

Does Proverbs Promise too Much?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, thank you for coming tonight. Someone asked me last week how I thought it went, and I told them that I'd tell them next week by how many people turned up, so it's very encouraging to see you here. Please turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 3, and let me start. Some time ago, I asked a young girl who may or may not have been one of my daughters The Secret of Being Wealthy, to which she replied, marry someone rich. Needless to say, we had a chat afterwards. Though that is some of the world's wisdom, isn't it? In fact, even a book says Smart Girls Marry Money. That's the title of the book on the next slide.

But is this the secret of being wealthy and healthy for that matter? Of course, there are all sorts of other books out there, like on the next slide, which offers the secrets to being healthy, wealthy, and wise. It gives you one secret per day for a whole year, I think it is. Or perhaps, as Benjamin Franklin reportedly said, he said, early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

So according to Benjamin, the secret of being healthy, wealthy, and wise is being a morning person, which means I'm in trouble. Even the Herald Sun ran an article a few years ago on the next slide.

It says, a hundred ways to live to 100 years old. Tips of a longer, healthier life. And then they listed a hundred tips. And their second top tip was move to Canberra. Apparently, it has a greater life expectancy, unless you're a politician, of course. Now, I like Canberra, but really? Well, as I mentioned last week, chapters one to nine of Proverbs are like the introduction to the book, which motivates us to listen to its wisdom. And as we come to chapter three in particular tonight, it motivates us by saying, this particular wisdom will give you a long, healthy, and wealthy life. I listen to this wisdom because it will give us the good life, in other words. So if you've got your Bibles there, just look at some of the promises here in chapter three. So verse two, you have longevity, you know, brings you long life. Your life will be many years, it says. Or verse three, popularity.

You'll win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Or verse six, simplicity. That is, your paths will be made straight or smooth. Verse eight, you have health and nourishment to your bones, it says. And then verse 10, you have wealth. Your vats will brim over with new wine and so on.

[3 : 0 2] Here are the promises of Proverbs to which we say it's not true, don't we? Because we know Christians who follow this wisdom in chapter three and yet do not experience these promises. In fact, just two weeks ago, was it? Back on the 29th of December, nine Christians in south of Cairo in Egypt were shot by the Islamic State while trying to enter their church. It's only a week and a half ago. Now, the police prevented the gunmen from getting inside the church and killing more people and one of their own was lost in the process. But here is another attack on Christians who trust in God. And so, how can these promises in Proverbs be true? Doesn't the writer know about unjust suffering in the world, which affects Christians too? And yet these promises of the good life are scattered throughout the whole book of

Proverbs. And particularly here in chapter three, which is why I've chosen it for tonight. And so, the question is, does Proverbs promise too much? In fact, one Bible scholar actually says, yes.

They wrote this on the next slide, I think it is. There is a strong suspicion here that Israel's sages or wise men have confused their belief about what ought to be the case with life, with what is actually the case in life. In other words, this Bible scholar says the Bible writers here got it wrong. They do promise too much. But I wanted to suggest that Proverbs, its promises are true and can be trusted. It's just that the promises are to be understood as generally true now and completely true later. That is, I want to suggest that we need to read the promises of Proverbs with the big picture of the Bible in mind. Let me explain. The big picture tells us that God created the world with order in it, both a physical order, which is why we can do science and the like, but also a moral order where right is rewarded and so on. What's more, God also gave people a purpose in creation, which was to live in relationship with him and to enjoy his blessings in full. That was life in the beginning, Genesis 1 and 2, before the fall. And so before the fall, Adam and Eve would have enjoyed every promise in Proverbs completely. But because sin entered the world, then God's order has been fractured, hasn't it? It's still present. The order is still present in our world, but it's fractured.

So that this order, especially God's moral order, doesn't always happen. And because sin entered the world, then God's purposes have also been fractured. A life with God enjoying his blessings is still possible, but it's partial. We don't get to enjoy all his blessings in full. We have every spiritual blessing in Christ, but not every physical blessing, for example. So that means that the promises of Proverbs are still generally true, because there is still order and purpose stitched into creation, but they are not yet completely true, because sin has fractured creation. It's like Proverbs, if I can illustrate it this way, it's like Proverbs is a map and creation is a well-planned city.

