

The Benefits of Living Wisely

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[0 : 00] When you were growing up, did your parents ever tell you to do something and you asked why? And they made that famous statement, because I told you to do it, because I told you so.

I'm going to guess the overwhelming majority of us in this room, we heard that numerous times. You do it because I said to do it.

Well, have you ever told your child the same thing? Well, I have, and I'm going to guess a lot of you have done the same thing.

Let's think about that. On one hand, it is not wrong for parents to say that. As a part of their God-given authority, parents have the right to command obedience of their children.

Of course, for appropriate things. God does the same thing with us. God authoritatively commands His people throughout His Word to obey Him.

[1 : 12] I will give you an example when God gave the Ten Commandments. God spoke, identified who He is, what He had done for those people.

And I'm telling you, you shall, and He gave the Ten Commandments. Sometimes, as you read the Bible, God simply commands us, you need to do this.

Do not do that. And God can do that. He's God. He has the right, He has the authority as Almighty God and our Creator.

But on the other hand, it's not wise for parents to always command their children to obey just because they say so.

A better way is for parents to explain why. Why it would be beneficial for the child to obey.

[2 : 33] Why they are telling the child, commanding or asking the child to do this. And our authority for doing it this way is also God.

The Bible reveals that God often, often explains why He commands us to do certain things.

The Bible often shows that God gives us incentives for obeying Him. He lays out the benefits for His people to obey Him.

And again, let's turn back to the setting of the Ten Commandments. After He gave the Ten Commandments, in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 3, we read this. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

You see, God's saying you need to obey these commandments that I'm giving you because it'll make life better for you in the place that I have provided for you, this land of milk and honey.

[3 : 54] God, this is not isolated now. God often says things like that to encourage us, to motivate us to obey Him.

And one of the clearest examples of this is Proverbs chapter 3, where we're going to begin looking at this morning. Turn with me if you would, Proverbs chapter 3. This chapter has been referred to as one of the most positive chapters in all the Bible.

Here's some of the reasons why, or one of the main reasons why. Throughout these verses, God never says, do this because I say so. No, He repeatedly says, do this because it will help you.

And as you read through chapter 3, God provides all kinds of reasons why you should obey me because it'll help you in this way, in that way.

It'll make a good, positive difference in your life. As we go through these verses, I want to make it clear. God is not saying, you do this and you'll be right with me, and I'll take you to heaven when you die.

[5 : 15] Proverbs is not trying to convey a message that we can work our way to heaven or that we can make ourselves acceptable to God. Proverbs is really written to God's people who already have a relationship with Him.

And God is instructing us in this book not on how to have a relationship with Him. He's explaining how He wants us, His children, to live wisely because it'll be the best for us.

We'll be glad to live His way if we'll do it. Let's look at what He says. Proverbs chapter 3, let's begin in verse 1.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments. For a length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart so you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

[6 : 39] Verses 5 and 6 are probably the most well-known verses in this book. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. We're going to focus mostly on verses 1 through 4 this morning and come back later on.

And next week into verse 5. What I want us to see in these first four verses, especially the first two, living life God's way will result in living life the best way.

Living life God's way will result in our living life the best way. Solomon is writing.

[7 : 39] He's writing from the perspective of a wise, godly father who loves and cares about his son and wants his son to experience the best life possible.

When he says here in verse 1, my teaching, my son do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments. He's referring to what he has taught, the wise father, because it is based on God's law.

So, Solomon is saying here, I want you to listen. As a wise father would say to a son, I want you to listen.

I want you to pay attention to what I have been teaching you. I want you to let it sink in. Don't just memorize the words, but let it sink into your heart.

Now, let me remind you of something. We saw in chapter 1, verses 2 through 7, and in chapter 2, that the teaching of Proverbs is focused on teaching godly wisdom, godly character, and how to experience right relationships with both God and others.

[9 : 03] The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom, but not just any kind of wisdom. The real focus is that we experience and use the wisdom that God gives.

And if we will do that, we will develop godly character. And if we will do that, we will have the right kind of relationships with God and with other people.

Now, the emphasis of these verses. Son, remember the wise teaching that you have heard as you have grown up.

Remember the wise teaching that not only I have taught, but that you have seen. That would be the idea. So I want you to think now. Don't forget the truth that you've been taught throughout your life by wise teachers.

Now, I know that everyone in this room, everyone didn't grow up in a Christian home. Everyone was not brought up in a Bible-believing church, but most everyone in this church was.

[10 : 15] Most everyone, if you look around, the majority of us had a Christian father and mother or at least one parent.

The majority of us grew up in this church or a church similar in that it was a Bible-believing church. So, most of us in this room, we have been taught the Word of God in our homes, in our church, and maybe in other settings.

