 31. Jeremiah 31, verse 31. Verse 31.

The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel.

Verse 33. This is the covenant I will make with the people.

After that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God and they will be my people. Let's go back to Proverbs chapter 3. He promises to give them a new heart.

A new heart that will love them and desire to obey his commands. Now you see, when we think of this, we are actually no different, are we?

[17:52] Because when talking about the way into God's kingdom, Jesus said this. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Well, how many of us have done that this week? When it comes to love and faithfulness towards God, we just don't quite make the grade.

I don't treasure God's commands as I should. I don't honour the Lord as I ought. Left to myself, I will never have the successful, abundant life that he promises.

You see, wisdom is revealing a broken heart. We too need new hearts.

A new life that will move us to love God with the very, every fibre of our being. So, wisdom offers us a successful life.

[19:01] But wisdom also reveals a broken life. Third, wisdom provides us with a love-filled life.

You see, at one level, we've been thinking that this is about a father's instruction to his son, offering a successful life. At another level, we see it's about a king instructing a nation.

Love God with all your heart and you can have this successful life. But none of us match up to it.

But as the story of the Bible progresses, we see it's all about Christ and his church.

For God sees our brokenness and our failed hearts and in its place fills our hearts with the love of Christ. He fills us, firstly, with steadfast love.

Proverbs 3, verse 3. Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them round your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart.

[20 : 18] It's not saying you must love God more and you must be more faithful in your life. It's telling us God is loving and faithful to people like us.

And don't ever forget it. Write that on the tablet of your heart. Remember when God showed up to Moses and revealed his character.

He said this, Well, love and faithfulness is that steadfast, loyal and committed love of God.

It's an unbreakable love. And that steadfast love is seen and experienced ultimately in Christ. For in love, God sent his son, the perfect man, who did not forget his father's teaching, but kept all his father's commands.

Who trusted his father, who honored his father. Jesus Christ lived the perfect, faithful and obedient life for us.

[21 : 42] But more than that, in love, God the Father disciplined his own son for us in our place. On the cross as Jesus died, he was rebuked in our place.

Jesus took the curse for all our failings and he received the discipline, death itself, that we deserve. You see, Christ comes to us as our representative, the perfect son, the obedient subject to the king. He stands in for us, taking our broken heart, our broken life, so that we might receive his successful life.

Don't forget his steadfast, loyal love that he has shown you in Christ. In fact, to ensure that we would never ever forget his steadfast love, the apostle Paul reminds us, God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[23 : 06] Just as it says in Proverbs 3, verse 5, Write them, love and faithfulness, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Well, God writes his steadfast love on our hearts, never ever to be erased. The Spirit of God fills our new hearts with the steadfast love of God, reassuring of us, of his commitment to us, even when we sin and fail, assuring us of his loyalty, even when we wander away.

God, by his Spirit, has poured his steadfast love into our hearts, so that we will never ever forget.

God, by his Spirit, has poured his steadfast love into our hearts, not only does he fill us with a steadfast love, he also fills us with a disciplining love.

You see, God's love for us is so great that he will do anything to keep us close. Sometimes he will bring us through seasons of discipline, a time of training and correction.

[24 : 30] Verse 11, My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline. Do not resent his rebuke.

Yes, sometimes God allows pain and hardship. Sometimes there are struggles and trials in our life. But never ever as punishment. Never as judgment. Because Christ has dealt with judgment on the cross, once and for all.

Instead, God, in his infinite wisdom, allows suffering and struggles of various kinds. Why? Because he loves us and delights in us.

Rather than taking the trials from us, God, in his sovereignty, works in them for good for his children.

[25 : 35] Verse 12, Because the Lord disciplines, he trains, he corrects those he loves. As a father, the son, he delights in.

You see, from our perspective, all the painful things, all the hard paths that we have to walk through, we see them as bad.

But wisdom helps us see that behind the trial, behind the path of difficulty, is a loving father who is delighting over his son or daughter.

Think of it like this. A mother disciplines her young son. He wants to go out with his friends, but she stops him from going out to play down by the river.

From the child's perspective, being kept inside, well, it's suffering, it's painful, I don't want it. But from the parent's perspective, they can see and know things that the child will never see or know or understand.

[26 : 48] The parent knows the harms and dangers of a particular path and will always know what is right and best.

And so in life, wisdom is telling us that sometimes our heavenly father will take good things from us. It could be our health. It could be our wealth. Sometimes hard things come into our lives. it could be kita and we'll take kita and we'll take kita and we'll take kita and kita and kita not because we have

done anything wrong but to keep us in his love so that we do not drift but remain dependent on him. Think this through with me. Go to Hebrews chapter 12 which is on page 1211. 1211. Hebrews chapter 12.

[28 : 09] Here the author of Hebrews expands on these verses that come from Proverbs 3 verses 11 and 12. We see it there in verse 5.

My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline. He quotes it. Now go down to verse 10, the middle of verse 10. God disciplines us for our good.

Why? In order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful.

Nobody wants to go through the hardships and the struggles. But later on however these painful times produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. In other words through those hard times God will work in our life in such a way that we are shaped and transformed to become a more beautiful loving caring person.

[29 : 27] In the eyes of God we will have an abundant life a successful life a life filled with holiness righteousness and peace where we are accepted and treated as God's own son.

Let's go back to Proverbs. So he provides us with a steadfast love and a disciplining love and what is our response to God's committed love towards us?

Well it can only be a wholehearted love on our part. Wisdom tells us chapter 3 verse 5 that we are to trust the Lord with all our heart rather than trust in our own wisdom in life we are to trust the wisdom and the ways of God no matter how difficult they may be.

Verse 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes but fear the Lord. Rather than depend on myself I now humbly depend on God who has in his sovereign care every detail of my life.

Not only do we trust the Lord and fear the Lord but verse 9 we honour the Lord with all our wealth. Rather than prioritise my life and think about what can I get for myself not only am I giving the bit of change but I am giving my whole life in honour and in service to my Lord.

[31 : 22] You see trust fear and honour it's not a performance to earn his love it's my wholehearted response to God who loves me.

It's saying Lord I love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and help me love you more. Wisdom is showing us that because God loves us with a steadfast love and a disciplining love I can love him.

I can trust him. I can fear him and honour him. Because he loves me he will keep his promises to me.

he will give to me a successful abundant life. Not just long life but new and eternal life.

Not just good health but resurrection bodies that will never ever get sick again. Not great wealth but the gift of a new creation.

[32 : 34] A new heavens and a new earth where everything will be put right and everything will be well. Wisdom provides us with a love filled life that is found in Christ.

Wisdom is life. Let's just take a moment to reflect on that together. Let's pray.

Amen. Lord God, thank you for your steadfast faithful, loyal, and committed love to people like us. Thank you Father for your perfect ways. Ways we admit we do not always understand. Ways that we find difficult and hard.

but yet we trust your sovereign care that you are working good purposes for you delight in us and long that we might know and experience your love in a deeper and more real way.

[34 : 19] Father, help us to trust you, to fear you, and to honor you. in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen.