

## **Intro**

What does a father do? What is a father after?

This morning we look to the Proverbs for an answer. There's a flourishing life to be lived. Fathers help bring this about through teaching their children. This morning we learn that fathers teach their children...

**BIG IDEA: Life goes well when we fear God.**

**READ PASSAGE**

**PRAY**

## **Body**

### **Passage Focus**

Proverbs says **Life goes well when we fear God.**

If you work hard you'll generally have money. If you use your tongue well, your life won't be filled with contention. Wise living doesn't guarantee success. There are exceptions (economic conditions beyond our control, bosses who play favoritism with their friends). But generally a life that is wise is a life that prospers (not just finances!).

Obedience doesn't shield us from God sent trials for our spiritual formation (Jas 1:2-4). Obedience doesn't shield us from inflation, rising gas prices. Obedience doesn't shield us from cultural opposition to God and his Word. But **obedience protects us from self-inflicted consequences.**

5 things a father teaches his children.

### **Point 1: Remember God's commands (3:1-2)**

#### **Context: a father to a son**

A father writing to a son. I envision myself sitting down with a seven or ten or thirteen year old boy and sharing these things. Critical truths to pass on. This is how we prepare children for life.

Of course the same truths can be shared with one's eleven year old daughter. These are truths for young boys and girls to grasp, remember, and cherish.

Adult Christians should remember these things too. Whether you've been saved five or 50 years, we never move on from these instructions.

And if you wouldn't consider yourself a Christian. You wouldn't say I've repented of my sins, I trust Christ, I've been born again. If this is you, these truths are for you. These five things are how we relate to God.

### **Explanation**

There's a temptation to forget God. Forgetting my teaching = forgetting God's commandments. It's assumed a father teaches God's commandments to his son.

Forget is what not to do. The second half of 3:1 is what to do: *“let your heart keep my commandments.”* **Proverbs is big on contrasts. Two ways to live. Two outcomes.** Notice what keeps the commandments. The son’s heart.

## Heart

Heart here represents our whole inner self. Our desires, our affections, our feelings, our intentions, our attitudes, our loves, our thought life, our values.

The point is **to keep God’s commands with all our being.** God wants us to think like he thinks. God wants us to desire what he desires. God wants us to treasure what he treasures. Internal affection inevitably results in external obedience. God isn’t looking for outward conformity only. God’s looking for obedience rooted in love for his commands. Obedience rooted in love for him. Love for God drives obedience.

So the warning is this. Don’t let your heart be captivated by other things to the point that you forget God. Forgetfulness causes loves to wane. God takes a backseat to pleasures like social media and TV and leisure and sports and video games. Remember God’s commands. Fight the fight of faith by meditating on God’s Word daily.

## Promise

We have a warning followed by a promise, an encouragement. What’s the result of love-driven obedience? *“length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.”* Obedience generally results in a longer life and a better quality of life.

Drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality (diseases), gluttony, violent altercations, laziness (no income and no food), etc. can shorten one’s life.

The goal isn’t a long life of perpetual strife and futility. The goal is a long life characterized by *shalom*: absence of strife, harmony, a rich, fulfilled existence. **An effective and harmonious life comes through obedience rooted in heartfelt affection for God.**

## Application

American evangelicalism has recaptured the vision of Proverbs 3:1. Books like *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (1995) by Ted Tripp have emphasized the fact that behavior must be rooted in love for God. We’re not looking for outward moral improvement. We’re looking for a different response to God. We want to see affection for God.

How a child does the dishes. How a child does their schoolwork reflects a heart response to God. Do we want children who do the dishes because they want to get to the video games? Do we want children who do the dishes because they’re afraid of punishment? Do we want children who do the dishes so they can boast about being better than the other children? Or do we want children who do the dishes because they love us, they want to contribute to the family, they want to glorify God, they trust God rewards obedience, they know laziness is a sin to shun?

Adults, we need to ask ourselves, am I doing this because I love God?

## **Point 2: Continue in love and faithfulness (3:3-4)**

### **Explanation**

Don't forsake = continue in these two things. "*steadfast love and faithfulness*" are repeatedly used to describe God's character in the Old Testament.

