

Four Keys to Spiritual Success

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. If you have your Bibles, we can turn this morning to Proverbs chapter 3, and we will be looking today at what were given by Solomon, I believe to be four keys to spiritual success in Proverbs chapter 3 and verses 7 through 10.

And Solomon, I believe, received the wisdom from God to provide so that God could provide his blessings.

And what we're going to hear is, I believe, four steps to abundant living and four rules that I believe if we follow in our life that will lead to daily victory in our lives as we allow God to control our lives, as we follow this wisdom that he gives us.

So, before we get into this message this morning, so what are these four keys to spiritual success? Well, the first one I believe that Solomon gives us is humility, that quality that makes us more like Jesus.

The second is holiness, and that's the character that identifies us as followers of Christ, that we're holy as God is holy.

[1 : 20] And also, maybe a little bit surprising, but health. The benefits that come from being right with God. And then honor.

Number four, the gifts that we give back to God. The things we give back to God because we love Him. So let's take a look at these keys. Let's look to Proverbs chapter 3, beginning with verse 7. It says, Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones.

Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the firstfruits of your increase. And with verse number 10, And so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. And let's pray. Lord, this morning as we come into your word, as we look at the wisdom that you provided Solomon, that Solomon is dispensing in these wise sayings, these general sayings that he provides for the way life works, we pray, Lord, that you would help us to understand them.

[2 : 32] We pray that you would help us to be able to use this wisdom and these sayings to understand how better how life works and how you work in this world.

Father, we thank you for this. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So what is the first key? The first key we see is humility, and that makes us more Christ-like.

If we look back at verse number 7, Solomon says, Don't think yourself better than you are. Don't be wise in your own eyes and say, Look, oh man, I am so smart.

I have got it all together. I know more than so and so. I'm better than someone else. He says, Don't think you have the market cornered on wisdom, on knowledge, and on anything else.

So Solomon says, Don't be wise in your own eyes. There are other places in God's word where he says, Don't lift yourself up.

[3 : 33] He says, Let someone else do it. He says, Because the last thing you want is to elevate yourself and to think that you are entitled, only to have someone else say, You know what?

You don't belong here. You belong down there. And then that's demoralizing. And so wait. And in humility, if the time comes to say, Let's give you this honor, and let's provide you with this responsibility, and then you're brought up rather than assuming that, and then you're put low.

So we are to humble ourselves, humble ourselves before God. And also, I really believe the Bible teaches that we are to humble ourselves before others.

He says, Don't be wise in your own eyes. So Solomon's first key is to not think yourself better than anyone else.

Because what goes before a fall? The Bible says pride does. If we have a haughty spirit, if we have pride, then ultimately that will lead to our downfall.

[4 : 41] Proverbs 16, 18 says, Pride goes before destruction. And a haughty spirit before a fall. So if we want our lives destroyed, then be proud.

Have pride. Think we're better than someone else. Think we're holier than someone else. Think that we are somehow, we measure up more. That we have more worth than someone else.

Pride goes before destruction. And an attitude of superiority, the Bible says, goes before a fall. Now pride identifies us with the Pharisees.

Because what did Jesus and what did Paul and others mention about the Pharisees? Jesus mentioned it.

He says they're proud. They give their offering so they can be seen before others. They think that they deserve the best seats at the show. They think they are the ones that deserve all the honor from everyone else.

[5 : 47] So in their pride, they were put down by Christ. Literally, he said, they were a brood of vipers. They were, they were evil inside.

So let's not be lumped with the Pharisees. Because who wants to be lumped with the Pharisees after all? So he says, don't be proud. Don't think of yourself more highly than someone else.

So if we want to have daily consistent victory, I believe that first key is humility. Humble ourselves. Realize that without God, we are nothing.

We are even less than nothing. We're not for God's mercy and God's grace. All we deserve is eternal punishment for eternity apart from God.

Because without Christ, we are nothing. As we think about Jesus's humility, we look at Philippians chapter 2. Verses 5 through 7 to see what type of humility or what humility looks like.

[6 : 53] The Bible says in verse 5 of Philippians chapter 2, let this mind or let this same attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, who the Bible says was being in the form of God, the exact likeness of God, very God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

Meaning, Jesus did not consider it something to be grasped onto. His equality with God was not something that was to be grasped onto.

But it says, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

Jesus had a humble birth in a stable. He made himself of no reputation. Think about it. Jesus Christ, who is God, became flesh, took upon himself the limitations of mankind.

[7 : 56] He became hungry. He became tired. He felt pain. He felt hunger. And he felt hurt when, I'm sure, emotional hurt as well.

So he made himself of no reputation, being God, the one who created this world, the one who owns this world, made himself, allowed himself to leave that reputation behind.

He took upon himself the form of a slave. He took upon himself the role of a slave, the role of a bondservant. And Jesus became obedient even to the point of death on the cross.

