

**“Who Can You Trust?”
Proverbs 1:1-7; Proverbs 3:1-18**

Proverbs 3

- 1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,
- 2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.
- 3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.
- 4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.
- 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
- 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.
- 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.
- 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops;
- 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.
- 11 My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke,
- 12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.
- 13 Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding,
- 14 for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.
- 15 She is more precious than rubies; 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 pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.
- 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

Introduction

The book of Proverbs is the most practical book in the Bible. It’s an ancient “How To” book. Through King Solomon and others, God has given a timeless guide on the art of living. Eugene Peterson explains it well in his introduction to Proverbs in the Message Bible.

He writes that “Many people think that the Bible has mostly to do with getting into heaven – getting right with God, saving our eternal souls. It does have to do with that, of course, but not only. It’s equally concerned with living well on this earth. In our Scriptures, heaven isn’t the primary concern where earth is a tagalong afterthought.

Wisdom is the art of living skillfully in actual conditions we find ourselves. Wisdom has to do with becoming skillful in honoring our parents and raising our children, handling our money and conducting our sexual lives, going to work, and exercising leadership using words well and treating friends kindly, eating and drinking healthily, cultivating emotions within ourselves and attitudes toward others that make for peace.

Proverbs concentrates on the here and now more than any other book in the Bible. Proverbs distills it all into striking images that keep us connected in holy obedience to the ordinary.” I love that phrase: “holy obedience to the ordinary.”

I. Keep

We read in Proverbs 3, how the wise father reminds his son these four teachings: “Keep my commands in your heart; Trust in the LORD with all your heart; Honor the LORD with your wealth; Accept the LORD’s discipline.”

It’s been said of the Ten Commandments that they are more than opinions. They’re not The Ten Suggestions! Obedience of son to this wise father and obedience of us to God himself isn’t mere lip service or an outward show. It’s meant to be written on the “tablet of your heart.” Not a tablet of stone from the Law given to Moses, but the tablet of the heart.

Not too many years ago, I would never wear a seat belt in the car, even for a while after it became a law. My family often gave me a hard time about it. Then on a Sunday right after church, one of our 1st Pres trauma docs asked me to the emergency room at University hospital. An out-of-state couple had been in an early morning car accident on I-215. Neither was wearing a seat belt. The man had a few hundred stitches in his face and they’d just told him that they couldn’t save his wife. Talk about a challenging pastoral call. Driving home that day, guess what I did? I put the seat belt on and have been ever since.

Now, didn’t they know, didn’t I know they could go through the windshield in an accident, even with airbags? When I went to the hospital to see this dear man, I didn’t learn any new information about seatbelts, but the information I already knew became new.

he information got real to my heart and finally sank down and affected the way I live (not the way I drive, but the way I live). I now wear my seat belt.

Several times Jeremiah speaks of this heart the Lord wants his people to have. From Jeremiah 11: “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them. I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” In Jeremiah 36: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you.”

And in Jeremiah 31: “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD.”

The question for you and for me is this: Is it your heart’s desire to keep God’s commands and never forget his teaching? “My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart.”

II. Trust

Then in verse 5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” So, who do you trust? And why? Readers Digest cites Tom Hanks, Sandra Bullock and Denzel Washington as the top three most trusted persons in America. Steven Spielberg, Bill and Melinda Gates are in the top ten. Where in the world does that trust come from? I really don’t know much or anything about these people to put my trust in them. Do you?

I’ve lived under 18 U.S. presidents. Under Eisenhower and Kennedy, about 78% of Americans trusted in the government in Washington D.C. “always or most of the time.”

Today it’s less than 20%, cited by the Pew Research Center.

It’s not surprising that it’s hard to trust Facebook, Wells Fargo, the President or Congress. Truths we once found self-evident have given way to disbelief. Many Americans have discarded once taken-for-granted beliefs: in democracy, patriotism, science, God, hard work, reputation, good manners. This isn’t just disagreement (“I’m right, you’re wrong”); it’s disbelief (“it’s not true”). Today’s age of mistrust is troubling in a nation long characterized by optimism and trust.

In ancient China, people wanted protection from barbarian hordes from the North. So, the Great Wall of China was built: thirty feet high, eighteen feet thick, and more than fifteen hundred miles long.

The goal was to build an absolutely impenetrable defense — too high to climb over, too thick to break down, and too long to go around. The people trusted this wall to keep them safe. But during the first hundred years of the wall’s existence, China was successfully invaded three times.

It wasn’t the wall’s fault. During all three invasions, armies never climbed over the wall, broke it down, or went around it; they simply bribed a gatekeeper and then marched in through an open door. The purpose of the wall failed because of a breakdown in values.

The wisdom of Proverbs says: “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.” So, friends, are you trusting in the Lord for your family, for the church, for your job, your health, your day-to-day life?

III. Honor

Then, verses 9 and 10: “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.” For Israel, this is both a call and a promise. It’s a call to generosity and a promise of blessing.

In Deuteronomy 26, it says, “When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the first fruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land... Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and say to the priest in office at the time, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God

that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us...’ The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm... He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.”

San Antonio’s David Robinson Foundation feeds the homeless through his Feed My Sheep program. It also helps needy families get diapers and baby food through the Ruth Project. This retired basketball great thinks of this work as life-enhancers rather than sacrifices. Robinson once said, “If I’m clutching my money with both hands, how can I be free to hug my wife and kids?”

In dollars, my net worth may be worth less than 1% of Robinson’s. But no matter how large or small our resources are, Proverbs 3 says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth.”

IV. Accept

Proverbs goes on. “Do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves.” Paul reminds us in II Timothy 3, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The writer of Hebrews quotes and expands on Proverbs 3. “The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children aren’t disciplined by their father? God disciplines us for our good. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (that’s in Hebrews 12:6-11).

A train was chugging along the rails of Lafayette, Indiana, at twenty-four miles per hour. Suddenly the conductor, Robert Mohr, spotted an object on the tracks roughly a city block away. Initially the engineer, Rod Lindley, thought it was a dog on the tracks. Then Mohr screamed, “That’s a baby!”

The child was Emily Marshall, a nineteen-month-old toddler who had wandered away from home while her mother planted flowers in her yard.

Lindley hit the brakes. Mohr bolted out the door and raced along a ledge to the front of the engine. Realizing there wasn’t time to jump ahead of the train and grab the baby, he ran down some steps, squatted at the bottom of the grill, and hung on. He stretched out his leg and pushed her out of harm’s way. Then he jumped off the train, picked up the little girl, and cradled her in his arms. Little Emily ended up with just a cut on her head, a few bad bruises, and a swollen lip.

Sometimes, like this train conductor, God must cause us some hurt in order to save us.

Conclusion

There's Proverbs 3 – Keep, Trust, Honor, Accept. “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding”, living with the quality of experience, knowledge, and good judgment. Of this wisdom, God's word declares, “She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.”

Let us pray together for God's wisdom in and for our lives.