Proverbs gives us wisdom to know which paths to walk down to get around the city and live well in it. But then there was an earthquake, which caused some of the roads to be blocked by boulders and some of them to open up in chasms and the like. And now we ask, what good is our Proverbs map now?

[7 : 07] Well, it's still generally true, isn't it? You know, this still has the same order to the streets and so on, but it won't be completely true because the earthquake has dropped some boulders on that particular road and created a chasm on that road. And in fact, Proverbs itself seems to present its own wisdom like this. So there are some Proverbs, like on the next slide, chapter 14, verse 23, that says, all hard work brings profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

This is true because this is how God has ordered the world and it kind of backs up with our experience, does it not? If you live according to God's order, then this promise will be true.

But yet it's not always true. And Proverbs acknowledges this as well. So on the next slide, in chapter 19, verse 1, it acknowledges that, you know, there may be poor people who still follow God.

So better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse. So you're still better off being poor and following God than anything else. But the point is that even Proverbs acknowledges that God's order does not always happen. And the implication is that you can still walk blamelessly, as I said, but you can still find yourself poor. And so even in Proverbs, we've got these both things happening. Yes, it's genuinely true now, but it will be completely true later. And in fact, the Proverbs even hints at a time when it will be completely true, when God will restore his order, judge the wicked and restore the righteous so that we might enjoy his blessings in full. In fact, I was surprised at how much talk there is of an end time hinting at towards things being put right. So for example, in our passage today in chapter 3, verse 18, I think it is, wisdom is referred to as a tree of life. Does that sound familiar? Tree of life, which continues to give life, which Adam and Eve, if they did not sin, would have eaten from and lived forever.

Or at the end of our passage in verses 33 to 35, it speaks of the wicked being cursed and inheriting shame while the righteous and the wise are blessed and inherit honor or literally glory.

[9 : 32] It sounds very much like judgment day, doesn't it? Or on the next slide, in Proverbs 11, 21, it says the wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free.

It assumes there will be a judgment day. Proverbs 12, in the way of righteousness, there is life. Along that path is immortality. When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death, the righteous seek refuge in God. In other words, even in death, the righteous have hope.

You see, even Proverbs acknowledges its promises are generally true now, and it looks to a time when they'll be completely true later. And the big picture of the Bible tells us that this will happen when Christ returns and puts God's order right, as we heard in our second reading.

The wicked will be judged, talks about being thrown into a fiery lake, and the righteous will enjoy life with God and his blessings in full, just as he created us to enjoy.

So when we read the promises in Proverbs, we are to read them understanding three things, which I've got on the back of your outline. I want to go through the first two things, because we looked at that last week, which has to do with the structure. How you read chapters 1 to 9 is a little bit different to how you read chapters 10 to 31. But have a look at the last paragraph there.

[11 : 02] So point three is understanding the Bible's big picture. That's what I've just talked about. And so the last paragraph. So when reading promises in Proverbs, we need to ask, in what way is this promise still generally true for us today?

And how will this promise be completely true through Christ on the last day? Hopefully that helps you to tackle these promises which seem too good to be true.

And so let's practice doing that now, as we look at some of its promises on being healthy, wealthy, and having a long life. So we're at point one and verse one.

You may have noticed that verses one to twelve are couplets. So there's two verses for each topic. On the odd verses, there's the obligation or what we are to do.

And then the even verses are the promises. So look at verse one. My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart. And here's the promise.

[12 : 05] For they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. So here the first obligation is to listen to wisdom, which comes in the form of this father's teaching and commands.

For us, it means listening to our heavenly father's teaching and commands in his word. In fact, the word for teaching here is the same word as Torah, which should remind you of something as well.

And not just his word in the Bible, but also his living word in Christ, who is God's ultimate wisdom. We are to listen to this wisdom.

And the promise is if we do that, then we will enjoy a long and good life. The Hebrew for peace and prosperity is that word shalom, which I'm sure you've all heard of.

It refers not so much to financial riches, but it refers to completeness or wellness, contentment, where there is peace with God and others.

[13 : 08] It's a good, content life, in other words. And it says here, if we listen to wisdom, then life will be long and good. And again, this is generally true, is it not?