And Jesus, in his humility, did not begin his ministry by trying to rule and reign with authority.

How did he begin his ministry? In submission. Goes to John the Baptist. He said, I need to be baptized. And that was a public proclamation.

[9 : 00] And then what happens when God gives his seal of approval? This is my son in whom I am well pleased. And so he begins his ministry in a humble fashion.

Jesus didn't own property, didn't own a house. He went from place to place. He relied on the hospitality of others to put him up, to feed him.

Then he chooses men who were not renowned, who were not the leading scholars of their day, were not the religious leaders of their day. He took common mankind.

He took a thief. He took fishermen who were unlearned and who were smelly and had one of the jobs that were not a, not a very, probably not a very desired job.

It was hard work and they didn't smell the best. And, and this is what he, this is who he surrounded himself with. In humility.

[10 : 00] If we humble ourselves, we become like Christ. So our humility makes us like Christ. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

The first key. The second key is holiness. And holiness also identifies us with Christ. Identifies us with him because we are set apart for his use.

He says in the second part of verse number seven, fear the Lord and depart from evil. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

Evil to fear the Lord is to have reverential trust in him. To realize who he is. To trust him. And to, in our humility, realize that Jesus is our Lord.

He is our master. And in doing so, we are for him and we are not to be serving ourselves. And he says, depart from evil.

[11:07] This is where repentance and faith begin. To realize who Jesus is. To have that reverential trust. Have that reverential awe.

Recognizing our sins. We turn to him initially for salvation. And we also then live from faith to faith. And we are set apart for his use.

Fear the Lord and depart from evil. And we recognize the holy life of Jesus as an example. Jesus lived his life for others. Jesus lived his life to serve the heavenly father.

Jesus lived his life. He gave his life for us, but he also lived his life so that we may have that relationship with him. And so that is the, that is the key.

That's the, that's the hallmark of a holy life. Being set apart for the master's use. So he says, fear him. Trusting Christ as our savior, we receive the power to live victoriously.

[12:10] This morning in Sunday school we were talking about how is it that we could be wronged, be wronged grievously, and as Paul says, to take it and go on rather than trying to get justice, trying to sue someone in, in the, in the legal system or in the courts.

So how could we take someone defrauding us, hurting us, stealing from us, and getting away with it?

Comes from the Holy Spirit. Inside of us. That would give us the power and the victory by providing something for us or do something through us that we could not do ourselves.

How do we forgive? How can we forgive like Christ forgives? It's to allow Christ to forgive through us. So trusting Christ as our savior, we live that victorious life.

Now how do we stay away from evil? I believe that what God does is he, temptation is limited to what we can overcome through Christ.

[13:23] Let's take a look at 1 Corinthians 10, 13. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.

But God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

Others will see our new life and they will recognize Christ in us. So as we humble ourselves, as we fear God in holiness, it identifies us with Christ and others will see Christ through us.

Thirdly, our health. As we see in Proverbs chapter 3, our health can improve. We can have better health because of holy living.

Now this is not an infomercial. This is not something that oh well trust Jesus, become a Christian, join the church and you can be healthier. No, it's not a name it and claim it.

[14:32] It's not become a Christian and all of a sudden you'll be healed of all of life's diseases. It's simply Solomon saying this in verse number 8.

Humble yourselves before God, live right, be holy and he says it will be health to your to your flesh and strength to your bones.

So he says humble yourself, fear God, depart from evil and life will be so much better because why do we suffer often?

Well, very often we suffer because of stressful situations that are of our own making. What about unforgiveness?

Lack of forgiveness has been shown to have negative health effects for us. So if we are able to follow Christ, if we are able to humble ourselves, be set apart for him, allow him to run our lives and we won't ruin our lives, then life will be so much better.

[15:49] Have you ever seen someone who has lived a sinful life, lived a what we would consider a wicked life, harming their bodies and they might be 40 years old but look like they're 80?

Why is that? Because God did not create us to harm our bodies through living and making choices that aren't godly choices.

So if we make ungodly choices with how we live, with the things that we allow into our body, the things that we do with our bodies, then the system that God put into place and it's not, God doesn't necessarily have to intervene and do anything.

Think about it. God has put principles in place. God has put laws of the universe in place. If we go, if we climb up to the roof and jump off, God did not say, okay, right now I want you to fall and hit the ground.

No. God put gravity, God put the law of the universe called gravity in place and if we defy that law, we break that law and that law is what judges us immediately.

[17:11] Same thing with our life choices. We make certain life choices that we receive the consequences in our body from those life choices. And so that is why I believe Solomon in his wisdom says, humble yourself, live right, and it's going to pay off in health dividends.

So he says, do this, it will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones. So if we can allow God to forgive through us, we won't have that caustic effect of unforgiveness.

What about worry? Worry is another one of those things. We can stop worrying when we have learned to trust in God. You know, very often, we have to remind ourselves of that.

