

Compassion Demonstrated
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Proverbs 3:21-35

Happy Father's Day!

What if I could make you this offer? If you put this into practice every day...

- You can enjoy safety during the day, and sweet, peaceful sleep at night!
- You won't stumble on life's road or live in fear of sudden disaster.
- You can live peacefully with those around you; even unpleasant people.
- God will be gracious to you, bless your home, and reward you with honor.

Sounds pretty appealing right? This may sound like the claims of an infomercial or the latest nutritional supplement, but these are the words of Solomon in the second half of Proverbs 3.

They are the characteristics of a life lived by embracing godly wisdom and discernment. Living this way also positively affects how we live, work with, and relate to our fellow man. As, **Proverbs 3:4 (ESV)** says, "...you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man."

Big Idea: Living with godly wisdom secures the blessings of God and "favor" with people. Embracing godly wisdom allows us to "love our neighbor" as God commanded (Lev. 19:9–18.)

Proverbs 3:21–26 (ESV) — **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.

- In verse 21 Solomon warns his son not to lose sight of sound wisdom and discernment. Isn't it true that our tendency is to lose focus on things that will help us in the long run? "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it!"
- We need to "hang on to, to embrace" godly wisdom and discernment.
- Verse 22 says they will refresh our souls and adorn our lives like jewels.
- Why do we wear jewelry? History, especially biblical history, shows the significance of being adorned with jewelry. It's pleasant to see, something to treasure, and can signify a certain status. (Illus. Susan's cast)
- Godly wisdom can "bedazzle" and "bejewel" our lives and reputation to make them sparkle with the blessing of God. What are those blessings?
- Verse 23 says, "...you will walk securely and not stumble." Verse six told us God would direct our paths. Warren Wiersbe writes, "*Because God directs our path, He is able to protect our path.*" If we live with godly wisdom, God will provide "providential protection" as only He can.
- Verse 24 says we will sleep soundly at night without fear.
- The old saying tells us, "*A clear conscience is a soft pillow.*"
- That's true enough but the real secret to sleeping in peace without anxiety is not conscience but confidence. It's the confidence that the God of the universe is watching over us. Taking nothing away from Mike Lindell's product, but the best night's sleep in the whole wide world isn't My Pillow, it's My Heavenly Father! By the way, I have no doubt Mike would agree.
- Let's get practical. Living with godly wisdom allows me to sleep at night because it keeps me from doing bad things that SHOULD make me sleep with one eye open and one foot on the floor. Have you ever looked at someone's wicked conduct and wondered how they can sleep at night?

- That's why verse 25 says the person living with godly wisdom doesn't stay awake fearing "the destruction that comes upon the wicked."
- Verse 26 says if I will live by God's word and God's wisdom, He will personally keep my "foot from being caught in a trap."
- To summarize verses 21-26, if I embrace godly wisdom and never lose sight of it as I live my life, God will sustain and secure my life.
- Some might ask, "Can you "guarantee" my life will be like this?"
- That sort of reminds me of Zig Ziglar's famous quote. People would ask, "*Will positive thinking allow you to do anything?*" Zig always replied: "*NO, Positive thinking won't let you do anything. But it will let you do everything better than negative thinking will.*" How does that apply to Proverbs?
- These are godly guidelines NOT godly guarantees; principles not promises. Here's what I CAN guarantee you: History and the testimony of God's people can verify that Christ-followers who live by godly wisdom live more blessed lives than those who DON'T live by godly wisdom.
- Embracing godly wisdom results in God's favor and protection.
- Godly wisdom also calls on us to "love our neighbor."
- Solomon got very practical on how to live in peace with other people.

Proverbs 3:27–30 (ESV) — 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. **28** Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you. **29** Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you. **30** Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm.

- Verse 27: If you owe it pay it! J. Vernon McGee writes, "*When we owe money to another person, the money we have is not ours...it belongs to the other person. To use it for our own purposes is actually dishonest.*"ⁱ
- This can also apply to those in need of help, mission efforts, worthy organizations. It doesn't mean just give to everyone without being discerning about their cause. It DOES mean don't

make excuses when you know you could do good. (Illus. Girl Scouts take Venmo and Zelle)

- By the way, this also applies to returning tools or keeping promises. If you owe it and can fulfill that promise it makes for better neighbors and friends.

