

Wisdom for the World (# 3)



Studies in Proverbs prepared by Dr. Bob Bernhardt (RobertBernhardt.com)
Based on the Contemporary English Version of the Bible (provided)

"From these (Proverbs), an ordinary person can learn to be smart, and young people can gain knowledge and good sense." (Proverbs 1:4)

An Introduction to Chapter three of Proverbs:

One of the challenges of exploring Proverbs is that it is about "wisdom" which consequently is related to every sphere of life - spiritual, intellectual, ethical and practical. When exploring Proverbs in a study group atmosphere this can take discussion off in many divergent directions. That is very evident from the text of chapter three. One could pursue such themes as health and longevity, relating to your neighbour, jealousy, honesty and blessing - to name just some of the topics referred to in this chapter. This diversity represents both an opportunity and a challenge when one attempts to get to the heart of the message of Proverbs.

The text provided here is the Contemporary English Version, released by the American Bible Society in 1995.

Proverbs 3

Trust God

¹My child, remember my teachings and instructions and obey them completely. ²They will help you live a long and prosperous life. ³Let love and loyalty always show like a necklace, and write them in your mind. ⁴God and people will like you and consider you a success. ⁵With all your heart you must trust the LORD and not your own judgment. ⁶Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow. ⁷Don't ever think that you are wise enough, but respect the LORD and stay away from evil. ⁸This will make you healthy, and you will feel strong.

⁹Honor the LORD by giving him your money and the first part of all your crops. ¹⁰Then you will have more grain and grapes than you will ever need.

¹¹My child, don't turn away or become bitter when the LORD corrects you. ¹²The LORD corrects everyone he loves, just as parents correct their favorite child.

The Value of Wisdom

¹³God blesses everyone who has wisdom and common sense. ¹⁴Wisdom is worth more than silver; it makes you much richer than gold. ¹⁵Wisdom is more valuable than precious jewels; nothing you want compares with her. ¹⁶In her right hand Wisdom holds a long life, and in her left hand are wealth and honor. ¹⁷Wisdom makes life pleasant and leads us safely along. ¹⁸Wisdom is a life-giving tree, the source of happiness for all who hold on to her. ¹⁹By his wisdom and knowledge the LORD created heaven and earth. ²⁰By his understanding he let the ocean break loose and clouds release the rain. ²¹My child, use common sense and sound judgment! Always keep them in mind. ²²They will help you to live a long and beautiful life. ²³You will walk safely and never stumble; ²⁴you will rest without a worry and sleep soundly. ²⁵So don't be afraid of sudden disasters or storms that strike those who are evil. ²⁶You can be sure that the LORD will protect you from harm.

Wisdom for the World (# 3)

²⁷Do all you can for everyone who deserves your help. ²⁸Don't tell your neighbor to come back tomorrow, if you can help today. ²⁹Don't try to be mean to neighbors who trust you. ³⁰Don't argue just to be arguing, when you haven't been hurt. ³¹Don't be jealous of cruel people or follow their example. ³²The LORD doesn't like anyone who is dishonest, but he lets good people be his friends. ³³He places a curse on the home of everyone who is evil, but he blesses the home of every good person. ³⁴The LORD sneers at those who sneer at him, but he is kind to everyone who is humble. ³⁵You will be praised if you are wise, but you will be disgraced if you are a stubborn fool.

Proverbs, Chapter 3. Notes on the Text.

3:2 References to long life as a blessing of God are frequent in Scripture. For example, when Solomon prayed for wisdom (I Kings 3:6-15) God promised him also prosperity and long life.

3:5 On a biographical note David similarly challenged Solomon to wholehearted commitment to the Lord (I Chronicles 28:9).

3:11-12 This passage is referred to in Hebrews 12:10.

3:18-20 The linking of "wisdom" with creation is dealt with more expansively in Proverbs 8:22-31.

3:27,28. See also, I John 3:17,18.

Applying the wisdom of Proverbs to our lives in today's world.

Here are some contemporary quotations which you are invited to consider in the light of what we read in Proverbs.

1) On wisdom and longevity (from a website about longevity).

"Longevity is the quest of many individuals. To live a long life and yet to remain physically, mentally and spiritually healthy is a challenge requiring great wisdom. A long lifespan is a blessing, which has to be earned with the wisdom of an anti-aging lifestyle. Your creator has given you the innate wisdom to live long, and your mission in life is to earn those extra years."

2) Two quotations on God and prosperity from a "Christian" website.

"Simply stated, God's will for you is prosperity. Every time you come into the fruition of a blessing, God is happy. He gets excited. He has a personal interest in your prosperity."

"He (God) is disappointed when we do not prosper because He has already reserved so many good things for us. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be blessed. We must be blessed, if for no other reason than to make God happy. God's will is prosperity."

Wisdom for the World (# 3)

3) How do you respond to this alternative perspective on approaching the care for others?

"You are only as good to others as you are to yourself because the truth of the matter is that you can only work out your own salvation. You cannot do that for anyone else and no one else can do that for you. Journeying on this path of the heart, of Self Love, will help you cultivate peace amongst the chaos that will inevitably occur in your world. There will be difficulties and choiceless situations and circumstances that pop up, and cultivating Self Love will benefit you when you face these difficult times in your life."

4) A comment on worry and religious faith. How does this match up with Proverbs 3:24?

"Worry and religious faith: Your faith and your prayers may help to dampen worry, but, if not, can leave you worrying about your faith as well! Aim for meditative prayer and guidance in coping more effectively rather than supplicatory prayer asking that your worries be removed. Do not make your worries the litmus test of your faith."

Thoughts to carry around with you.

If you were asked to identify two areas of your life in which you could be more richly blessed by "wisdom", what would they be?

Has anything that you have encountered thus far in Proverbs offered any insight or help with these things?