

## Proverbs 3:1-35 - The Rewards of Wisdom

### I. Introduction

- A. Structure built on: בְּנִי *bēnî* "My son..." - Forms three sections in this chapter
  1. (v.1-10) - Admonitions concerning wisdom
  2. (v.11-20) - A poem: The Blessings of Wisdom
  3. (v.21-35) - Prohibitions concerning wisdom
- B. The name, יהוה *YHWH*, "LORD" occurs 3 times in each section, 9 total
  1. Prominent feature of God's name shows God's connection with wisdom
  2. The teaching of parents and the discipline of Yahweh offer wisdom together

### II. (v.1-10) First Lecture: Admonitions concerning Wisdom

- A. Admonition #1 - (v.1-2) My teaching תּוֹרָה - *tôrâh* do not forget, and my commandments let your heart keep/guard
  1. Benefits
    - a. Long life - "Life" is derived from the root, חַיָּה
      - 1) חַיָּה This *can* be a theologically loaded word
      - 2) Other Old Testament passages:
        - a) Deut 4:4; 8:3; 30:19-20; 32:39, 47
          - Connection with obedience to God
        - b) Jer 2:13; 17:13 - Source of "life" is God
        - c) Hos 6:2
          - He will "revive" - חַיָּה us
          - Life is restoration to God
        - d) Ezek 37:1-14 - Death and resurrection of Israel
          - Death came as a result of sin
          - Life away from God in his temple is death
          - Life is in fellowship with God
        - e) Josh 5:8 - "healed"; Jud 15:19 - "revived";  
2 Kings 20:7 - "recovered"; 1 Chr 11:8 - "repaired";  
Neh 4:2 - "revive"
          - Life carries the idea of wholeness
    - 3) New Testament idea of life
      - a) Uses ζωή *zōē* (not βίος *bios*) for חַיָּה
      - b) Matt 4:4; Luke 15:24, 32; 12:15; 1 Tim 4:8
      - c) John 5:24; 6:35; 48; 14:6; 17:3; 1 John 3:14
      - d) Life is not just quantitative, but qualitative



4) *"The mere presence of the tree of life suggests that rather than being originally mortal, human beings need something outside of themselves in order to sustain life...Deut describes a quality of life that is firmly rooted in relationship to Yahweh. ... For this reason, the possession of true life is consistently linked with maintaining covenantal values, ... hyh involves a sense of wholeness. When reduced to the bare minimum, life is indeed the opposite of death, as with the restoration to life of both the widow's son and the unnamed Israelite ( 1 Kgs 17:22; 2 Kgs 13:21). But viewed more positively, hyh has a qualitative dimension that envisions health and strength. This no doubt adds to the implications surrounding hyh's function in religious contexts. Ideally, life for the people of Yahweh is more than the absence of death. It is, in every sense of the word, to be well.<sup>1</sup>*

b. Peace - "Peace" is from שָׁלוֹם *šālôm*

- 1) שָׁלוֹם is theologically loaded
- 2) Following wisdom brings peace (v.2, 17)
- 3) Other Old Testament passages
  - a) Gen 29:6; 43:27; Psa 38:3  
Idea of Health, wellness, soundness, wholeness
  - b) Gen 15:15; 26:29; Exo 18:23; Psa 4:8  
A state of mind, being at ease, fulfilled, satisfied
  - c) Gen 34:21; Judg 4:17; Zech 6:13  
Absence of strife and war
- 3) Connection of שָׁלוֹם *šālôm* with Yahweh
  - a) Ezek 37:5 - בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם *b'rit šālôm*  
"Covenant of Peace" means restoration of a relationship with Yahweh along with its blessings
  - b) Num 6:24-26 - Peace comes from the presence of Yahweh
  - c) Isa 48:17-19 - Peace comes from following Yahweh's commandments
  - d) Isa 48:22; 57:21; 59:8 - No peace for the wicked
  - e) Jer 6:14; 14:13, 28; Ezek 13:16; Mic 3:5  
False peace and wellness.
- 4) *"The preexilic prophets warned against the assumption of the false prophets, who identified the divine purpose of salvation with political stability and peace in Israel, thus identifying divine "peace" with political peace. Such an identification was unacceptable for the preexilic word-prophets, who argues that the*

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<sup>1</sup> Terry L. Brensinger, "חֵיה," In *New International Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 2:108-109.