So what he says here, don't forget my teaching. He's talking to us and telling us, don't just think about the words that have been spoken.

Take it to heart. Think about what you have heard, what you have seen. Let it sink in. He says, let your heart keep my commandments.

The idea is, make it your own. Believe it. And if it's true, accept it. Take it to heart. Live it out.

[11 : 31] That's what he's trying to get across here in verse 1. Now, if you grew up in that Christian home and been involved in a Bible-believing, teaching church, I want you to understand that you have been blessed.

You have been favored by God to have been brought up in such an environment. But we need to be careful here. Being exposed, only exposed to the Christian truth, is not enough.

If it was just word spoken, if it didn't sink in, if we didn't accept it, if we didn't believe it, I want to ask you, have you taken what you were taught in your home as a child, in your church?

Let me pause here. Even if you didn't grow up in a Christian home, by you being here today, I'm going to assume that there's very few who are here for the very first time. If you didn't grow up in a Christian home, you didn't grow up as a child in a church, you probably have been exposed to Christian teaching for a few years at least.

In a church, read for yourself, or something along that line. Have you taken what you have been taught? What you have seen in others?

[12 : 56] And have you decided these are no longer my parents' or my teacher or my pastor's beliefs? These are my beliefs.

And have you taken them one step further and said, I not only hold to these teachings, but these teachings now have a hold on me? That's what a conviction is.

Have you taken what you were taught as you were growing up at home, at church, and developed not just strong beliefs, but have you developed firm convictions that you're not going to be moved, you're not going to be swayed from?

You know, we get our beliefs and our convictions tested in this world all the time. if you're in if you're in elementary school even, especially middle school and high school, you have had people, some of them you would consider friends, some of them are just classmates, some could even be teachers.

You have had people that have challenged, that have opposed what you've been taught in your home and at church. And if you've made them your own firm beliefs and strong convictions, you've had people that's tried to persuade you to stop believing that or stop living that way.

[14 : 28] There's opposition everywhere. People are going to oppose you, they're going to oppose the Christian truth, the biblical truth, because they oppose God and anything related to God.

the devil will tempt us to sin throughout our lives by tempting us to disobey what we do know God's word teaches.

The devil will work through people, he'll work through situations and circumstances to test us or to tempt us and most of the time the devil's going to try to get us to compromise just a little bit.

Not go just 180 degree turn but he's going to get us tempted to compromise just a little bit. And when we compromise just a little bit it opens the door to compromising even more.

The little compromises sooner or later turn into greater compromises if they're not repented of. If we don't seek God's forgiveness and help in maintaining them.

[15 : 37] Now, I want you to take a real honest look at yourself right now. I want you to think do I see evidence in my life of how I have compromised the truth of God that I was taught in my home or that I was taught in my church?

Things that I really have said I believed. you think about it. How were you what were you taught? I'm talking about biblical truth. I'm not talking about just sayings. You think about the biblical truth you were taught as you grew up. You think about how you have heard and understood and believed the word of God taught in your Sunday school class from me and other preachers.

have you compromised any of those beliefs? Have you stopped living that way?

Now let me ask you do you think those compromises have made your life better? We're being real honest.

[16 : 56] are you living according to the truth the wisdom of God that you were taught as you grew up that you said you believed? Have you compromised or have you forsaken some of them?

Well have they made your life better? Let me ask you a second question along that same line. Are you proud of how you've changed?

Are you proud of the fact that I no longer believe or live the way that my parents taught me to live or my son's school teacher taught me or my pastor taught me I'm proud of the fact that I no longer do or live the kind of life that the Bible says I ought to live?

Are you so proud that you would tell your parent or parents that you'd go and tell your son's school teacher pastor or any Christian who has tried to help you?

Are you so proud of how you've changed how you've compromised that you'll go and tell those people that you are better off now because you have rejected their teaching which is based on the truth of God's word?

[18 : 15] now if you would do that so be it it is what it is but my guess is that if you're honest if you'll be honest with yourself and with God you would have to admit that rejecting the biblical wisdom you were taught has not made your life better it's not caused you to experience any real joy contentment

satisfaction it's certainly not drawn you closer to God and most likely it's not helped your relationships with other people either and the reason I say that is because God created this world and us in such a way that living life his way is the best way

God's the creator God's the master designer of life and he created us to live life his way because that's what works best that's what will give us the most satisfying life and that's what God is actually saying here in verses 2 and most of the odd numbered verses or the even numbered verses at least down through verse 12 we see here in verse 2 my son do not forget my teaching but let your heart keep my commandments for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you verse 2 one of the results of being faithful to the truth of God is a long life and peace that's the word shalom here it's talking about having a sense of wholeness a sense of rightness a sense that life is the way it should be life is worthwhile we sense that we experience that now we need to understand that when proverbs says something like this it is not a promise

God is not making promises that if you live a certain way life will turn out that way in the book of proverbs that's not what Solomon and the other writers intended that's not how God led them that's not the kind of literature that it is proverbs are general statements about how life usually works proverbs are basically what wise people like Solomon writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit observed about life and how it works in most people's lives we can see how verse two usually works the idea of having a long life and peace wholeness we can see how verse two usually works like this a young person who lives according to the truth they've been taught by their Christian parents by their teachers at church or other Christian teachers a young person who lives according to this wisdom is more likely to avoid the kinds of things that will lead to an early death or just a miserable life let me give you a more specific example most Christian youth have been taught at home and at church the most important thing for you to do in your relationship with God is seek to know

His will and then do it it's so important if you're a Christian seek to know and do God's will in everything that you do most young people have heard that heard it from their parents heard it at church most young people have heard things like this don't use drugs and alcohol wait until you get married to have sex honor God by doing your best in school and everything you do see the ultimate purpose of life is to glorify God in everything now if a young man or young woman ignores those teachings they will usually experience unwanted consequences sometimes they are fatal every one of us in this room we we know someone that may be old that may be young who chose to ignore biblical wisdom and instead chose a path just the opposite they may have got involved in alcohol or drugs committed adultery or be involved with pornography may just be very greedy and materialistic may just be just downright dishonest and one or several of those things as they look back now they've seen that that's what's ruined their life it's hard to argue against the fact that rejecting biblical wisdom it just does not add value to anyone's life it actually takes away value rejecting biblical wisdom rejecting

God's way of living has cost many a person their job their family their reputation just about anything of value many people have lost because they refuse to listen to the Lord accept his word as this is what's right and then seek by God's grace to live it out give you a quick example go to a high school reunion go to your high school reunion especially if you've been out of school 20 30 40 50 years and just observe just look around the room and especially if you know a little bit about your fellow classmates you can look at them and you can hear just a part of their life story and you can tell who sought to live according to godly wisdom and who didn't you can see it in their appearance you can hear it in their life stories living life god's way it does add value it does make life worth living it does make life better emotionally physically and spiritually look at verse 3 and 4 quickly let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you do you know that steadfast love and faithfulness is the way god chose to reveal himself or describe himself as he revealed himself to the people of israel in the book of exodus in chapter 30 god says i am a god of steadfast love and faithfulness some translations say i'm a god of grace and truth let steadfast love and faithfulness god's character let not let it forsake you bind them around your neck write them on the tablet of your heart internalize them let it be a part of who you are on the outside and on the inside and just look at what he says so you will find favor and good success in the sight of god and man again what verse 2 and what verse 4 says here these are not promises if you live your life according to the truth of god's word you're going to live long you're going to be prosperous you're never going to be sick or anything like that but the fact of the matter is you see in your life and people's lives around you that people who

develop wisdom character and right a right relationship with god and other people they most often are the ones who live longer and better lives and they certainly live longer and better lives overall than people who live foolish the people who live and act immorally and people who have poor relationships with other people you know we're going to look at verses 5 and 6 next time but look quickly here in verse 6 after he says to trust in the

[28 : 04] Lord with all your heart and understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths the book of Proverbs is filled with that word about how we live being described in terms of the path or the road that we take whenever we think about the path that leads to right and good relationships with god or to a right and good relationship with god we need to always remember that it begins with jesus jesus is the one who told us in john 14 6 i am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through me so i want to ask you this morning before we leave do you really and truly know jesus christ as your savior and lord that's the only way having a relationship with him that we really can know god and experience his wisdom and experience his blessing in our life if you don't know christ i'm not saying if you profess faith or been baptized do you know him have you truly repented of your sins and put your trust in him wholeheartedly and are you following him as the lord of your life if you have it and you want to start now by turning from your sin and repentance and trusting him and calling upon him to save you it may be that you are a christian and you started down the right path with him but you've strayed the only way that things are ever going to be any different be better is for you to come back humbly repentantly confessing your sin and renewing your commitment to the lord jesus you know the christian christian life really is the best life and god graciously encourages us in proverbs 3 to seek him and his wisdom so that we will experience life as he intends for us will you do that will you listen to the lord this morning and all these incentives that we find in proverbs 3 to live a life that honors him that obeys him that does things his way let's pray together father we pray that right now that you will help us to honestly look at our own lives and the way the path that we're on father just drive home this point the living life your way according to the truth of your word according to your wisdom is the way you intend for life to be lived in the most meaningful way in the best way in every way so help us to clearly see ourselves help us to understand the truth that you have given us this morning through your word show us now how to respond and in an attitude of prayer you just respond to the lord if i could help you i would be happy to here at the front i'll pray for you share with you in any way would you listen to the lord and respond to him you