In May last year, or 2016, I think it is, I gave this example in Morning Church a little while ago. On the next slide, there was a CNN report which gave a study. And the study surveyed 75,000 nurses over 20 years.

So it's pretty reasonable. Some went to church and followed God, some didn't. And the study found that those who have a faith generally lived longer and had better health. There you go.

Church is good for you, physically. On the next slide, a few more years further back in 2006, another study found the same thing. Now, it's hard to know how much stock to put into these studies, but it does make sense, does it not?

I mean, God teaches us to forgive others and not hold grudges, which fosters peace with others and is psychologically healthy. I mean, after all, grudges only end up eating you up, don't they?

[14 : 17] He says, trust in him, which frees us from stress. He says, don't be a drunkard, which, well, that's physically healthy too. He says, don't envy or chase after money, which only pressures us to work harder and longer and produces grey hairs quicker.

He says, to trust in Christ who gives us peace with him and so on. You see, all these things that God tells us to do actually do promote physical health and long life.

Of course, there are exceptions to this promise, aren't there? Jesus himself was one such exception. He was the perfect son of Proverbs 3. He was the son who always obeyed his father's teaching.

And yet his life was cut short, wasn't it? But this happens so that we might have hope of the new creation, where these promises will be completely true.

For in the new creation, we will enjoy a very long life, eternal, in fact, and complete shalom, peace. And then there's the promise of popularity or better admiration.

[15 : 27] Do you see verses 3 and 4? So again, verse 3 is the obligation. Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart. And here's the motivating promise.

Then, verse 4, you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man. Here we are to take on God's character. When God proclaimed his name to Moses on the next slide in Exodus chapter 34, he said, The Lord passed before Moses and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

You see, love and faithfulness are at the heart of God's character. And the word for love here is that Hebrew word, which Andrew Reid taught us about many times, hesed, which refers to God's amazing, undeserving love for us.

That is, his love is other person-centred. What's more, this love at the heart of the father's character is also at the heart of the father's Torah, his law, his commands.

Do you remember Jesus summed up the whole Old Testament law with two commands? What were they? Love, love God, and love your neighbour. It's about love.

[16 : 51] And so the main way of not forgetting, but keeping our father's commands in verse 1, is to put on God's character of love, which sums up the commands in verse 3. And it says we are to wear God's character around our necks.

In fact, verse 3 says, bind it so it never comes off. My son just discovered brand name t-shirts. He's into Stussy and Mossimo.

And he got a brand name t-shirt for Christmas, which he wore every single day until he told him he had to take it off and wash it. But God's character of love and faithfulness is never to come off from around our necks.

It has to be bound there. And it has to be written in our hearts so that it becomes our very character too. In other words, we are to make God's character our character. Now in verse 27 and following, we'll be given some examples of what this love and faithfulness looks like in practice.

But for now, notice the promise of verse 4. If we bear God's character of love and faithfulness, we will be admired, it says.

[18 : 00] We will win favor and a good name with both God and man. And again, is this not generally true? Isn't it generally true that people who are loving and trustworthy are well respected and admired?

I mean, the classic person you can think of is Mother Teresa. That's just the one that popped into my head immediately. But this was brought home to me personally some years ago when I was a late teen and I worked in that family restaurant called McDonald's.

That restaurant is a very generous description, but there was a Christian there who reflected God's character. Yeah, people still hassled him for being a Christian, but over time they respected him and admired him.

And I saw them even come to him for advice. You see, reflecting God's love and faithfulness does win favor and a good name. On the other hand, I've sadly heard about Christians who might have worn a cross around their neck, but they didn't wear love and faithfulness around their neck.

And so they were not respected in their workplace and they ended up giving Christ a bad name. Or people have left churches because they were hurt by other Christians who did not practice love and faithfulness.

[19 : 14] Now, I'm not having a go at Christians who wear crosses around their necks. And sometimes those who leave churches were simply looking for an excuse to do so. But the point is, this wisdom does work in general.

And so we are to practice it that we might win favor in the sight of God and man. Not for our sake. Remember, love is other person-centered. But for the sake of others and indeed for Christ's sake himself.

Now, this is not always easy to do, is it? Especially when the state government and the media is moving further away from God and encouraging the population not to admire Christians but to deride us.

Or when the world's wisdom for health, wealth and happiness seems to make better sense to us. It's hard to practice this. And so the next obligation then is to trust God despite appearances.

See verse 5? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, submit or acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.

[20 : 18] Now, I was going to ask how many people have learned this as a memory verse but I didn't know how it was going to go so I won't. But I'm sure many of you have learned this as a memory verse. And if you haven't, it's worth doing.

We are to trust God, not with half our heart but with all our heart. And we're not to lean on our own understanding but on his. I remember one time, at Legs of Lamb, we're on special at Coles and I'm quite partial to lamb roast and I asked Michelle if she would mind getting one while it was on special.

And every day of the week, I kind of went to the fridge and went, you know, I was just waiting for this lamb to turn up until finally I thought, I'm going to miss out. And so I went and bought one myself after work.

I came home around the same time she did open the fridge and there was a lamb already sitting there. We had two which might have been good except we didn't get time to cook the other one and expired.

Yeah, I know, it was very sad. But it's often what we do with God, isn't it? We don't trust him with all our heart, we kind of just trust him with half our heart and if it's not looking good, we might just lean on our own understanding a bit too.

- [21 : 30] And this happens when it comes to his word, for example, and even theology, if you like. You know, if we don't quite understand what his word is saying, how he can be completely sovereign, yet we can still choose, you know, the whole predestination thing. If you want to have a killer conversation at church, just start talking about predestination.
- We don't quite understand how it all works and so we attempt not to trust his word but lean on our own understanding. Like one guy I know who just simply refuses to believe it. No, don't believe it. Yeah, I know it's there, don't believe it.
- Because he's leaning on his own understanding. Or when it comes to sexuality, we know what God says in his word but we don't trust it with all our heart and we, again, rely on our own understanding.
- I've had Christians say to me, even before the whole marriage vote thing, that they can't understand why homosexuality is wrong if they love each other. From our church, actually.
- [22 : 29] And while it's a misunderstood argument, it appeals to our hearts, doesn't it? And we know, I know people who struggle with this. Or the assisted dying bill that was recently passed.
- Again, it appeals to our hearts because we know people who are suffering and it's horrible. And see, we want to give in to our own understanding and go, look, this can't be right, what God says.
- So we'll just do it our way. But God is the one who made us and knows what's truly good and loving for us.
- He's the one who can see the big picture and works for our good. In the words of an old Sunday school song, which is on the next slide, he says, I know who holds the future and he'll guide me with his hand.
- With God, things don't just happen. Everything by him is planned. So as I face tomorrow with its problems large and small, I'll trust the God who cares for me. Give to him my all, all my heart.
- [23 : 30] That's what we ought to do. And the promise, well, verse six says that he will make our paths straight. The word straight here can mean right and smooth.
- And again, this is generally true, is it not? That if we trust God and lean on his understanding, that he does direct our paths the right way. But he will generally also make our paths smooth too.
- Though, it never feels like it at the time. We often have to look back to see it. When I was younger, I used to think that my testimony about becoming a Christian was boring.
- I wasn't one of those dramatic life changes. I grew up in a Christian family and I always believed in God. And then in my early teenage years, I made a more conscious decision to trust Christ, who died for me, to pay for my sins and give me certainty of life in heaven.
- There was no dramatic change. I didn't once live as an alcoholic and then become to Christ and change completely. And so I thought my story was boring. I've met many other Christians who think the same thing.
- [24 : 39] And I thought that until one day I met someone who did have one of those dramatic stories. And you already said to me, he said, I wish I had your story. It would have saved me so much pain.
- You see, because I grew up generally trusting God as my parents taught me, it saved me from a whole lot of pain. I just didn't realize it. My path was smoother than I'd realized, you see.
- I'm sure our paths will not always be completely smooth even when we do trust God. But when we look back at our path, it is generally true that it's been straighter and smoother than it otherwise would have been without trusting him.

And in Christ, in the new creation, there will be no sin there and the paths will be completely smooth all the time. This is similar to verses 7 and 8.

Do you see the next promise there, verse 7? Do not be wise in your own eyes, but fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

[25 : 46] Again, here we are to fear God for the good of our physical health. We are to shun evil. And again, this promise here in verse 8 is generally true.