*issue of divine salvation and peace could not be treated in isolation from the guilt and sins of the nation.*"<sup>2</sup>

5) In the New Testament, peace is εἰρήνη *eirēnē*

- a) The New Testament usage of this word is heavily influenced by its usage in the Septuagint, which uses it to translate, שָׁלוֹם *šālôm*
- b) Eph 6:15; Acts 10:36; Eph 2:17 - Peace is a major goal of Christian preaching.
- c) Eph 5:23 - Peace is connected with sanctification

## 2. Life and peace for the Christian

- a. The New Testament develops these themes
- b. Rom 8:6 - Living according to the Spirit is connected to both *life* and *peace*. The ultimate life and peace will culminate in the redemption from corruption (v.19ff)
  - 1) Life and peace are both benefits of wisdom in Proverbs 3
  - 2) In 1 Corinthians 2:5ff, The Spirit is connected to wisdom
  - 3) Living according to the Spirit will help us to grow in wisdom and therefore grow in life and peace.
- c. Col 3:15 - Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts
  - 1) In context, this passage is talking about the characteristics of the new self
  - 2) Putting to death the old self and putting on the new self carries the idea of wholeness, life, and peace
  - 3) Letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts is about transformed, righteous living.
- d. This returns us back to the idea of heeding his commands

B. Admonition #2 - (v.3-4) - Kindness חֶסֶד *hesed* and Truth אֱמֶת *emet* do not let leave/forsake you, bind them on your neck, inscribe them upon the tablet of your heart

- 1. חֶסֶד *hesed* Which is translated kindness has no single English substitute. The range of meaning of this word is as follows: Unfailing love, mercy, kindness, devotion, covenant loyalty. Examples of its use:
  - a. Isa 54:10 - My חֶסֶד *hesed* will not be removed from you
  - b. Num 14:18-19; Ps 51:1; 106:45 - Forgiveness from God is on the basis of his חֶסֶד *hesed*
- 2. אֱמֶת *emet* - Translated "truth" can also mean reliability, faithfulness, or stability.

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<sup>2</sup> Philip J. Nel, "שָׁלוֹם," In *New International Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 4:132.



3. לִיָּהּ *luah* - "Tablet" usually refers to a stone, metal, or wood tablet. This imagery suggests permanence, or committing to memory. We would speak of "etching" something in our mind.

#### 4. Benefits

- a. You will find favor/grace חֵן *hēn*
- b. Good prudence/insight שֵׂכֶל *śēkel*
- c. In the sight of God and man

- C. Admonition #3 - (v.5-6) Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and on your understanding do not lean/support yourself. In all your ways דֶּרֶךְ *derek* know יָדַע *yadac* him...

1. This is not merely an admonition to trust in the Lord in difficult times
2. The imagery is choose the Lord's paths at all times
  - a. In all our ways, we are to "know" him
  - b. The knowledge of God implies an intimate relationship
    - 1) Gen 4:1 - A euphemism for sexual relations
    - 2) Exod 6:3 - God makes "known" his name, initiating a covenant with Israel
    - 3) Psalm 139 - God "knows" us inwardly
3. Benefit: he himself will make smooth your paths/hiways  
אֲרָהּ *ʾorah*. - Straight, or smooth paths are ones that have been made safe for travel with less likely of stumbling.

- D. Admonition #4 - (v.7-8) Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear Yahweh and turn from evil.