### **Steadfast love**

Speaks to a disposition. Fidelity, loyalty, committed love. God says to his people, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Heb 13:5). Committed love that's devoted and acts with practical expressions of kindness. This is how God deals with us.

Practically we express loyal, loving commitment to God by keeping his commandments. From the heart.

### **Faithfulness**

God's faithfulness = certainty, dependability, firmly kept promises, a consistency in what he says and does. God keeps his promises because he's reliable.

Practically we express consistent, dependable devotion to God by habitually keeping his commandments. From the heart.

We keep God's commands close by ("*bind them around your neck*"), like having them inside us ("*write them on the tablet of your heart*").

Practically this we do this by daily Bible reading, taking time to meditate on what we read, and memorizing Scripture.

I don't systematically memorize Scripture. I remember 20 years ago a friend gave us the assignment of memorizing **Romans 8** by next week. 39 verses. After about an hour I had four verses down. Not for me. I quit. Memorizing a chapter a week didn't take root in my life. But I memorize some verses, some fragments, some concepts, and locations of truth. The point is having it accessible. Do what works for you. Keep God's Word close to your heart.

### **Promise**

Committed, consistent commandment keeping results in blessing.

*"So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man."*

Favor means an attractive personality that is well received. Good success = good perception. The ESV notes "success" could be translated "repute." If we consistently obey God's Word we'll be perceived well by God and people.

If we're consistently marked by hard work, honesty, generosity, a wise and kind tongue, mercy, patience, forgiveness, compassion, etc. generally we'll be well perceived. This is how life works in God's world. Of course there's exceptions. But obedience to God results in a life that flourishes.

Public obedience leads to evangelistic credibility!

### **Non-Christian**

How do we get favor with God? The next point is key.

### **Point 3: Trust everything God says (3:5-8)**

#### **Explanation**

We remember and continue and obey through faith. That's how a child does the dishes! Faith = trust. We trust God's character. We trust God's promises. We trust God's ability to do what he says. And we trust with all of our being ("*with all your heart*"). Whole-hearted trust. Not partial trust.

Trusting God is contrasted with:

- 1) "*do not lean on your own understanding*"
- 2) "*be not wise in your own eyes*"

In other words, thinking we know it all. Thinking we're wiser than God. **In order to find favor with God, we need to trust God instead of ourselves!** Practically, we trust God by trusting his Word. Then doing what he commands.

Trusting God with all of our being includes:

- 1) "*In all your ways acknowledge him*"
- 2) "*fear the LORD, and turn away from evil*"

Fearing God = being teachable. Willing to be corrected. Not being wise in our own eyes. Humbly accepting what God says. Treasuring God's instruction.

Trust that the one who created you knows how you're intended to live. Trust that your Creator wants to help you flourish in this life.

Fear God instead of man. And so turn from evil. Who has our heart? Who has our ear? God or man? God or culture? Trust God. Love God. Obey God's commandments.

#### **Promises**

Trusting God instead of ourselves brings blessing. Trust-driven obedience results in:

- 1) "*he will make straight your paths*"
- 2) "*It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones*"

Straight in the sense of smooth, free from obstacles. **Faith driven obedience protects us from self-inflicted consequences.** As we obey, God shields us from destructive paths.

Obedience has physical consequences. Not saying obedient Christians can't get sickness or disease. More like faith brings rest to the body while anxiety distresses the body. Anxiety weakens the immune system making us susceptible to infections and illness. Anxiety causes headaches, weight gain, digestive problems, heart problems, muscle tension, and insomnia. Faith protects us physically! No self-inflicted consequences = peace = blessed body.

#### **Application**

3:5-8 calls us to forsake self-confidence and replace it with radical confidence in God's wisdom. 3:5-8 calls us to forsake self-confidence and pursue radical obedience. 3:5-8 calls us to forsake self-confidence and pursue the rewarding life God promises through obedience. **Be confident in God, not yourself.**

#### **Point 4: Honor God when he provides (3:9-10)**

##### **Explanation**

In Proverbs, the natural consequence of hard work is plenty. Obedience is assumed. When plenty comes, it's time to remember God.

Giving back to God results in an ongoing supply of provision:

*“then your vats will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”*

##### **Two ways to live**

There's two ways to live. Giving back to God in confidence he'll continue to provide. Or hoarding more and more for ourselves because we're not so confident God will continue to provide. Giving back = trust.