I mean, we've looked at it a bit already from verse 2. We saw before those studies, which suggests following God is good for your physical health. And again, it makes sense, doesn't it?

If we don't fear God, but fear the world and what it says, or if we are wise in our own eyes, allowing our bodily appetites to lead us, then we become addicted to all sorts of harmful things, like getting drunk or engaging in promiscuous sex or pornography or experimenting with drugs or eating too much or too little and so on, all of which are statistically proven to be bad for your health.

The same is true of our mental health. If I try to live life being wise in my own eyes, then it's all depending on me now. And when disaster strikes, I have no comfort in knowing God is in control.

I have no hope that he will provide for me or work for my good or even raise me to new life. So I'm left with no comfort, no hope, and just worry and stress.

[27 : 01] See, it does work. It is generally true. Now, of course, we still live in a broken world which is decaying with disease and death. And so while wisdom's promises are generally true, they're not completely true.

But through Christ and the new creation, they will be. For then there will be no more death, nor mourning, we heard, no more crying, nor pain. For the old order of things has passed away.

What about verses 9 and 10? Surely this is the prosperity gospel. Have a look at this. Verse 9, Honour 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.

Here we are to honour God with or literally from our wealth. In other words, it's not just honouring God with how we use money in life, but it's honouring God by giving money to Him.

And to honour God means to give God His due. It's like that church sign that I've showed you a couple of times where we are to give God what is right, not what is left.

[28 : 13] And what is right, what is His due, are the firstfruits, the firstfruits of our wealth, it says. And this means not giving God whatever change we find in our pockets on Sunday night, but rather planning and putting down our gospel giving as the first thing in our budget.

And the promise is that if we do this, then our barns and vats will overflow. Our barns are where you store your grain for bread and vats are where you store your, well, your wine for drink.

And so it's talking about having more than we need. It's not talking about mega riches. It's not talking about being given a Ferrari. Although one time I was, I was given a Ferrari.

Did you realise that? I was talking about it in a sermon one time and Bill and Mary Milford gave me a Ferrari. It's a Matchbox Ferrari, but it was a Ferrari. But the point is the promise is not about becoming mega rich, but it's certainly about overflowing with more than you need.

And the New Testament backs this up as true. So on the next slide, 2 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul writes, each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

[29 : 23] And God is able to bless you abundantly, not so that you can keep it, but so that in all things and at all times having all that you need, you will then abound in every good work.

In other words, you'll give it again. You'll be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion. That's the logic. And we are to honour God with our wealth and we will have more than we need, but we have that in order to keep giving.

And I've seen this happen. In fact, I remember one of my wardens at my old church was quite well off and he would give generously to the church. He would tell me, look, if you know of anyone in trouble, let me know and I'll just quickly duck home and grab a couple thousand dollars out of my safe and bring it back.

I was tempted to ask if he wanted to move to Melbourne and come to this church as well. But he was very generous to the church and to people in need and he sold his business one time and he said, oh, Andrew, I've got so much more money for my business than I was thinking I'd get.

Is there any way else I can give money to? The answer is absolutely. But you see, he had an attitude of generosity. It's not about the amount. It's the attitude of generosity and honouring God.

[30 : 38] And when we do, God will give us more than we need, which is really everyone here, most people here at least. It's not mega riches, but more than we need so that we can keep being generous. Now, while this is generally true, it's not absolutely true, is it?

My wife's godmother gives out of her poverty and her barns and vats are not overflowing, not even close. And yet in Christ, in the new creation, they will be.

For as Jesus said, store up treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy. And he also said, the meek shall inherit the earth. That's pretty rich, isn't it?

You see, these promises are generally true, but they are not yet completely true. And so as I said at the start, the Proverbs acknowledges this by giving us wisdom for when it's not always true, when we are poor and so on, or when times are tough and we do suffer.

And that comes partly in verses 11 and 12. He says, my son, 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.

[31 : 52] He, wisdom tells us not to despise God's discipline nor resent his rebuke. How does God discipline and rebuke us? Well, sometimes it can be through his word when we read it or hear it and think, yeah, I need to trust God with my whole heart, not half a heart.

But other times it can come through hardship and suffering as the New Testament makes clear. That is, God uses our hardship and suffering to discipline us in terms of training us to trust him more and more and so grow in Christian maturity.