I have to remind myself of that. You don't have to worry. Do things God's way, and we don't have to worry. We can find real joy when we walk in God's will.

And just that fact of being able to have joy and experience real joy can bring its own measure of health into our life.

[18:23] And so new life in Christ can improve our health and well-being. Not because necessarily it's a health and wealth and prosperity type gospel that because we belong to him then we won't get sick and he'll make us feel good all the time.

No, it is a byproduct of living life the way God designed for us to live. it's it would be it one analogy would be to take a vehicle let's say and you follow the owner's manual.

You get it serviced at every interval. You get the oil changed. You get everything fluids and belt everything. You get everything done at its proper time.

what are the chances of your vehicle lasting longer and being in better condition at the end of its service life than if we ignored all of those service intervals and we didn't do what and we let's say the it was a 14,000 pound weight it should be able to handle and we put something that's two tons in it or hauling something all the time.

Well your transmission will go out prematurely. Your suspension and all of these things will begin going wrong with the vehicle because we are not operating it according to specifications.

[19:58] And this is simply I believe Solomon's way of saying we conduct our lives the way God intended we live our life based on godly principles and we will feel better for it because we will not be adding additional wear and tear on our bodies.

And so it's a simple matter of its logic and it is something that God designed if we take care of our bodies if we live for him then we are not harming our bodies.

It will be health to your flesh strength to your bones. And then lastly honoring God and we have to remember our motive for this but honoring God in giving increases his blessings.

Let's take a look at verse number nine. Honor the Lord with your what? With your possessions. Honor the Lord with what you own.

Honor the Lord with your bank account. Honor the Lord with your vehicle. Honor the Lord with everything you own. And with what?

[21:11] The first fruits of all your increase. What does that mean? What does that mean? Honor God with the first fruits of all your increase.

Now I have to remember this was an agrarian economy. economy. This is an economy where everybody planted their own food. Everybody had this is how they there wasn't a Winn-Dixie. There wasn't a Brown's grocery there. We couldn't just go to the store and buy everything they needed. So what is he saying when we honor God with the increase with the first fruits of our increases?

Where does the tithe come from? When did God want the offering of the tithe? After they fed their animals?

After they paid their, if there was a lease on the property or if they were farming for somebody else? And after they paid all their bills and God got what was left over?

[22:16] No, he said you honor me with the first fruits. The first things you pick, those are God's. And you honor me with that?

Then he says your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. What giving does is giving teaches us to live by faith.

Giving God of the first fruits. Giving God before we pay the government, before we let the government take what it, what it will take, we give to God of the tithe of what the first fruits, God says that there will be blessing.

God says this is what I expect. So giving teaches us to live by faith. What does fear say? Fear says I'm afraid to give.

Fear says I can't do it. Fear says it doesn't make sense because if I give because if I give and I am generous in my giving to God then we won't be able to make ends meet.

[23 : 29] Fear tells us that. Faith says I am so blessed I can't withhold this. I am so blessed by God.

God has provided so much for me. I can't hold this back because I love God so much. I will trust God and I will live by faith.

Faith says I'm so blessed I can't withhold. So if we humble ourselves, realize we're no better than anyone else, don't think we're smarter than we are, don't think we are worth more than anyone else.

If we realize that God is in control, if we humble ourselves, if we in holiness give ourselves for his honor, his purpose and not give in to wickedness, not give in to sin.

And if we also in humility, giving to God, also honoring God with his increase, we're going to see so many other benefits.

[24 : 48] Solomon knew what he was talking about. God gave him the wisdom. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord. Depart from evil. It will be health to your bone, health to your flesh, strength through your bones, honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase.

So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. So have we been using these four keys to spiritual success?

If we have not, will we start using them today? Humble ourselves before him. Fear God. Depart from evil.

Honor God with our possessions and with the first fruits of our increase. faith. These are four keys that I believe Solomon gave so that we could see that doing things God's way and this works.

He says, do this and you will be blessed. Father, this morning as we've gone into your word and we have, I trust, gleaned from the wisdom of Solomon that you would help us to better understand how to live our lives.

[26 : 07] Not thinking ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Fearing you. Departing from evil.

Allowing you to help us not to give in to the temptation as we trust your Holy Spirit's power through us.

Lord, we ask that you will give us the power to forgive. You will give us the power not to worry. So, Lord, we ask that you would help us as well as we give back to you as this is our loving service to you.

Teach us this morning. Lord, be with those who are not well today. Pray as well, Lord, that you would be with those who are at work. Provide safety. Help them, Lord God, testimony as they work today.

Well, thank you for all of this. We'll give you all the honor, all the glory, and all the praise for it.

Father, for it's in Jesus' name we pray. Let's all stand.

[27 : 15] Let's all stand. Let's all stand.

Let's all stand.