1. Benefit:
  - a. Healing it will be to your body<sup>3</sup>
  - b. And drink to your bones<sup>4</sup>
2. This expands on the previous exhortation not to lean on your own understanding and to trust the Lord.

- E. Admonition #5 - (v.9-10) Honor/glorify<sup>5</sup> Yahweh from your wealth, and from the beginning/choicest<sup>6</sup> of all your product/yield

1. Benefit:
  - a. So filled with plenty will your storehouses be
  - b. And your wine vats with new wine will burst

<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew word is שֹׁר *śor*, which means "navel string". The Septuagint uses σωμα *sōma*, which may indicate that this is an figure of speech meaning "body."

<sup>4</sup> אֵצֶם *ešem*, translated "bones" here, is also used figuratively in Hebrew to denote the seat of disease and pain, or to denote the whole substance of the self.

<sup>5</sup> The root idea of כָּבֵד *kbēd* is heavy. In this case "to make heavy" or to treat as weighty, important, with honor.

<sup>6</sup> רֵאשִׁית *rēʾšit* can be used temporally - "beginning" or spatially - "chief, head, choicest, etc."



2. This implies that all of the "produce" ultimately comes from God. This idea is more explicit in other scriptures, especially in Deut 26-28.
3. Malachi expresses the same idea
  - a. Mal 1:6-8 - Dishonoring the Lord with what was not the beginning/choicest of the product
  - b. Mal 3:8-12 - Honoring the Lord from your wealth will result in the Lord's blessing
4. 2 Cor 9:6-10 Expresses the same idea
  - a. Uses the imagery of "sowing"
  - b. Communicates an expectation of a "harvest"
  - c. Investing resources into a relationship with God

#### F. Reflections on Verses 1-10

1. The key verse in this section is verse 5
  - a. Trust in Yahweh
  - b. Do not lean on your own understanding
2. Observations
  - a. True wisdom comes from Yahweh
  - b. Wisdom involves the following characteristics
    - 1) Godly Character
      - a) v.3 - Kindness/ unfailing love/ loyalty
      - b) v.3 - Truth/ faithfulness
      - c) v.7 - Turn away from all evil
    - 2) Accepting instruction and direction
      - a) v.5 - Trusting in the Lord, not ourselves
      - b) v.6 - "Knowing" the Lord in all our "paths" in life
      - c) v.7 - Not being a "know it all," but being humble enough to accept wise instruction
    - 3) Honoring God above all else
      - a) v.7 - Fear the Lord
      - b) v.9 - Honor the Lord by putting him first in all things
  - c. Benefits include the following
    - 1) v.4 - Finding favor/grace from Men and God
    - 2) v.5 - God will make straight paths for you
    - 3) v.8 - An inner refreshing, probably a spiritual and emotional blessing
    - 4) v.10 - Material blessing



### III. (v.11-20) - The Benefits of Wisdom

- A. Admonition: (v.11-12) - The discipline of Yahweh, my son, do not refuse/despise, and do not loathe his correction. For whom he loves Yahweh rebukes, even like a father the son he is pleased with/ delights in.
1. Other places where the same theme appears
    - a. Deut 8:1-5 - God disciplining through hardship for testing
    - b. Heb 12:4-7 - Suffering as God's discipline
    - c. 2 Sam 7:12-15 - Corrective discipline with the rod of men
    - d. Psalms 89:32-33 - Corrective discipline with whipping
  2. Here in Proverbs, the discipline appears to be verbal, there is no indication of corporal punishment
  3. Unlike previous admonitions, there is no explicitly named benefit except recognition that the Lord is a loving father who disciplines his son
  4. The poem that follows implies that accepting the Lord's discipline and correction will lead to wisdom with all her benefits
- B. A Wisdom poem: (v.13-20)
1. Beatitude: (v.13) "Oh the blessedness<sup>7</sup> of the man (who) finds wisdom, and the man (who) obtains understanding"
  2. The blessedness comes from wisdom's value
    - a. (v.14) "Her profit<sup>8</sup> is better than the profit of silver, and better than gold is her product"
    - b. (v.15) "Precious is she more than corals<sup>9</sup> and all you desire does not compare to her"
  3. Benefits of wisdom, or her "profit" are these:
    - a. (v.16) "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left are riches and honor<sup>10</sup>"
    - b. (v.17) "Her ways are ways of delightfulness, and all her pathways are peace<sup>11</sup>."
  4. (v.18) - "A tree of life is she to those who seize her, and those who grasp her are blessed."
    - a. Tree of life appears in Genesis 1-3
      - 1) The tree brought life
      - 2) (Gen 3:21-24) - Adam and Eve were driven from it
      - 3) Ezek 47:12 - Another tree that brings life in a vision
      - 4) Rev 2:7 - Tree of life will become accessible again

