

HOW TO LIVE

LIFE LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Purpose February 19, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

Who is someone in your life that you think of as wise?

If we're honest, a lot of the time we're pretty sure we already know How to Live. We might need some help on the big stuff - should I buy this house? - but we've got most of it covered. This week, we will look at our purpose in Proverbs 3, and consider the heart change we need in order to live fully in God's world in God's ways.

READ Proverbs 3:1-26

Which images and metaphors stand out to you or capture your imagination?

- Our theme this week is "purpose;" which of these verses offer perspective on our purpose?

Focus on Proverbs 3:13-18 - a beautiful poem about the value and benefits of wisdom.

Using the poetic images in these verses, consider what else our culture values in the way this poem values wisdom.

- For example, 3:13 could read, "Blessed is the one who finds *money*, and the one who gets *financial security*."
- If you can, think of the sources that teach you these values.

Is it easy or hard for you to believe that wisdom is as valuable and beneficial as these verses describe?

- What could change your mind?

Focus on Proverbs 3:5-8 - a short poem on two ways to live out our choices in life.

How would you describe the difference between the words "trust" (3:5) and "obey" (not found in this passage) - a term found often in the law sections of the Old Testament?

- When have you done something simply because you trusted the person giving you the advice or directive?
- How is that different from times you do things you are required to, or to avoid censure?
- How do you see these verses as agreeing or disagreeing with the cultural wisdom found in phrases like "follow your heart" or "do what you think is best" (or other cultural wisdom in this vein!)?
 - Does putting it this way reveal any *feelings* that make this passage particularly difficult to live out practically?

FROM THE MESSAGE

As Dirk shared about God's will for our lives, he discussed God's sovereign will (what does and will happen; we learn about His sovereign will in the Bible), His moral will (what actions He has conclusively drawn lines around), and His personal will for each of us: "The more familiar you are with God's sovereign will, the more obedient you are with God's moral will, the easier it'll be to discover God's personal will."

DAILY TIME

Proverbs 16
Proverbs 17
Proverbs 18
Proverbs 19
Proverbs 10
Matthew 7:7-14

As you read each day, consider:

What do these proverbs show me about God and His character?

Where do they highlight my need to confess and receive God's forgiveness?

Where can I ask for help to live out the wisdom I see that I need?

Partner Potluck!

February 26, Kentwood Location
Encounterchurch.org/events

SIGN UP TO SERVE!

Encounterchurch.org/serve

NOTES AND QUOTES

Several places in the New Testament talk about "putting on" Christ, or the new self, to describe living in good and right ways. (Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 3:10) However, for the original readers of the Old Testament, a full understanding of the nature and work of Christ was veiled; instead, they were to "put on" the wisdom of God (Proverbs 1:9, 3:3, for example). This is all the clearer when we see that Christ is the wisdom of God! (1 Corinthians 1:24)

Proverbs speaks often about wisdom as something we dress in - a crown, a garland or necklace - inviting us to agree that wisdom is of the highest value, a better adornment than any riches of the world. Wise living increases our love and praise for God, and unmasks the foolishness of counterfeit ways. Wisdom does all of this "not by appealing to joy or fear of disillusionment, but to fear of Yahweh." (Kidner)

Fear of the Lord - a relationship with God where we trust and believe Him, and therefore agree with His definitions of what is good and right - makes wisdom different from obeying laws. Law can be external, promising reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience (see Deuteronomy). Fear of the Lord works on our hearts, inviting us to agree with God in our convictions and beliefs and not just in our actions. Wisdom gained within this relationship leads to a heart change that causes a life change.



“The more we’re familiar with what God is up to and His plans, the easier it is to identify His will for our lives.” Can you share an example from your life of when knowledge of God’s sovereign will (from the Scriptures) and His moral will have given you clarity on what path to take?

- What is encouraging about this pursuit of God’s will in our lives?
- What is challenging or confusing?

“God is more interested in you discovering Him than His will.” Notice how Proverbs 3:5 says “Trust in *the Lord*...” (not “in His willingness to reveal the future plan of your life”), and 3:6 says “In all your ways *know Him*...”

- What are some practical ways we can grow in our trust and experience of God?
- What difference does it make that we are being encouraged to trust in *the Lord* and not in “the plan?”

EXTRA: Read Luke 6:46-49

How does this passage layer meaning about wisdom, trust and obedience onto the passage we’ve been looking at in Proverbs?

- Do you find the image of the house more or less compelling than the straight (and presumably crooked) path?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

As you pray for one another, ask God for wisdom; use James 1:5 to guide your prayer.

PRAYER AND CARE

Reminders for the week ahead:

Proverbs 3

1 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,
2 for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.
3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
7 Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
8 It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.
9 Honor the Lord with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.
11 My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.
Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom
13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.

Proverbs 3:25-26 tell us if we walk in the path of wisdom, there is no need to be afraid. This is not a promise that if I walk in wisdom, no harm will befall me. The principle underneath is that **there is no safer way to walk through life than on wise and righteous paths. (Wilkin)**

Proverbs speaks often of the path, the way, the feet and the steps; yet it always presents two and only two paths. One path leads to life, and the other does not. Jesus spoke in these same two paths in places like Matthew 6:24 and 7:13-14:

“He wants us to find our way home, to Him. He comes to us offering exactly what we need to navigate life in such a way that we will enjoy His presence along the way and find him fully at our final destination.” p 195-196 (Guthrie)

“The decision that determines our destination, as Jesus makes clear [John 14:6] is not merely a matter of behavior or companions or intentions, but a matter of how we respond to Him, whether we will choose Him as our path, our life.” (p 201)

15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.
19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
by understanding he established the heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.
21 My son, do not lose sight of these—
keep sound wisdom and discretion,
22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will walk on your way securely,
and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror
or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes,
26 for the Lord will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught.