

**No 1 The Value of Wisdom Ch 3 v 1 to 20**

Chapter 3 is all about the acquisition of wisdom. What is it and how do you get hold of it. At its heart is a very famous verse

***‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart***

***And lean not on your own understanding;***

***In all your ways acknowledge him***

***And he will make your paths straight’*** (3:5 & 6)

This chapter is encouraging us to give up the fantasy of self-determination and self-sufficiency and turn to wisdom. Wisdom is seen as a guide and protection from real dangers.

1. Try to answer the question – what is wisdom?

If it’s not about being clever then what is it?

Read 1:1 to 7 and try to summarise why we need wisdom in our daily lives

1:7 is reckoned to be the definition of wisdom.

Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom?

What is the connection between our relationship with God (fear) and how we understand our own situations through the eyes of God-given wisdom?

Proverbs 3 is a series of three instructions.

* ‘Do not forget my teaching’ v 1 to 10
* ‘Do not despise the Lord’s discipline’ v 11 to 20
* ‘Do not let sound judgement and discernment out of your sight’ v21 to 35

Each one is preceded by ‘My son …’

1. The three benefits of long life, prosperity and good reputation are highlighted in v 1 to 4. How much do we try to acquire these virtues in our own way rather than trying to acquire them by learning God’s wisdom?

The writer is saying – the more we learn God’s mind then those three qualities will increase in our lives. Is that always true?

How would this be understood by a Christian living in poverty or under persecution?

There are five ‘admonitions’ that follow in verses 3 to 12. They concern

* Independence v 3 & 4
* Self-determination v 5 & 6
* Making our own moral rules v 7 & 8
* Ownership of goods v 9 & 10
* Freedom from correction v 11 & 12

The message is clear – you cannot be masters of your own destiny; you cannot be your own gods.

1. How easy is it to slip into a worldly view of these issues?

* Are we staunchly independent – are we proud of doing our own thing rather than doing God’s ‘thing’?
* Are we fixed on a biblical view of morality or do we choose which bits of God’s moral law we go along with?
* Are we convinced that every piece of ‘goods’ we have is not our own but God’s gift for us to look after?

Etc………..

Maybe it’s a good time to pause in the group and pray for God’s help to seek his wisdom in all aspects of our lives. Pray that, in the culture of 21st century UK, we may always seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Having warned us of things to avoid (as the Bible so often does for our good), the writer reminds us of the blessing that wisdom brings into our lives. One admonition is in this section. The word ‘discipline’ has the same root as ‘disciple’. In our 21st century world ‘discipline’ and ‘love’ are sometimes seen as opposites. Not here!

1. What does the Lord’s discipline look like?

Have you ever experienced it in your life?

How do you respond to the Lord’s discipline?

Do you resent getting answers you don’t want?

Do you feel unloved by God when he disciplines you?

Verses 13 to 18 sound like a hymn. In verses 14 & 15 the value of wisdom is described as far more valuable than the most precious things in the world. Verses 16 & 17 talk about ‘long life’ which is not necessarily only about longevity. It can variously be translated as ‘peace, abundance and well-being’. In other words, God’s wisdom improves ALL aspects of our quality of life.

1. Worldly wealth will fail – it will be irrelevant in eternity. In our world of 21st century marketing, are riches still attractive to us. Is it easy to envy next door’s house, garden, kitchen or car?

Are we convinced that our quality of life depends on our relationship with God and following his ways?

In verses 19 and 20 we have a mini-account of creation in Genesis 1. It’s as if the ‘tree of life’ reference (a widely used symbol of goodness and blessing in the ancient world)(v18) triggers other thoughts of creation. To connect it to the rest of the chapter, the author is saying that creation is the work of a mind of perfect and infinite wisdom. Having talked in verses 13 to 18 about the blessings of wisdom, the author uses creation as the supreme example of the benefits of wisdom.

1. In these days of heightened awareness of environmental issues, are we sufficiently aware that the supreme architect, maker and sustainer of our world is God?

Do we re-cycle because we’re told it’s good or do we do it to please God because we have heard his wisdom?

**‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge**

**But fools despise wisdom and discipline’**

**Proverbs 1:7**