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<sup>7</sup> Some translate this "happy" rather than "blessed," which may not carry the connotation of the word very well. The word used here is **אַשְׁרֵי** not **כְּרוֹן** which appears to derive from the root, **אָשַׁר**, which carries the idea of walking straight, going forward, making progress. **אַשְׁרֵי** is plural. Literally - "Oh the blessednesses of..."

<sup>8</sup> **סֶחֶר** profit, and **תְּבואָה** product, revenue, are both marketing terms. The verb form, **סָחַר** means to trade, as in a trader or merchant.

<sup>9</sup> These were highly valued. Since this does not communicate in contemporary language what it did in ancient times, most translations will use something like "jewels" or "rubies."

<sup>10</sup> **כְּבוֹד** - Range of meaning: Honor, glory, abundance, wealth, splendor, heavy, weighty, important.

<sup>11</sup> See notes on peace **שָׁלוֹם** *šālôm* in verse 2.



- 5) Rev 22:2 - Tree bears fruit and brings healing
- b. Psa 1 uses the image of a tree
  - 1) It flourishes and bears fruit
  - 2) The source of its nourishment is in Torah
- c. See the notes on "life" from verse 2. Life is more than the absence of physical death.
- d. Note the interesting choice of words - "seize" and "grasp"
- 5. (v.19-20) - A reference to creation
  - a. (v.19) - "Yahweh by wisdom founded the earth, he established the Heavens by understanding
  - b. (v.20) - "By his knowledge the deeps were broken open and the clouds drip dew."
  - c. Why this sudden reference to creation?
    - 1) God gave life to the world by wisdom
    - 2) Those who take hold of that same wisdom will find life
      - Clouds drip dew and bring life

C. Observations: Several images in this poem teach valuable lessons

- 1. The image of doing business
  - a. The starting place should not be learning to make a profit and be successful in business.
  - b. The starting place should be learning wisdom
    - 1) Wisdom brings long life
    - 2) Wisdom brings riches
    - 3) Wisdom brings honor
  - c. Becoming successful in business without beginning with learning wisdom can easily bring #2, but cancel out #1 and #3.
    - 1) Wisdom would involve ethical and honorable practices
    - 2) Wisdom would involve gaining a good reputation (v.4)
    - 3) Wisdom would involve doing things God's way, even if it means being honorable at the expense of profit (v.5-6)
  - d. Whatever career path you choose, the wisdom, righteousness, and honor of God needs to stay front and center.
- 2. The image of a tree of life
  - a. Life here is used qualitatively
  - b. In order for wisdom to act as a tree of life it takes "seizing" and "holding on" to her. This is one woman you never want to let go
    - It would be like a child that discovered a great treasure in a prize machine, manages to get it out, and treasures it, not letting it out of his sight. It is more precious than rubies, money, etc. to him.
  - c. A "tree of life" suggests several things
    - 1) Peace and joy
    - 2) Fellowship with God



### 3) Long fulfilling life

#### 3. The image of the beginning of creation

- a. At the beginning of creation, God provided the conditions for life
  - 1) He brought order to the "formless" and "void"
  - 2) He founded the earth, and split the waters above and below
  - 3) He did this according to his great wisdom
- b. If it is by his wisdom that God granted life, then it is by God's wisdom that we will also find life
  - 1) This is why the section begins with an admonition to listen to the correction and instruction of the Lord
  - 2) In wisdom, God ordered the creation to sustain life. Therefore, if we want life, we will live in harmony with the wisdom of God.

