

FPFWC Christian Development



Learning About Faith

January 2024

Winter Quarter

January 13, 2024

Lesson #2 – Faith and Trust

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Proverbs 3:1-8

ICE BREAKER –

1. What are the characteristics of biblical trust?
2. What steps should you take to ensure you trust the Lord with all your heart?
3. How can we develop the right priorities?

Key Verse: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.—Proverbs 3:5

LESSON BACKGROUND

The book of Proverbs is generally attributed to King Solomon (see Proverbs 1:1). His wisdom was renowned (examples: 1 Kings 4:30–31; 10:24), and over 3,000 proverbs originated with him (4:32), so he was an ideal person to write this book of wisdom literature. Additionally, the text attributes two other sections to Agur (Proverbs 30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1). However, we know nothing about these two men.

The text does not indicate when these texts were consolidated into the form of Proverbs that we read today. Further, the text does not have a direct recipient. The significance of Proverbs is not found in its original writers, date of composition, or original audience. Instead, its importance is in how it communicates what makes up a life of wisdom. All people can learn and apply the wisdom taught in the book of Proverbs.

For some readers, the book of Proverbs reads like disjointed sets of oracles without any connection. However, five sections divide the book: an introduction to wisdom (Proverbs 1–9), the proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16; 25:1–29:27), the words of the wise (22:17–24:34), the words of Agur (Proverbs 30), and the words of King Lemuel (Proverbs 31).

The first section begins with an explanation of the importance of wisdom (see Proverbs 1:1–7). After the introduction, most of that section is written from the perspective of a father advising his son on the importance of seeking wisdom from the Lord.

With one exception (see Proverbs 3:5), the poetic order of each pair of verses in today’s Scripture follows the same pattern. First, the father gives his son a negative command (example: 3:1a). Second, the father gives a positive command (example: 3:1b). Finally, the father concludes that section with a promise for the son (example: 3:2).

LESSON COMMENTARY

3:1–2. The opening exhortation, so typical of the lessons in the first part of Proverbs, encourages **my son** to heed his father’s **teaching**. Rather than ignoring or rejecting (**do not forget**) what the father instructs, the son should obey (**keep**) his father’s **commandments**, not perfunctorily, but with all his **heart**. The result of doing so **will add** to the **length** of

one's life (cf. Ex 20:12) and improve the quality of that life through increased **peace** (*shalom*) or well-being. This is the kind of full, rich life associated with the blessings of fellowship with God, in contrast to the way of death associated with folly (cf. comments on Pr 2:16–19 above).

3:3–4. The son here is encouraged never to **let kindness and truth leave** him. Indeed, he is told to **bind** these virtues **around** his **neck** like a necklace and to **write them on the tablet of his heart**, a reflection of the teaching of the Shema (Hb. word meaning “to hear,” from Dt. 6:4), given by the Lord to Moses with the command to keep God's Word “on your heart” and “bind them ... on your hand” (cf. Dt. 6:4–9). By doing so he is making these virtues a permanent part of his inward character. But what exactly are these virtues? **Kindness** (*chesed*) refers to loyalty and covenant love, and **truth** (*'emet*) involves faithfulness. Together they speak of loving faithfulness.

And whose loving faithfulness is this? Some have argued that this pair of virtues refers to *God's* loving loyalty (so Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 144–145). But since the exhortation is directed to the son, it is more likely that these virtues belong to him. So the son should be loyal and faithful in his relationships with other people and, more fundamentally, with God. Still, because this pair of virtues is often used of God (cf. Gn 24:7; Ex 34:6; Pss 86:15; 115:1; 138:2), it may be that the text is purposely ambiguous (so Longman, *Proverbs*, 132). That is, by living a life characterized by loving faithfulness to God and others, the son will also be keeping himself close to God Himself, who truly epitomizes loving faithfulness. This kind of lifestyle will **find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man** (Pr 3:4). Those who are lovingly loyal to God and man are well-regarded by both.

3:5–6. These verses represent the heart of the exhortations. The son is admonished to **trust in the LORD with all his heart** (v. 5a). Such trust completely believes what God says, including accepting His words of wisdom while rejecting the way of folly, obeying His commands, and embracing His promises. Trust also involves resting secure in God's loving, protective care and relying completely on His resources. Thus the trusting one will **not lean on his own understanding** (v. 5b). “In acknowledging one's own lack of resources, one becomes open to God's power and wisdom, which is a better guide to life” (Longman, *Proverbs*, 133).

The one who trusts God and not his own wisdom will also **acknowledge God in all his ways** (v. 6a). To **acknowledge** God is to know Him personally and to be in fellowship with Him (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 63–64). The trusting one thus pursues his relationship with the Lord in everything he does (cf. 1Co 10:31).

The result of trusting and pursuing the Lord is that **He will make your paths straight** (Pr 3:6b). As the lifestyle of the wicked is crooked in both a moral sense (they live corruptly) and a pragmatic sense (they face difficulties of their own making) (see 2:15), so the lifestyle of the righteous is straight in both senses. His way of life is straight morally (i.e., he lives in a God-honoring way) and smooth pragmatically (i.e., he faces fewer obstacles to a successful, joyful life).

3:7–8. This group of verses complements the preceding one. In a similar vein, the wise one will **not be wise in his own eyes** (v. 7a). He will not be impressed by his own capacity for shrewdness (cf. Is 5:21), thereby relying on his own resources. Instead, he will **fear the LORD** (Pr 3:7b; see the comments on 1:7). He will worship Him, trusting in His resources and reverently obeying Him. He therefore also will **turn away from evil**, a sure sign of a worshipping heart.

Interestingly, such spiritual health can result in physical well-being (v. 8). What's more, the imagery of **healing** and **refreshment** involving one's **body** (lit., "navel") and **bones** probably suggests that such well-being is both external ("navel") and internal ("bones"), extending from a person's physical state to his mental and emotional state (Waltke, *Book of Proverbs 1–15, 26–27*; cf. Garrett, *Proverbs*, 81, n. 51). Generally speaking, those intimately close to the Lord experience a spiritual refreshment that has enormous benefit to their whole being.

LESSON NUGGET – What you do with your heart determines what you do with your life (Proverbs 4:33). Cultivate an obedient heart (Proverbs 3:1) that receives God's Word (Proverbs 3:3; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3) and a trusting heart that obeys (Proverbs 3:5-6). Verse 5 does not suggest that you ignore your mind or common sense, but that you not lean only on them and reject God's way.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary