

## SERMON

**Wisdom Is Not For Knowing – But For Living!** (Proverbs 3: 1-12)

A water tank is used to storing water. I would imagine that most of, if not all of us have a cold water tank either in the loft or at the top of the airing cupboard. That is what water tanks do – they store water.

But they also have use. They are used to also deliver water – to give water away. What happens if the water does not flow out as well as flow in? The water becomes brackish and stale and unusable. There must be a through flow or the tank is useless.

The same is true of wisdom – it is no good just acquiring wisdom,

**Wisdom is not for knowing, but for living.**

And in actual fact when you have wisdom you realise that fact. You cannot keep it for yourself, you have to live it and this also means that others will see it and you will then have to give it away, just like the water in the water storage tank – it only become useful when it flows out again along the right channels.

We are reminded again in this chapter how we gain wisdom which we looked at last week. In verse 1 we read

**“My son or my child (as in the NLT), do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,”** (Proverbs 3:1 NIV)

- **Teaching** – we learn wisdom through being taught, but remember where it goes. It goes to the heart, not just in the mind, the brain, but involves our emotions as well as our brain; our emotional intelligence as well as our intellectual intelligence.

Then in verse 3 we read

**“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.”** (Proverbs 3:3 NIV)

- **Love and Faithfulness** – this is love for God and being faithful to him, but it must also be loving what God has created, his world, his fauna and flora and also other human beings. If we do not love other human beings then we will never be faithful to them either. Being unfaithful, breaking one's word, not standing with them is a sign that you do not love them. When you love someone you will stick with them through thick and thin. Like the survey done recently after the this man got married recently and the questions asked was

**Would you leave your partner if they became morbidly obese?**

What do you think the answer is? Well 56% of those asked said “No, they would not leave their partner if they became morbidly obese – because of love.

Then we move on to verse 5

**“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;”**  
(Proverbs 3:5 NIV)

- **Trust in God** – that is where all wisdom comes from. So we must trust in God because he is so wise and we see it in Jesus, his life, his sayings, his death and resurrection. Only through this could we be saved. God knew this and so Jesus, God the Son came to earth to die for us, knowing that the resurrection was coming.

Then in verse 9 we read

**“Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;”**  
(Proverbs 3:9 NIV)

- **Honour God with our money** – they say that the last part of a person to get converted is their money. Christians have been discussing together whether we are to tithe now or not. The word tithing does not appear in the New Testament. The nearest we get to it is 1 Corinthians 16:1

**“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”** (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV)

Is this meant to be a tenth, a tithe or not? I would only want to throw into the mix the incident in the life of Jesus when

**“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”**” (Mark 12:41-44 NIV)

Who was commended – the wealth who did not miss what they put in, or the widow who gave, even out of her poverty? And it reads as if she gave far more than just 10%.

And finally in this chapter we are reminded that we also gain wisdom from something we do not really like these days. Verse 11

**“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”**  
(Proverbs 3:11-12 NIV)

- **Responding to Discipline** – Discipline is something that we do not like to think about these days. On the street where we lived, there was a child whose parents had ‘modern’ ideas about disciplining their child. They never shouted at the child, they would try the, ‘if you loved mummy and daddy you would not do that’ approach.

One day I had just washed my car and this little boy came and weed on my car. As you can imagine – I was not happy at all. The boy then ran off with me fuming. The little boy was a pain to all the neighbours, but the parents were still always trying this ‘if you loved mummy and daddy you would not do that’ approach. Then one day I came round the corner in my car and obvious the boy had gone too far, for on the pavement was the little boy and his mother and she was hauling him back to the house with one hand, giving him some verbals with her mouth and when he answered back – she got a smack on the bottom with her free hand. I sat in the car and silently cheered – not because of the physical punishment, but for any punishment being meted out and that now, maybe the parents and the boy would learn the usefulness of discipline.

God does discipline us because he loves us. As Hebrews says

**“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as children: “My child, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a child.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as children. For what child is not disciplined by his parents? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true children. Moreover, we have all had human parents who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”** (Hebrews 12:4-11 NIV)

Discipline is a way we learn wisdom and it is something good, not something to be resisted or avoided.

So we can gain wisdom

- Through Teaching
- Through Love and Faithfulness
- Through Trusting in God
- Through Honouring God with our money
- Through Responding to Discipline

But that is not enough. Wisdom is not a about sitting an exam, but about living it. So what benefits do we get from wisdom. If we are to live it, it must be beneficial to us. Again we look into the passage that was read this evening for answers to that question. We begin at verse 6

**“in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”**  
(Proverbs 3:6 NIV)

- **Right Direction in Our lives** – with wisdom we will lead good lives, lives that follow God and so are going in the right direction. In the Journeys course on Thursday one of the things that has come across is that the Christian life is for living, not for waiting around asking God how you should live and where you should go. As we grow in wisdom we live righteous lives – lives that are more in keeping with the life God wants us to live.

Then what comes next is verse 4

**“Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.”**  
(Proverbs 3:4 NIV)

- **Good Name Before God and People** – We are called to have a good name before people and when we listen and follow God, we will have a good name with God. As the writer of Romans says

**“Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”** (Romans 14:16-18 NIV)

There are some cultures where if someone asks to be a member of the local church, then the church not only interviews the person who wants to become a member, but also their next door neighbours who may or may not be Christian or even sympathetic to Christian things! Would we pass that sort of interview?

So when we live the way of wisdom, people may not agree with us, but they will respect us, they will see that we live good lives and try to do the best for others. Some of the best outreach I have seen is through help given to others and then the speaking about Christ.

So now we move on to verse 12

**“because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”**  
(Proverbs 3:12 NIV)

- **Delight in the Home** – there is delight in the home because there is wisdom. There is living aright and having a good name, so delight is bound to be there.

Then we move on to verse 10

**“then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”** (Proverbs 3:10 NIV)

What is this? It is talking about

- **Success** - the full barns and wine vats means success, so as we grow in wisdom we are more and more prosperous.

But there is more. Verse 8

**“This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.”**  
(Proverbs 3:8 NIV)

- **Health and Nourishment** – As we grow in wisdom we are in health and nourishment. I have seen people become Christians who have given up some of the things they did as a non-Christian which did not do them any good and their overall nourishment has improved, because they spend money on better food and so their health has improved as well.

And finally we have a benefit which is talked about in Verse 2

**“for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.”**  
(Proverbs 3:2 NIV)

- **Long Life and Prosperity**- fits in with good health and success.

But I have a real problem with these last three benefits especially. It all sounds too good to be true. Every year at the Baptist Assembly we have a time of remembering those who have died over the last year who were either ministers or missionaries. We all stand and music is played and the names slowly scroll up the screen. To me it is a very moving moment and even more so when I recognise some of the names scrolling past. Along with the name they also give the age of the person and I am fine when the numbers are in the eighties or nineties, but when it is a friend who dies at 57 or others who died in their early 60 and I have heard of their good reputation, I feel sad. I know the journeys of some of the ministers to death and it has been through cancer, or other at times painful illness.

Were these men and women who were not wise? They were – their lives spoke of it and their reputations did as well.

So is the Bible wrong? No, but these are proverbs, not promises and so we know that they are proverbially true, but other factors may come into play. Job suffered loss of health, loss of family and loss of material goods – but he was so wise, so holy.

However our experience tells us that by gaining wisdom we do enjoy the benefits of wisdom, so it is worth gaining wisdom, but remember that wisdom is for living, not for knowing.

PRAYER