## IV. (v.21-35) Prohibitions Concerning Wisdom

- A. (v.21) Introductory Admonition: "My son, let them not turn depart from your eyes, guard efficient wisdom<sup>12</sup> and resourcefulness<sup>13</sup>
  1. (v.22) Benefit: "And they will be life to your soul<sup>14</sup> and grace/adornment to your neck
  2. (v.23) "Then you will walk to the security of your way/path, and your foot will not stumble
  3. (v.24) "If you lie down, you will not be in dread. And you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet."
- B. (v.25) Prohibition or another benefit?
  1. This could be translated as a prohibition or benefit
    - a. If a prohibition: "Do not fear sudden dread, and the devastation of wicked men when it comes." This fits better grammatically with the context<sup>15</sup>
    - b. If a benefit: "You will not fear sudden dread, and the devastation of wicked men when it comes." This fits better thematically with the context
  2. (v.26) Reason: "For Yahweh will be your confidence<sup>16</sup> and he will guard your feet from capture.

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<sup>12</sup> תִּשְׁטַיָּה - *tûštyyāh* - sound, efficient wisdom, abiding success. Used also in 2:7; 18:1; Job 5:12; Isa 28:9

<sup>13</sup> מְזֻמָּה *m'zummāh* is usually rendered, "plan, device, scheme, or discretion." The idea behind this word is the ability to put together a plan, or "resourcefulness."

<sup>14</sup> נֶפֶשׁ *nepēš* - soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, and passion. "Soul" in Hebrew does not necessarily have the connotation of the "spirit" of a person as it does in Greek or English. It stands for the whole person.

<sup>15</sup> The prohibitions in verse 27 - 31 have the same grammatical construction as v.25.

<sup>16</sup> כֶּסֶל *kesel* - stupidity, confidence. Same word is used in Psa 49:13; Eccl. 7:25. [Can there be a lesson in this choice of words?](#)



### C. Prohibitions concerning ethical treatment of neighbors

1. (v.27) Prohibition#1 - Do not withhold good from its owners<sup>17</sup> when it is in the strength of your hand to do (it).
  - a. Withholding the "good" from it's owners seems to be talking about paying your debts
  - b. Some interpret "it's owners" to be a reference to the needy<sup>18</sup>
2. (v.28) Prohibition#2 - Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and return tomorrow, and I will give." And it is with you."
  - a. In context with verse 27, this is saying not to put off paying a debt when you have the ability to pay it
  - b. Deut 24:10-15; Lev 19:13 - This is specifically prohibited
3. (v.29) Prohibition#3 - Do not devise evil against your neighbor/companion when he dwells securely by you.
  - a. This would be exploiting a neighbor's trust in you
  - b. 1 Sam 18:25 - Saul and David is an example of this
  - c. 2 Sam 11:14-15 - David and Uriah is an example of this
  - d. 2 Kings 21 - Ahab and Naboth is an example of this
4. (v.30) Prohibition#4 - Do not contend with a man for no reason if he has not dealt you evil
  - a. רִיב - *rîb* - "Contend" can refer to a physical altercation, or quarrel, or a lawsuit.
  - b. If a lawsuit is what this verse intends, then this is a prohibition against frivolous lawsuits.
  - c. If quarreling is what this verse intends, then this is a prohibition against being contentious for no good reason.
  - d. This proverb probably intends to prohibit both lawsuits and quarreling.
5. (v.31) Prohibition#5 - Do not envy a man of violence<sup>19</sup> and do not choose any of his ways.
  - a. This is a continuation of the thought from the previous verse.
    - 1) The violent may plan or devise evil against his neighbor
    - 2) Like Ahab, he may "devise" a plan to get what his heart desires, such as a vineyard

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<sup>17</sup> Most translations interpret rather than translate בַּעַל *ba'al* as "those who deserve it" rather than the literal rendering, "lord, owner, or master."