Proverbs 3:30 (ESV) — 30 Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm.

- Don't plan evil or pick a fight with someone who hasn't harmed you. Actually, Jesus taught us not to fight even if they HAVE harmed us.
- I'm amazed at how many people wind up in court over relatively minor irritations that mushroomed into major conflicts.
- Whether it is about loud music, where their cars are parked, or throwing tree limbs over the fence, work it out and in some cases just let it go!
- The NIV and CSB render this, "don't accuse" anyone for no reason. We need to get our facts straight before we engage our mouths either to our neighbor's face or behind their back.
- What about neighbors who hate us because we're followers of Christ?
- A class member recently emailed me about this situation. The negativity has increased even more in recent days due to the tension in our country.
- Quoting Wiersbe again: *"Sometimes it takes a great deal of patience, prayer, and wisdom to rightly relate to people who don't want Christians in the neighborhood, but perhaps that's why God put us there. It's possible to have a godly home in the midst of an ungodly neighborhood, for God "blesses the home of the righteous" (v. 33, NIV). We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and one dedicated Christian in a neighborhood can make a great deal of difference and be a powerful witness for the Lord."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- **1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)** tells us, Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

- How can I apply the book of Proverbs to being a good neighbor? Just look at the descriptions of a bad neighbor in Proverbs and do the opposite:
 - Don't pick a fight, lend a hand (3:28,29, & 30)
 - Don't betray their trust, keep your promises (3:29)
 - Don't gossip or chew them out, build them up (11:9,12,24:28,25:18)
 - Don't be inconsiderate, be overly considerate (21:10)
 - Love them like you love yourself (Mark 12:31)
- Can you be a Christian but not a good neighbor? Sadly, yes and I've met a few. But you can't be an obedient Christian and be a bad neighbor.
- Those approaches above also apply to co-workers, the other parents at school and on the sports team, and unpleasant family members!
- In verse 31 Solomon kind of reads our minds: "don't envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways.
- Don't be tempted to imagine the "payoff" for criminal behavior. This isn't only about murderers or mobsters, it also applies to that person who cheats on their taxes or cuts corners in business.
- Don't envy their ill-gotten gains. Here's why:

32 for the devious person is an abomination to the Lord, but the upright are in his confidence.

- Look at the contrast: God hates the deeds of the wicked and they will be punished. God loves the righteous and wise and they will be blessed.

33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous. **34** Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. **35** The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

- When you look at it through God's perspective there's no question which lifestyle is the right lifestyle. A life of embracing godly wisdom results in blessing from God and honor from people.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Living with godly wisdom secures the blessings of God.
- If God directs our path He will protect our path.
- Embracing godly wisdom and discernment will be rewarded by God's grace and protection. We'll sleep soundly, live peacefully, and have less fear and anxiety, knowing God is watching over the wise.
- Godly wisdom also influences how we treat those around us.
- We're commanded to "love your neighbor as yourself." The "genius" of that standard is that if we truly try to live it out we will NOT mistreat others.
- We also won't withhold good when we're able to give it. We won't be a "slow pay" on our debts. We won't dodge legitimate organizations seeking donations. We'll return that rake we borrowed three years ago.
- We also won't "plot harm" to other people over minor offenses either with our mouth or through the courts. Sometimes you can't avoid a conflict, but most of the time we just need to let it go!
- Finally, we should never envy the ill-gotten gains of the wicked. When God exacts His judgment on their evil we would not want to trade places.
- So, practically speaking how do we embrace godly wisdom every day?
- **James 1:5 (ESV) — 5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
 - We need to diligently study and obey God's word
 - **Proverbs 3:1 (ESV) — 1** My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,
 - We need to seek and obey the direction of His Holy Spirit.
 - **2 Peter 1:3 (ESV) — 3** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

ⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Skillful* (p. 40). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ McGee, J. Vernon – Thru the Bible Commentary - 1991 Thomas Nelson

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*Be Skillful*](#) (p. 41). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.