

**Trusting Is Important**  
Proverbs 3:1-12 (03/12/17)

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Joshua was facing a huge assignment after Moses died and Israel was getting ready to cross the Jordan and face those formidable walls of Jericho. Before sending Joshua out, God met with him and gave him these assuring words.

*Joshua 1:6-9 "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Can you imagine God giving you those kinds of assurances? Turn to Proverbs 3, because that's exactly what he does in verses 1-12. Imagine God bringing you into His inner chamber. He assures you of His love, asks you to sit down for a few minutes, and then proceeds to tell you, "Listen, son, I want you to succeed in your life, just like Joshua. I'm going to give you six life principles that, if you follow them, I guarantee your life will be successful for Christ. I'm not talking about being perfect, but if you follow my counsel, your life will succeed for My kingdom." This is sweet, delightful counsel from our heavenly Father out of His heart of electing, adopting, and keeping love. He desires every one of His people to succeed in living for His glory and succeeding in this life.

**#1 – Keep God's Word at the very center of your heart and life – vv. 1-2.**

*1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; 2 For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you.*

Paul counseled Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15 to "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Don't forget it; keep the Word alive in your heart. These sacred writings brought you the message of the gospel. Here you learned about your sin and condemnation, how God brought His Son into the world to pay the penalty for sin, how God raised Him from the dead and He ascended up to heaven as our Savior and King. These writings taught you about justification by faith alone, how God imputed to you the perfect righteousness of Christ, gave you eternal life, forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and all the rest. This Word is your lifeline to heaven and the most important thing you have in your life to succeed. It's God-breathed, without error, your authority, will never fail you, and sufficient for living your life for God's glory.

Just like Joshua, read it and meditate on it and pray over it! Don't forget it and don't let it get away – let your heart keep its commandments! How many professing Christians who are being lured back into the world or struggling with some sinful habit or caving in to their fleshly desires, when asked, "Are you keeping God's word at the very center of your heart?" can't tell you the last time they read their Bibles! We are all prone to forget God's Word. That's why we need weekly sermons and daily reading plans. We need to remind one another of the most basic truths. Keep the Word, Christ, and the gospel that is at the center of the Word, central in your heart just like the law that was placed in the tabernacle in the center of Israel's camp. This is the first principle for a successful Christian life – in school, in college, in your work place, in marriage, in business, in your middle years, in your autumn years, in poverty or in wealth – don't forget God's truth. Keep them at the very center of your heart and life.

What is the result in verse 2? God is not talking about the health, wealth, and prosperity false gospel here or anywhere in the Bible. But God does promise that your life will tend to be blessed with good days, even good health, but not always. We're all dying. We may have to endure life-threatening diseases. But notice that word "peace." It means more than everything being nice. Peace is that Old Testament word "shalom," which has the idea of flourishing. God will keep you in perfect peace, shalom shalom, whose mind is fixed on Him. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you." Shalom means a life that is full of contentment and joy and happiness, finding Christ to be the joy of your soul! Keep God's word at the center of your heart and flourish in contentment and joy.

## **#2 – Show others the same kindness and faithfulness that God has shown you – vv. 3-4.**

*3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.*

As you get dressed every morning and go through your day, be sure to put on these two godly qualities: kindness and faithfulness or integrity. God's ways are full of these two virtues: lovingkindness and truth. Psalm 89:14, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne, and lovingkindness and truth go before Him." Psalm 25:10, "All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies." God revealed Himself to Moses on the mountain in Exodus 34:6, "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth."

Keep these two God-like virtues clear and obvious in all your relationships in this world. Not just kindness without truth, or you're just an ooshy gooshy Christian. And not just truth without kindness, or you're as severe as an axe or a butcher knife. Guide your relationships with that beautiful balance of kindness, treating others with respect, thoughtfulness, grace, and truth, being honest and faithful in all your promises and commitments.