<sup>18</sup> This would follow the idea the Septuagint reading communicates: "μὴ ἀπόσχη εὖ ποιεῖν ἐνδεῇ ἡνίκα ἂν ἔχη ἡ χεὶρ σου βοηθεῖν" - "Do not withhold to do good for the poor whenever it is in your hand to assist."

<sup>19</sup> חָמָא *hāmās* - violence, wrong - *violence*, specifically of physical violence; but also *wrong*, including injurious language, harsh treatment, etc. such as the wrong done to Sarah by Hagar in Gen. 16:5.



- 3) One might be tempted to envy the man that is able to get what he wants in this way.
  - b. The prohibitions have progressively moved from omission (withholding good), to commission (devising evil and contending), to the heart (being envious of the violent)
  - c. This suggests that the problem with the unethical or wrong treatment of a neighbor is basically a heart problem
- D. The theological underpinning - The reasons for these prohibitions flow out of the character of God, which can be learned through what he hates and opposes as well as what he delights in and blesses.

1. (v.32) Contrast #1 - Devious v.s upright

a. For an abomination to Yahweh are the devious

- 1) Devious is a word picture. It means uneven, or crooked
  - a) This is a picturesque description of character.
  - b) The idea is a person who is not consistent in his ethics or character.
  - c) The New Testament word, "hypocrite" carries a similar idea
- 2) Abomination refers to something that is repugnant
  - a) God finds those who lack consistency and integrity repugnant, detestable and reprehensible
  - b) Other places "abomination" or "detestable" is used
    - Lev 18:22-30
    - Deut 18:9-12
  - c) It is serious business when the Bible says something is an abomination to God

b. But with the upright is his counsel

- 1) Upright is a word picture. It means straight, or level
  - a) The idea is of moral and ethical integrity
  - b) An upright man is one who is consistent
  - c) This is one who can be trusted
- 2) Counsel (or council) can refer to a couple of things
  - a) It could refer to advice
  - b) It could refer to a council, a group of people who put their heads together to decide
  - c) It could refer to an intimate group of friends. This seems to fit the parallelism the best.



## 2. (v.33) Contrast #2 - Wicked v.s. Righteous

- a. The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked
  - 1) Dt 28:15-25 - Gives a picture of what it means to be cursed of Yahweh
  - 2) To be cursed is to stand under Yahweh's condemnation and as a result, to be punished in some way.
- b. But the house of the righteous he will bless
  - a) בָּרַךְ *bārak* - "to bless" carries the idea of congratulating, praising, or speaking well of.
    - 1) Exo 18:10; 2 Sam 8:10; 1 Kng 1:47; are examples of this use of blessing
    - 2) The blessing of a Father was a highly prized thing as the story of Jacob and Esau demonstrates in Gen 27.
    - 3) The blessing of God typically means prosperity and health.
  - b) Deut 28:1-14 - Gives a picture of the Blessing of God
  - c) Gen 12:1-3 - The blessing here is also a spiritual blessing
  - d) To be blessed of God is to be favored of God, and therefore to have him prosper you

