

## ***LEARNING TO LEAN***

### **Proverbs 3:1-12**

#### **(Read Proverbs 3:1-12)**

**Intro:** The other night the Great Commission Team was meeting in Ron & Bonnie's family room and we were discussing a young man who was killed by the reclusive and little known inhabitants of North Sentinel Island. The man was trying to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to what are described as the "Last Stone Age Tribe" and lost his life doing it. The question was asked, "Where is Sentinel Island?" and we immediately picked up our handy hand-held devices and Googled it and found they are in the Bay of Bengal off the East Coast of India.

We have so much knowledge at our fingertips. Our kids know stuff we never knew as their age. Grady can work a remote with much less difficulty that I can. Fiona was showing Nana a video the other week where a man dressed (for some strange reason) in a Spiderman outfit was filling a lined hole in the sand with dozens of bottles and cans of pop, raw eggs, dish soap, Mentos and some other things I can't remember and then, finally, Spidy dumps in something that caused the mixture to foam out of the hole in a huge and amazing eruption. As it happened, Fiona, who was narrating it said, very matter-of-factly, "*It's some kind of chemical reaction.*" And I thought to myself, I was twice her age at least and probably three times her age in high school chemistry class (which I failed miserably) before I knew anything concerning a chemical reaction. They start young these days.

We have so much knowledge. And much too little wisdom.

That's why it's good to look at some Preachable Proverbs. As I mentioned a couple weeks ago on May 1, if you read a chapter of Proverbs each day you can complete the book of Proverbs on Tuesday May 31. They are very readable and really make you think, but not all of them are as easily made into a sermon, and for that reason I'm preaching through a sampling of Proverbs in an effort to help us soak up some wisdom.

As we do this we find that following the way of wisdom is the only way to go and the writer of Proverbs reminds us of the advantages. It's obvious that leaning into wisdom, the wisdom of God, is the way to abundant Life. We need to learn to lean.

First of all . . .

#### **Remember the teaching you've had (vv. 1-2)**

- What happens here this morning, during this time from the one who is preaching, or in Sunday School, or simply hearkening back to something you learned in Vacation Bible School or in a Sunday School class when you were a child many years ago, will serve you in good stead.
- The reward for it is long life and abundance. The idea that the writer has in mind is the fullness of the whole idea of the Jewish word, shalom. Shalom is so much more than absence of strife. It is the sense of everything being right with the world because God is God and we are his people. This means that in the midst of craziness, Christ Followers can have God's peace, the peace that passes all understanding.
- Salvation makes this possible. Without Jesus living in your heart it's impossible to have shalom. In the time of this writer of this Proverb, probably Solomon, long life was proof that God was on your side, for Christ Followers, the ultimate proof is eternal life. Don't forget this wise teaching and live long and prosper. And all this time you thought that promise came from a movie about A Long Time Ago, in a Galaxy Far, Far Away.
- Next, in the words of Eugene Peterson and his Message paraphrase . . .

#### **Don't lose your grip on love and loyalty (vv. 3-5)**

- That's how Peters begins verse 3.. My translation says, *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you.* v. 3a ESV.
- The people of God MUST to be characterized by loyalty and reliability. We should be known for our mercy and kindness to the helpless. We need to show grace, plain and simply. As we show that we will find favor with both God and our fellow man.
- Remember, we are Christ Followers first and foremost and because of that integrity is etched into our very being and it drives and directs every single relationship and contact. Everyone we meet is a loved and

coveted child of God and we may be the only example they see of the love of Jesus. Put God first and then he will show you how to put others first.

- Next. . .

### **Live a God-centered life. (vv. 5-6)**

- Our text says, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.* v. 5. This is a memory verse many of us recited in Sunday School and so it's probably very familiar. It's also the very heart of my talk because, even though it's familiar, it's seldom truly followed. Peterson says, *Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own.* v. 5 MESSAGE. Learn to lean Church! Learn to lean on God and not on the shaky frame of this world.
- And *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* v. 6. Better yet this, *Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.* v. 6 Message. In this way everything about you will reflect God. Not your denomination or your political party or your paycheck or your address or your name or anything, other than the fact that everything about you will shout you are servant of the King! You will be leaning into God and him alone. Another way of putting it is, God's not biting his nails, and neither should we.
- AND . . .

### **Don't be impressed with your own wisdom (vv 7-8)**

- That is the translation from the New Living Translation. Peterson says *Don't assume you know it all.* (v. 7a The Message). Or, as one commentator put it, "*Do not take yourself too seriously.*" He goes on to say, "*A sense of humor is still in season; we are always calling for it—usually in others! It is most badly needed among the "good" people, the "pillars" of society, like the people who produced Proverbs. But what makes a sense of humor possible? It is not to be confused with irresponsibility or flippancy. How can one be serious and relaxed at the same time? Responsible without worrying? The sage replies, "Just remember God is taking care of things." That seems to be a salient meaning for "fear of the Lord" here.*" J. Coert Rylaarsdam
- Verse 8 is interesting and also so helpful and true. Listen to it again, *It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.* Proverbs 3:8 ESV. The MESSAGE says, *Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!* vv. 7b-8 The MESSAGE. What is this saying? It's clear – leaning on God and not on our own understanding means we will be healthier for it. Run from God and you'll be a physical wreck more often than not. Now, don't get me wrong – we live in a world ruined by the fall, and disease and tragedy are too often reality. But the healthy option is running to God and away from evil.
- And, here it is again . . .

### **You cannot out give God (vv 9-10)**

- I'm sorry if you get tired of hearing me say this, but I will not apologize, because it's true. The concern I have from these verses is the way they've been misconstrued, or maybe even out and out misinterpreted to imply that as we give we will gain prosperity and wealth. The problem with this thinking is it motivates giving from a selfish spirit.
- The truth is as we worship by our giving, God takes care of what we need. Giving is from gratitude and not from greed. Giving is an act of love and obedience and not a way of getting.
- I love the generosity of ABC. Over the past ten years, especially, we have seen ABCers give to a renovation plan and pay it off in less than three years. We experienced a pandemic where many fellowships struggled and still do but we have flourished. The truth is you aren't tired of hearing that Christ Followers cannot out give God because you have experienced it in your own lives and you've known it to be true for our congregation. Nevertheless, may it continue to be true of us that we *honor God with everything we own.* v. 9a The MESSAGE.
- Finally...

### **God disciplines those he loves (vv.11-12)**

- Don't despise it and don't resent it. He's not given up on you. One commentator says, "*God disciplines the wise for their own good. The reward of the patient and grateful acceptance of reproof is it deepening awareness of one's filial relation to God, finding God again as the center of one's life.*" (Rylaarsdam).
- Last week I mentioned that my mother never said, "*Wait until your father gets home!*" because she handled discipline quite effectively without any reinforcements from our dad. In a discussion with someone the next day I shared that my dad was also an effective disciplinarian, but in contrast with my mother who often disciplined out of pain, frustration, and, too often, outright anger, when we were punished by our dad, we KNEW we had it coming.
- Likewise with God. When discipline is coming from him, it is just and, truly, for our own good. I think Peterson sums it up perfectly, *But don't, dear friend, resent God's discipline; don't sulk under his loving correction. It's the child he loves that God corrects; a father's delight is behind all this.* vv. 11-12  
MESSAGE.

**Conclusion:** Lean into the wisdom of God. Don't forget, or worse, ignore, the whole teaching of the Word. Be reliable and faithful. Always put God first and trust him with all your heart. Acknowledge him and allow him to keep you on track. Honor God with everything you own and welcome his correction. You are his loved and coveted children he delights in you. Always be learning to lean on him. Amen.