Now, sometimes this suffering is a form of punishment because we've sinned and there are a couple of examples of this in the New Testament but more often our suffering is simply the result of living in a fallen world.

Either way, God will use it to train us, discipline us as an athlete disciplines themselves that we might grow in Christian maturity.

That's what we do as parents, isn't it? So if my children do something wrong, we discipline them with punishment so that they might learn what is right and wrong and grow in maturity. And at other times, we discipline them in terms of simply training them through healthy habits and routines.

[33 : 10] So in our house, you do not get dessert unless you have your vegetables first. And there is no TV Monday to Thursday during school terms, which for our children is a great form of suffering and hardship, they claim.

But it's disciplining them with a healthy routine so that they might grow in maturity. And we do it, of course, for their good, don't we? For their growth. It's a sign that we love them.

In fact, not to discipline would be unloving, wouldn't it? I remember my father was a high school teacher at a local high school and he said there were a number of students there, high school students, teenagers, whose parents would give them a hundred bucks on Friday night and say to them, I don't want to see you again until Sunday night.

Now, at first, the kids might think, Ripper, a hundred bucks, I can do whatever I like. But it's not love, is it? It's indifference. It wasn't for their good.

And so that's why we are not to resent God's discipline when hardship or suffering comes because it is actually a sign that he loves us and he's growing us in maturity. Some of you might remember a few years ago I fell off my push bike and broke a few ribs.

[34 : 24] And when I was in the hospital emergency room with cracked ribs, torn muscles and blood dripping from my shoulder, it wasn't that bad but I kind of... I remember remembering this proverb, God disciplines those he loves and I thought, perhaps God, you could love me a little less.

And for others here who are currently enduring chronic illness or cancer or unrelenting pain, it's understandable to think, how much more training do I need?

Well, we don't know. We don't know why God allows some to experience the suffering of this fallen world more than others but we do know that even Christ went through suffering for us.

He knows what it's like, perhaps more than we do. We also know that God will give us the grace we need to persevere and be trained by it. Do you remember the Apostle Paul said to the Lord Jesus three times to take the thorn from his flesh?

And do you remember what Christ's response was? my grace is sufficient for you. And so I take it God will always give us enough grace to bear whatever suffering he sends our way.

[35 : 35] And whatever happens we must not resent it but learn from it. Otherwise, if you just turn over the page to Proverbs 5, look what happens if we resent our father's discipline. Over the page, chapter 5, verse 11.

At the end of your life you will groan and when your flesh and body are spent, verse 12, you will say how I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction.

I would not obey my teachers or turn my ear to my instructors and I was soon in serious trouble in the assembly of God's people.

Or worse still, down the bottom at verse 22 and 23, the evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them the cords of their sins hold them fast. Why? Well, because it's a lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their great folly.

We have to despise God's discipline but remember it's a sign that he loves us. You see, while these promises in Proverbs are generally true, they will be completely true on the last day.

[36 : 43] God will discipline us for our good now and we will be completely holy on the last day. So in the meantime, we're to do as the hymn writer put it on the next slide.

We sung this hymn last week. When through fiery trials your pathway shall lead, his grace, Paul, remember, shall sustain you with all that you need. The flame shall not hurt you, his only design, his purpose, your dross to consume your gold to refine, to grow us.

Do you see how helpful God's wisdom actually is in reality? It is the wisdom we need to be truly healthy, wealthy, and wise. Generally in this life and completely in the life to come.

And so that makes this wisdom very valuable. We're going to move much quickly now, much more quickly. So it's point two, verse 13. Look at the value that the writer now ascribes, this wisdom which gives us such a good life.

It says, Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies.

[37 : 59] Nothing you desire can compare with her. So here to have God's wisdom means you are happy or blessed. Why? Because God's wisdom in his word is worth more than any worldly wealth you could possibly desire.

It's better investment than silver and gives a better return than gold. Why? Well, verse 16, because it gives true life. Long life is in her right hand.

In her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her.

Those who hold fast to her will be blessed. Do you notice the echoes of verses 1 to 12 here? Verse 16 talks about life, which we've seen in verse 1 already, and also verse 10 with overflowing wealth.