These ornaments are more beautiful than the finest diamonds you can buy. Wear them as a necklace so others can see your kindness and faithfulness. Write them on your heart so you don't forget them and they become a part of you. How can you practice these this week? Every wife and husband desires a spouse rich in kindness and faithfulness. Practice them with your fellow workers, with your friends, and even those who disagree with you. Practice them with your children and you'll be a God-pleasing parent.

What is the result? Verse 6 very simply says you will please God and people will usually appreciate your kindness and faithfulness. Luke 2:52 describes Jesus at age twelve, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Follow this principle and you will be one of the strange people who actually does what you say you'll do! That's godliness in action! Do you want success as a believer? Show others the same kindness and faithfulness God has shown you.

## **#3 – Trust and follow God's counsel in every decision you make – vv. 5-6.**

*Proverbs 3:5-6, Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.*

This is the most popular and well-used verse of all the Proverbs. Is God trustworthy? Is He kind and faithful? Is He really in control? Does He have the power to keep His promises to you? Does He actually care about you personally? Then throw your entire weight on Him! That's what "trust" (*batach*) means. How do you trust God? Here are four ways.

- Entirely – "with all your heart." Not just some of it. Not double-minded, as James describes those who aren't sure they really want to go God's way.
- Exclusively – "don't lean on your own understanding." You aren't nearly smart enough to figure life out on your own. Fools lean on their own understanding, not realizing God created us to trust Him.
- Extensively – "in all your ways." Not just in some of your ways, but in every way you take, trust God! There's not one part of your life God is not concerned about. In all your ways.

- Expectantly – “He will guide you.” He’ll give you the wisdom to make good decisions that please Him. There’s nothing mystical or magical about this. But the sure way to know God’s will is to trust Him and apply His truth to your situations and decisions.

Proverbs 16:20 says, “Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he!” Those three Hebrews youths in Daniel 3 refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, and said, “Our God is able to deliver us from your little fire over there, but even if He doesn’t, we’re not bowing down!” They were trusting God all the way! When Jehoshaphat was heading out to battle against an enemy that was way bigger than they were, he stood before all Israel and looked to God and cried out, “O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; **nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.**” 13 All Judah was standing before the LORD, with their infants, their wives and their children.” (2 Chronicles 20:12-13). They were trusting God! Stake everything you are and have on Christ. If God be for us, who can be against us? Trust Him.

Never think you know better than God; don’t put any weight on your own paltry understanding. Do you let the Bible overrule your own reasoning and feelings? What about when the Bible contradicts what you want to be true? Are you tempted to respond, “Well, I don’t agree with the Bible on that issue,” or “I don’t like the idea of hell. I don’t think there is eternal torment of people who don’t come to Christ. I think there are other ways to heaven besides through Christ alone.”

There is no way you know enough to contradict God, so don’t lean on your own understanding. Listen to Jeremiah who puts it very plainly. Jeremiah 17:5 & 7, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. 7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD.’”

Notice, “in all your ways acknowledge” or literally “know” Him. That means in every decision you face, in every life circumstance, and with every personal dealing, you must consider His Word and follow His counsel. Joshua 9:14 tells of those Gibeonites who fooled Joshua and his men, and it says “they did not ask the counsel of the Lord.” Joshua and company did not acknowledge God. Learn from this. Whatever you are setting out to do, God is right there with you; but you need to talk to Him and consider what He says. Before that purchase, that job change, whatever decision you have to make, don’t just barge ahead thinking you are smart enough. Acknowledge Him! The NLT says, “Seek His will in all you do and He will show you which path to take!” If you’re thinking about marrying that beautiful girl, good for you. But be sure to acknowledge God there. Don’t base your decision on just those soft lips or her beautiful face. You must have God in your decision. God has something to say about that. Is she a believer with a daily personal walk with God? Trust and follow God’s counsel in every decision you make and He’ll direct your path, giving you wisdom to make good decisions.

#### **#5 – Take God seriously and do the right thing – vv. 7-8.**

*7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.*

Proverbs 26:12 says, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Don’t think you are smarter than God and that you can get away with sin without paying the consequences. You’re not smarter than God. You’re like a little bit of seaweed torn from a larger bit swirling around in the vast ocean of God’s infinite wisdom and you need God to tell you what to do. God created this vast universe and put man on this earth and He knows how life works. A three-year-old isn’t smart enough to fly a jet, and you’re not smart enough to do life outside of God’s authority and direction. Mrs. Lot thought she could outsmart God. “One little look back won’t hurt,” she said, and that’s the last look she took!

Here’s a life principle: take God seriously! He knows what He’s doing and He knows what’s best for you and me. That means you turn from evil and do the right thing. When you mess up, quickly go back to Him, ask forgiveness, and get right back under His authority. Don’t think you can figure it out; you can’t. Millions have tried and they’ve made a mess of things. God tells you to fear Him and turn away from evil; He wants your best.

Notice that taking God seriously affects your body. From your navel (body) all the way to those blood cell producing bones, your life will tend to have spiritual vigor, zest, energy, and vitality! Christ promised that when we come to Him, He'll give us rest for our souls. Write it down: the happiest people in the world are obedient Christians. No one ever got to the end of their lives regretting that they lived for God so seriously.

#### **#5 – Give of your best to God, your Master – vv. 9-10.**

*9 Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.*

The last verse of this familiar old song by Howard Grose says:

*Give of your best to the Master;  
Naught else is worthy His love;  
He gave Himself for your ransom,  
Gave up His glory above.  
Laid down His life without murmur,  
You from sin's ruin to save;  
Give Him your heart's adoration;  
Give Him the best that you have.*

Have you heard Martyn Lloyd-Jones' story about the Lord's calf? A farmer ran to tell his wife the good news. Their cow had calves, one white and one brown. He told his wife, "We're going to give one of these calves to the Lord! When it's time we'll sell the one and keep the proceeds and sell the other and give the proceeds to the Lord." His wife asked, "Which one have you dedicated to the Lord?" He assured her, "We don't need to decide that now. When the time comes, I'll make a decision." A few months later the farmer came into the house dejected and miserable. "What's wrong, husband?" "I have bad news. The Lord's calf is dead." It seems it's always the Lord's calf that dies! Here's a question for you to consider. Could our local church here survive if everyone gave the same percentage of their income as you do?

Do you want to live a successful Christian life? Give of your best to the Master and He will bless you for it. Back then God filled their barns and made their vats burst out with new wine. The New Testament really says the same thing. "He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, but he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Emails to our church include many fund raising ideas in hopes we'll plug into one of them; all are ignored. God wants His people to give. If we give from the first of our income as stated in Proverbs 3:9 and if we are generous, liberal, cheerful givers as we're told in 2 Corinthians, our church won't need fund raising campaigns to increase our missionary giving or build our next addition or meet increased staff needs.

#### **#5 – Submit to and learn from God's loving discipline in your life – vv. 11-12.**

*Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, 12 For whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.*

Maybe you are dealing with a heavy trial, a difficulty, a persistent sickness, financial problems, or another issue we face in this fallen world. When trials come, there are two wrong attitudes toward God: ignore God or get all angry and upset and blame God about them. God is your heavenly Father. He loves you and sometimes He spans with his rod and sometimes He just brings trouble into your life to help you grow and become like His Son. There is little more important in the Christian life than this; know and see that God is in your trials and all He does is from His loving heart! He is our Father who wants you to succeed, just like He wanted Joshua to succeed.

Folks, take these six life principles to prayer and to application in your life. Write them in your heart. Trust and praise your Father for His kindness and faithfulness to you. Don't think you know better than your Creator and Redeemer. Give your best to Christ. Let your heavenly Father's discipline draw you near to Him.