##### **Tithes and offerings**

Israelites gave back through tithes. The Old Covenant had multiple tithes that added up to 23%.

What we find in the New Testament (no Old Covenant) is giving to elders who labor in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17-18), giving to full-time missionaries (1 Cor 9:3-12), and giving to churches in other regions who are experiencing poverty (2 Cor 8:1-4).

Giving is supposed to be cheerful and not under compulsion (2 Cor 9:7). Giving is in accord with our level of prosperity (1 Cor 16:2). Those with plenty are instructed to enjoy their wealth and be generous (1 Tim 6:17-19). Giving is premeditated (1 Cor 16:2) or budgeted.

10% is a good starting point based on the tithe principle. Giving is an act of stewardship. Like our time and our talents, we use our treasure for God.

We give because we value the church's ministry. We give because we trust God will keep providing.

#### **Point 5: Receive God's correction (3:11-12)**

##### **Explanation**

God's correction is a sign of his love. What's the discipline in mind?

1) A father's rod

▪ God's discipline carried out through the father. To reveal to children that sin has consequences.

“rod” = a part of a tree; a thin stick or branch used to administer a small amount of pain without causing lasting injury.

2) A father's verbal correction

3) God's unspecified discipline (sickness in Corinth, David's son through adultery died as a newborn)

Likely the rod and verbal correction. **The issue here is a child's response to discipline.** A child may harden their heart and reject discipline. A child may be wearied = sickening dread, horror and have their spirit crushed by discipline.

“for” in 3:12 explains why neither of these responses are appropriate. Because correction is act of love. God disciplines, fathers discipline, because they delight in their son.

### **Application**

Why does a father discipline their child for neglecting the dishes or a rebellious attitude in doing so? Because the father is grieved by their laziness or selfishness or rejection of authority. If a child persists in laziness they won't provide well for a family of their own. They'll be a stumbling block to the gospel if they profess Christ. Who likes lazy co-workers? If they persist in selfishness their relationships will suffer. If they reject parental authority, they'll reject God's authority. Better to help the child see that laziness, selfishness, rejection of authority is a path of fools. A path that doesn't trust God.

**Wise people want to correct problematic thinking and behavior! Wise people want to place themselves under God's blessing!**

### **Conclusion**

We respond to God with humility and trust. **Life goes well when we fear God.**

Back in 1998 I was living the life of a fool. God's commandments had no place in my life. For some reason I wanted to go to my Dad's church. Around Christmas that year I was convinced God was good and I was not. But I didn't want to give up my sin.

In the days leading up to my conversion God highlighted the fruit of despising God's commandments. On April 23, 1999, two high school students murdered 12 classmates and one teacher (Columbine). Speculation suggested depression, mental illness, video games, bullying were causes. Whatever the case, I saw humanity's brokenness on full display.

On May 9<sup>th</sup> I was drawn to a 2 part miniseries: *The Hunt for the Unicorn Killer*. Based on the true story of Ira Einhorn. A hippy environmental activist (he spoke at the first Earth Day in 1970), Einhorn had an on off five year relationship with Holly Maddux where he abused her. Holly ended the relationship in summer of 1977. She disappeared around the time she gathered her belongings from Einhorn's apartment. In early 1978, Holly's family hired a private investigator to find her. It took until March 28, 1979 to get a search warrant for Einhorn's apartment. There they found Holly's mummified body in a locked steamer trunk in a locked closet. The movie portrayed Einhorn as indifferent. When questioned as to how the body got there, Einhorn claimed he was framed. No emotion.

The miniseries spoke to me about the brokenness of humanity. I thought to myself as a non-Christian, “if people just obeyed the Bible, none of this stuff would happen. It's that simple.”

Without reading Proverbs, I came to the same conclusion as Proverbs. If we live in accord with God's commandments, life goes well. If we reject God's commandments, we inflict ourselves.

Two weeks later I repented and believed. I turned from rebellion to trust. Alone in my room in my parents' condo I confessed my sins. I trusted that Jesus died in my place as a substitute. Jesus suffered for my sins. To rescue me. I committed to follow Jesus. I asked God for a new heart that I might obey.

**Life goes well when we fear God.** Trust him today.