

GUIDANCE FOR OUR YOUTH

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The inspired writer of Proverbs can be viewed as a guidance counselor for life. Solomon wrote these proverbs to guide those that sought the wisdom of God. He tells us that wisdom comes from God (Proverbs 2:6). James, the wisdom writer of the New Testament, tells us the same thing (James 1:5). Solomon tells us that there is nothing on earth to be compared in value to wisdom (Proverbs 8:11). It is also interesting to note that he was writing these to guide his son as he matured into adulthood (Proverbs 3:1).

In Proverbs 3, Solomon gives great counsel to young people. He starts out by telling his son **do not be forgetful** (3:1-6). This does not mean forgetful about where the car keys are or not taking out the garbage. Solomon says not to be forgetful of the Law of Moses that he was teaching his son (3:1). The reason for this admonition to not be forgetful is to equip his son to be able to keep God's commandments.

Notice the results of keeping the commandments of God. It will increase his life and bring him peace. We know that life is fragile, but when one lives according to the wisdom God gives, the chances greatly increase for a longer life span. The sins in which one engages generally have the ability to shorten life. For instance, researchers say that you take ten minutes off of your life span for each cigarette that you smoke. You do the math on how many cigarettes are in a pack and how much your life is reduced by smoking a pack a day for any length of time.

Following the commandments of God also results in being merciful and having the truth. Jesus teaches us to be merciful in order to obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7) and He also told us what truth is: God's word (John 17:17). God looks favorably on those that have these attributes. When we don't forget God's word, it allows us to trust in God and not ourselves. We will end up where we want to go by remembering God's law.

Solomon gives another nugget of guidance by telling his son to **fear the Lord** (3:7-12). The word "fear" means to "hold someone or thing in awe, to reverence." The only way this is possible is if we don't forget God's law. When we do fear God, it brings us spiritual health.

It will also cause us to be givers as we should be. Many times young people fail to give as they should, perhaps thinking that proper giving is for adults. It is for all those that profess to be Christians. If one is baptized at the age of ten, he is commanded to give as he has been prospered just as one who has been a Christian for many years. Of course, his giving will not be as much because he does not prosper as much as an older Christian. If we give generously in our youth, it is much easier to give generously when we are older.

When we truly fear God, it will allow us to accept God's correction. You and I sin from time to time and we need to be corrected. If God didn't correct us, it would mean that He does not love us, which is far from the case. God corrects us because He loves us

(Hebrews 12:6).

Solomon then advises his son to **find wisdom** (3:13-20). Remember that it is God that gives true wisdom. The reason for finding wisdom from God is that it leads to great spiritual riches. You and I are to be laying up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

Solomon says that wisdom is a tree of life. There was the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, that when fruit from it was eaten, allowed the one eating to live without dying. When we follow the wisdom of God, it allows us to live without dying spiritually. Once we have been raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4), we do not have to die again spiritually if we follow the wisdom of God. We will live eternally with God. Therefore it is imperative to find wisdom.

Guidance from Solomon comes to his son when he tells him “**watch your feet**” (3:21-26). With wisdom, our feet will go in the right way so as not to stumble. There is only one path in life that leads to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). God’s wisdom leads us on this path. When one is on this path, there is safety and peace. There is not safety from the problems of life. We all face those and have to learn to deal with them with great help from God’s word, the source of wisdom. There is spiritual safety when we are on the path of wisdom. Our parents tell us to stay away from dark places and to go only to those places that are well lit at night. The same is true spiritually. The path of wisdom is well lit by God’s word (Psalm 119:105).

We don’t have to fear what the world throws at us because God is leading us and with us (Hebrews 13:5). When one follows the wisdom of God, he can lay down and sleep with nothing bothering his conscience. He can sleep the sleep of the just because he is right with God.

Finally, guidance ends from Solomon in Proverbs 3 with the admonition “**don’t be a fool**” (3:27-35). A fool is one without wisdom. One shows he is foolish when he fails to help his neighbor who is in need. If it is in our power to help a person then we have the obligation to do so. We are to love our neighbor just like we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

It is foolish to be envious of others. Envy is a sin (Galatians 5:19-21). It is especially foolish to envy those who are sinners. This is a problem because we see people we know are sinners and it seems they are living a great life. We are not the first to think this. The psalmist thought this same thing and wrote about it in Psalm 73. There the writer said he was envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked (vs. 3). It seemed to him that their life was perfect. He thought this until he again worshiped God and realized what the end result for the sinner was (vs. 17-28). Those who are sinners are an abomination to God and there is no reason to envy them.

Solomon closes this chapter by telling his son, and us, that those who don’t forget, find wisdom, fear God, watch their feet, and aren’t a fool receive blessings, grace and eventually will inherit glory. Is there any better guidance for our youth than this?