And in verse 17 it echoes verse 2 with peace or shalom. You see, the world may think that those who are rich with silver and gold are truly blessed, but worldly wealth only brings short-term happiness, doesn't it?

[39 : 10] I mean, have you ever noticed how the more people have, the more they worry about what they have and the more they want more? And money often causes more fights in families than anything else.

Sadly, I've seen it at funerals. You see, silver and gold does not bring lasting peace and contentment, shalom, with God nor others, but God's wisdom here will.

And so it is valuable, it is to be desired above all else, and more than that, God's wisdom in Christ will bring us life eternal. You see, this wisdom truly is valuable. It gives life, and we shouldn't be surprised that it gives life because it's already given life at creation.

You see verse 19? By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations. By understanding he set the heavens in place. By his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew, it says.

Here, wisdom will bring us the blessing of life because it already has brought us life at creation. And so we are to value wisdom.

[40 : 22] We are to seek it. We are to pay attention to it, and we are not to lose it. Which brings us to our final point in verse 21. The writer returns to where he began.

He says, My son, do not let this wisdom and understanding out of your sight. Preserve sound judgment and discretion. And in case he needs any more motivation, or we need any more motivation, he says, they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck.

Then you'll go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster, of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be at your side, and will keep your foot from being snared.

You see, the more motivation to get this wisdom, and the motivation is that it brings confidence and security. Why? Well, verse 26, for or because the Lord will be at your side.

It means we can go to sleep at night, and not stress. It doesn't mean that we'll never experience disaster or suffering. In fact, the first part of verse 25 almost assumes we will, but we need not fear it when it comes.

[41 : 46] I've spoken and prayed with a number of people from our church who've gone in for surgery the next day, and they've said they've had a real peace and security about it, because they knew God was at their side.

I've watched others die without fear, because in their words, they were going home to Jesus. God was with them, they knew where they were going.

And if all this is not motivation enough to listen to our Father's teaching and keep his wisdom, wisdom, then we're told that this wisdom also teaches us to live rightly and inherit glory. Verse 27, do not hold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act.

Do not say to your neighbour, come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you then, when you already have it with you. Do not plot against your neighbour who lives trustfully near you. Do not accuse anyone for no reason when they have done you no harm.

Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. Here are the practical examples of what it means to love others and have faithfulness bound around your neck.

[42 : 55] Here in verse 27 and 28 it means loving your neighbour by giving to them when they are in need and not putting it off until the next day. Here loving your neighbour means verse 29 not seeking to harm them or verse 30 accusing them unjustly.

Then in verse 31 we are not to copy the ways of the unrighteous. In other words here wisdom shows us how to love and live righteously in love and faithfulness and this matters because the verse 32 the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence.

The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but shows favour to the humble and oppressed. The wise will inherit honour or literally glory but fools get only shame.

As I said before these last verses in particular look forward to a time when God will bring about final judgment where the wicked are cursed and the righteous are blessed where the wise inherit glory or honour and the fools get shame.

And because it will happen when Christ returns then it's worth paying attention to this wisdom that we might live continue to live as his sons and daughters in righteousness that we may inherit his glory.

[44 : 20] Well I need to finish. According to Sun Herald tip number 12 on the next slide to living a long good life is buying a sports car. This is tip number 12 and they say on there if you can read it buying a Porsche this is for men particularly will boost a man's testosterone levels which in turn gives them better health.

So men if you want an excuse to buy a Porsche here it is. It doesn't seem to have an equivalent for women but the very next tip after buying a sports car is somewhat contradictory and it says aim for financial stability.

Not sure how that works so much for the Sun Herald's wisdom. That God's wisdom truly does bring life. Oh sure even Proverbs itself acknowledges it is generally true now but it also looks forward to a time when it will be completely true later but it's still wisdom that works it's still wisdom that's worth valuing and so the big point of chapter 3 is really verse 1 and 21 my son my friends do not forget our father's teaching nor let his wisdom in Christ out of your sight but keep his commands in your heart and preserve sound judgment for they will bring the best possible blessed life in this world and glory in the world to come let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for this word to us tonight that encourages us to pay attention and to keep your wisdom for it truly does give us the good life generally now and completely later in

Christ our Lord and Saviour and so please help us to pay attention we pray in Jesus name Amen