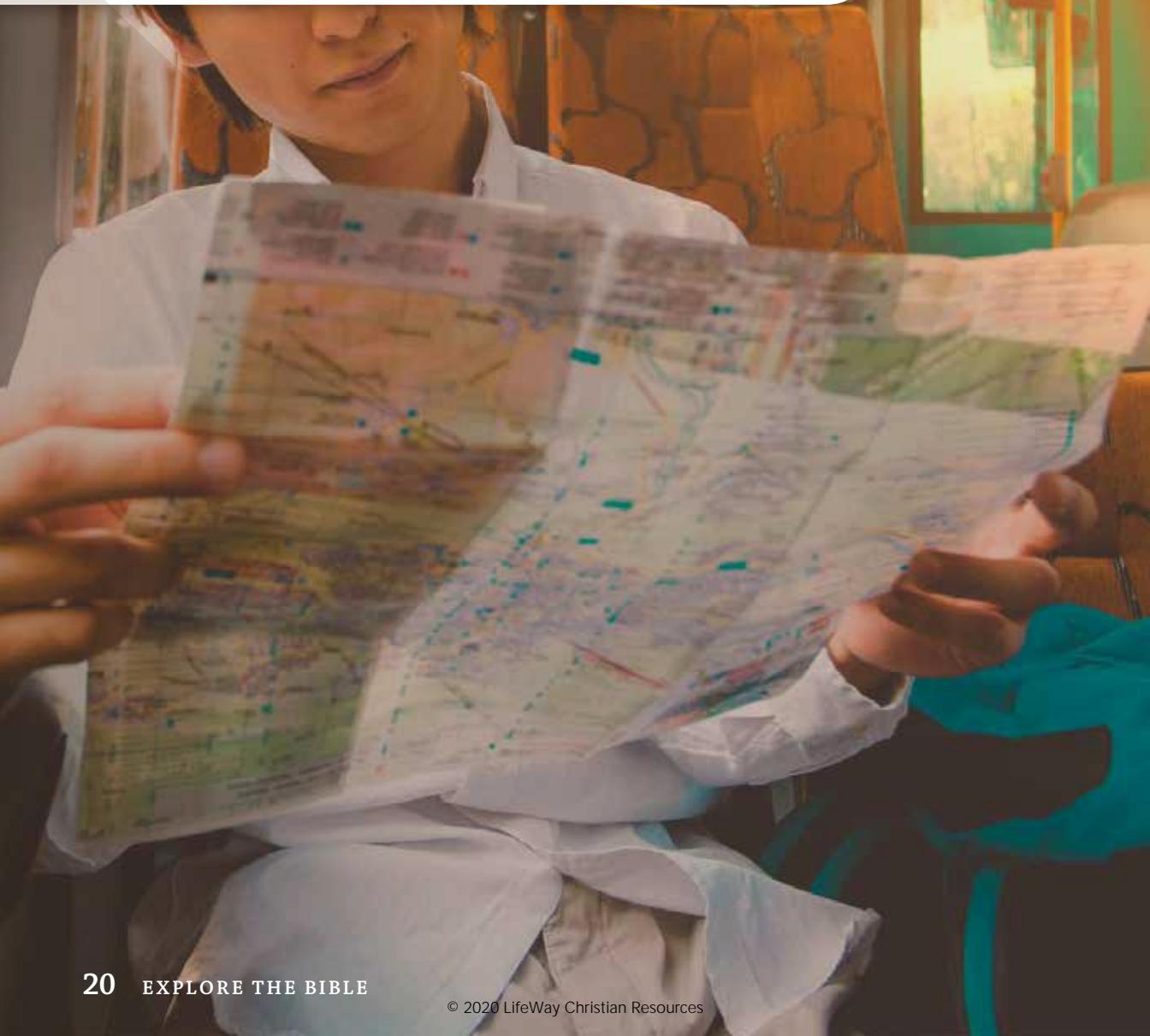


Session 2

Direction Offered

God provides direction to those who place their trust in Him.

Proverbs 3:1-12



How often have you ignored the directions offered by a GPS because you wanted to take a different path? What dangers do you put yourself in by ignoring instruction?

A global positioning system, better known as GPS, is a handy tool for getting directions. Simply provide the address, and the GPS will have you on your way. It even tells you how long you'll have to travel before you reach your destination. The tool works well unless you decide you're going to ignore it and go in another direction. That's when we hear the rerouting announcement over and over again. Solomon gave clear instructions about how to live wisely. But these instructions are useless to the person who refuses to follow them.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

If chapter 1 of Proverbs was Solomon's call to be wise, then chapters 2–3 are his counsel about how wisdom works. Proverbs 2 speaks of the great value of wisdom. The value of godly wisdom is worth seeking, it is like silver and hidden treasure (2:4). The pursuit of wisdom “stores up success for the upright” (2:7), is a “shield for those who live with integrity” (2:7), and protects God's followers (2:8). Solomon argued that the wise person will “understand righteousness, justice, and integrity—every good path” (2:9).

Further, Solomon not only set forth wisdom as something worthy of being pursued, he stated that wisdom will “enter your heart, and knowledge will delight you” (2:10). True wisdom rescues the righteous from the path of evil (2:12-14), including from sexual temptations (2:16-19).

Solomon ended chapter 2 with a challenge and a comparative illustration. He urged his readers to “follow the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the righteous” (2:20). This was a clear challenge to follow and keep the patterns of wise and godly counsel.

Solomon used words like upright and integrity to characterize those who would enter or inhabit the land, an image used in Scripture to speak of God's rest and protection (2:21). He used words like wicked and treacherous to describe those who would not enter into God's rest and protection (2:22). His challenge and his comparison of the righteous with the wicked served as the basis from which he implored his readers to hear the call to be wise. Solomon's instruction in chapter 2 set the stage for his explanation of the basis of true wisdom—a heartfelt and continual trust in the Lord (Prov. 3:1-12). Ultimately, Jesus Christ is our wisdom, and it is through Him that we have both abundant and eternal life (1 Cor. 1:24).

PROVERBS 3:1-12

- 1** My son, don't forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commands;
- 2** for they will bring you
many days, a full life, and well-being.
- 3** Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you.
Tie them around your neck **A**;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- 4** Then you will find favor and high regard
with God and people.
- 5** **Trust** **B** in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on **your own understanding** **C**;
- 6** in all your ways **know** **D** him,
and he will make your paths straight.
- 7** Don't be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
- 8** This will be healing for your body
and strengthening for your bones.
- 9** **Honor** **E** the LORD with your possessions
and with the first produce of your entire harvest;
- 10** then your barns will be completely filled,
and your vats will overflow with new wine.
- 11** Do not **despise** **F** the LORD's instruction, my son,
and do not loathe his discipline;
- 12** for the LORD disciplines the one he loves,
just as a father disciplines the son in whom
he delights.

Passage Outline

Remember (Prov. 3:1-4)

Trust (Prov. 3:5-8)

Honor (Prov. 3:9-10)

Accept (Prov. 3:11-12)

Keywords

- A. Metaphors emphasizing that children should cultivate faithful love as a part of their nature, inwardly and outwardly.
- B. To rely on or have confidence in someone for help and protection, resulting in feeling safe and secure.
- C. "Insight" (NRSV). One's own intelligence and understanding of right and wrong are corrupted by sin.
- D. The person who knows God puts Him first, seeks His will, and submits to His authority in trust and obedience.
- E. Giving back to God some of the wealth He has given; an act of worship showing gratitude to and trust in God
- F. A warning not to reject or resent the Lord's discipline or correction (Gen. 25:33-34)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Solomon urged his son: *don't forget my teaching*. This was a call to use the mind and intellect. Then he added, *let your heart keep my commands*. Added to the call to exercise the mind is this call to the heart (the will and emotion). Both the mind and the heart matter.

KEY DOCTRINE: Education The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge (Prov. 3:13-15).

The key point in verses 1-2 is that when we take God's commandments to heart, we won't regret it. Putting into practice the inspired teaching of Scripture will render a life of fulfillment and satisfaction. Such a life is described in verse 2 as *well-being*. Our days will be filled with what matters most in life. A devotion to loyalty and faithfulness describes those who hold in high esteem the wisdom of God. According to Solomon, a life of integrity *produces favor and high regard with God and people*.

Why is integrity in the life of a believer so important? How would you define integrity?

Knowing truth without a deep trust in and love for God can lead to arrogance. To disconnect the mind from the will is deadly. Our trust in God should impact our hearts, our understanding, and our paths in life. We are to trust God in every area of our lives.

Contrast those who trust in God with those who trust in themselves. How should this contrast encourage believers to live God-honoring lives?

Evidence of wise living is seen in daily moral and spiritual decisions. Giving demonstrates the true condition of the heart. (See 2 Cor. 8-9.) The wise will *honor the LORD* in their use of *material possessions*.

How is the way a person handles finances a way of measuring his or her spiritual maturity? What challenges might a person face in seeking to honor God with their financial management?

Solomon knew his son would struggle with the Lord's instruction at times. Perhaps that's the reason Solomon referred to God's instruction as *discipline*. Becoming a disciplined person who is devoted to the Lord can be a struggle. Being disciplined by the Lord may be confused with being punished. Solomon's son could have felt that God was punishing him. For that reason, he needed to remember that *the LORD disciplines the one he loves*, not to his detriment but for his development. (See Heb. 12:5-6.)

Why do we view God's discipline as unexpected, maybe even unfair? In what ways does God discipline us? How can we recognize God's discipline?

APPLY THE TEXT

- The believer's life is characterized by integrity.
- Trusting in God leads to renewed life.
- God provides for those who honor Him.
- Learn from God's discipline, realizing that His discipline is an act of love.

Discuss with your Bible study group ways of helping each other live with integrity. How can the group remind each other of God's expectations?

List reasons you may struggle with trusting God. How are the reasons you listed connected? Ask God to help you trust Him with all areas of your life. Record your prayer.

In what areas of your life is God disciplining or sharpening you? What are you learning from that discipline or sharpening? How can you grow from this discipline or sharpening?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Nurturing God's wisdom provides blessings for believers.

Read Proverbs 3:1-2, considering the promise made to those who follow God.

Nurturing God's wisdom in our hearts comes with the promise of many days, a full life, and well-being. There is great blessing for the wise believer. But is it true that the wise person always lives a long, successful, and trouble-free life? Here we have to be careful. Proverbial sayings are just that—generally true statements about the way things ought to be and can be. In fact, they are true most of the time and should be embraced wholeheartedly. But proverbial sayings are a little different than the direct promises of God.

A direct promise is something you can take to the bank, a sure thing based on the character of God. A proverbial saying is a truism that is most often true but may not operate on the same level as a direct promise. For example, Romans 10:13 says, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." That is a direct promise. Everyone who places faith in Jesus Christ can and will be saved.

Conversely, Proverbs 22:6 states, "Start a youth out on his way, even when he grows old he will not depart from it." Though this statement is generally true, we still see children who were raised in godly and loving homes depart from the faith. Why might this happen? Because there are other factors involved in the life of every child, namely, his or her own faith apart from the faith of those involved in the child's upbringing. The child must personally believe the gospel; one cannot and will not be saved based on the faith of the parents.

How do you explain this promise when your experience says otherwise?

Day 2: Believers should be people of integrity.

Read Proverbs 3:3-4, identifying the characteristics of integrity.

A devotion to loyalty and faithfulness describes those who hold in high esteem the wisdom of God. These godly characteristics are to be tied *around your neck* for everyone to see and written on the *tablet of your heart* where they shape our words and actions. When we put Solomon's counsel to work in our lives, we will become people of integrity. This means we will be the same person on the inside that we are on the outside. Wisdom brings both vertical blessings from our relationship with God and horizontal implications in the relationships we have with people.

Why is it important for you, as a believer, to have integrity? How would you define integrity?

Day 3: Believers are called to fully trust in the Lord.

Read Proverbs 3:5-8, underlining the phrase “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”

These verses call us to three actions. First, we are called to *trust in the LORD* with complete and total confidence. Second, we are not to *rely on our own understanding* apart from having our minds shaped and conformed by godly wisdom. Third, as we trust God and reject ungodly thinking, we are to *know* or acknowledge God and His truth. No area of our thinking, feeling, and behavior is off-limits to God. As we trust God, avoid godless thinking, and acknowledge Him in every area of life, He will make our *paths straight*. God’s wisdom straightens out the paths so we can go in the right direction.

In verse 7, Solomon appealed to his son to avoid trusting in himself (see also v. 5). Instead of being wise in his own eyes, he was to *fear the LORD*, which is the beginning of true knowledge (see 1:7). Solomon also challenged his son to *turn away from evil*. Repentance—turning away from sin—is not a one-time event but the continual practice of a sincere believer. The consequences of obeying these commands are remarkable. In verse 8, Solomon identified the results of obeying these commands: health and strengthening of both body and soul. In summary, we are to remember the Lord in all that we do (3:1-4). The call remains for us to fully trust in the Lord (vv. 5-8), rejoicing in the good consequences of wise and godly living.

Contrast those who trust in God with those who trust in themselves. How should this contrast encourage you to live a God-honoring life?

Day 4: God provides for those who believe in Him.

Read Proverbs 3:9-10, noticing how believers should handle material possessions.

People in Solomon’s time counted on their fields and vineyards to produce what they needed. The wise person recognized that God owned all of the ground in which he planted crops (Lev. 25:23). He also recognized that God provided the seeds, the rain, and the sunshine so the crops could grow and the harvest could be plentiful. Because of God’s goodness, He deserved to be honored with the first produce of the harvest. Generous and sacrificial giving is an act of worship, a reflection of gratitude to God, and an expression of trust in Him. Solomon indicated in verse 10 the result of generous and faithful giving: *your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine*. Again, we must be careful here. This verse can be misunderstood to mean that if you want to be rich, you simply need to give more of your possessions to God. The verse, however, doesn’t promote such a notion. It does teach that we can count on God to provide for us when we honor Him. This is not prosperity thinking but rather a deep trust in a promise-keeping God who may not provide all that we want, but He will provide what we need as we live for Him.

What challenges have you faced in seeking to honor God with your finances?

Day 5: Discipline is always purposeful.

Read Proverbs 3:11-12, noting who God disciplines.

God is not a cruel overseer who wants to make us suffer. He's a loving Father who cares enough about us to teach us so we can grow in our walk with Him. Learning well may require us to face some difficult circumstances. We're wise when we face them with the certainty that God loves us all the time. The discipline we experience from Him is not to be despised but embraced as part of our spiritual development. Discipline is never pleasant, but it is always purposeful.

BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scriptures to help understand a Bible passage. Read Hebrews 12:5-11.

Notice how the writer explained the anxiety and pain that can often accompany God's discipline of His children and the value of discipline in the spiritual growth of the believer. Next, read Job 5:17-18 for another way of describing the difficulties as well as the benefits of being disciplined by the Lord. How do these two passages shed light on God's disciplining His people (Prov. 3:11-12)?

How have you viewed God's discipline as unexpected, maybe even unfair? Why?

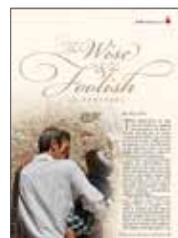
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Proverbs 3, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

How are trusting in the Lord, fearing the Lord, and humility related?

Why does God want us to give Him our material goods?

Discuss the difference between discipline and punishment. How does this impact our understanding of these verses?



For additional context, read "The Wise and the Foolish in Proverbs," an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided via digital download in the Summer 2020 *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*.