## 3. (v.34) Contrast #3 - Scoffers v.s. Afflicted

- a. Though to the scoffers he scoffs
  - a) Scoffers are clearly defined throughout Proverbs
    - 1) Prov 13:1 - He does not listen to rebuke
    - 2) Prov 14:6 - Wisdom is beyond his grasp
    - 3) Prov 15:2 - He does not like those who correct him
    - 4) Prov 21:24 - He is proud
    - 5) Prov 24:29 - He is an abomination to men
  - b) The scoffer is a loud, proud, "know-it-all" who thinks he is smart, but is in reality, stupid.
  - c) He finds no favor with God, only scorn
  - d) Jas 4:6 - God is opposed to the proud
- b. Yet to the afflicted he gives grace/favor<sup>20</sup>
  - a) עָנִי *ʿanî* - afflicted, poverty. Idea is of someone afflicted, poor, or lowly
  - b) These are people easily exploited or oppressed, and with very few resources
    - 1) Prov 22:22 - Do not crush the afflicted at the gate

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<sup>20</sup> עָנִי *hēn* - grace, favor, acceptance



- 2) Prov 30:14; 31:5 - Some prey at the afflicted
- 3) Prov 31:9 - The right thing to do is to defend the rights of the afflicted

4. (v.35) Contrast #4 - Wise v.s. Foolish

- a. Honor<sup>21</sup> the wise will inherit
- b. But fools will exalt/lift up dishonor
- c. This makes a fitting conclusion to this section

E. Just and ethical treatment is always connected to the character of God

1. Lev 19:2, 18

- a. Their character was to be a reflection of God's character
- b. "I am Yahweh"
  - 1) Yahweh is God's covenant name
  - 2) God revealed his character to Israel
  - 3) Goes back to Exodus 3:7, 14, 15 and 6:2-3
  - 4) God defends the widow and the afflicted

2. Dt 10:17-19

- a. Yahweh is a God of justice and love
- b. The people were to be a reflection of his justice and love in the way they treated others

3. Dt 24:10-22 - Note verses 18 and 22

- a. They were not to oppress or mistreat others
- b. They were to remember their own situation which God had delivered them from
- c. The implication is that they needed to treat others as God has treated them

4. Amos - The prophet of social injustice

- a. Amos 5:6-7 - Warning of judgment due to lack of justice
- b. Amos 5:10-13 - Description of the selfish injustices
- c. Amos 5:14-15 - Admonition, love good, establish justice
- d. Amos 6 - Prediction of what will happen if they don't change
  - 1) v.1 - Woe to those at ease, the distinguished men of the foremost<sup>22</sup> of the nations...

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<sup>21</sup> כְּבוֹד *kābôd* - Range of meaning: Honor, glory, abundance, wealth, splendor, heavy, weighty, important.



2) v.7 - They will go at the head of the exiles

5. Matt 22:37-40 - The greatest commands

- a. Jesus related love for God to love for our neighbor
- b. The entire law rests on these two commands
  - 1) Exo 20:1 ff - First 4 commands = love God
  - 2) Last 6 commands = love your neighbor
  - 3) After the Ten Commandments is an expansion of these commandments

6. Matt 5:43-48 - Treatment of our enemies

- a. We are to love our enemies
- b. How we treat our enemies is connected to the character of God
- c. God causes the sun to rise on the righteous and unrighteous
- d. Loving our enemies makes us "complete." We are to be "complete" as God is.

7. Example from Romans 1:17 - The "righteousness of God"

- a. This is the theological theme of Romans
- b. Paul does an exposition of the Righteousness of God
  - 1) 2:9-11 - God is righteous in that he does not show partiality
  - 2) 3:9 - Both Jews and Gentiles are under sin
  - 3) 4:16; 9:32; 10:11-12 - Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith in Christ
  - 4) 11:17-24 -
    - a) Branches broken off due to "un-faith" in Christ
    - b) Branches were grafted in due to "faith" in Christ
    - c) Do not be arrogant or conceited
    - d) v.22 - If you continue in his "kindness"
      - Interesting choice of words
      - Didn't say, if you continue in "faith"
      - Paul is beginning to transition to the next major section of Romans that deals with the application of the doctrine of the "righteousness of God."
  - 5) 12:3ff - Ethical instructions based on the righteousness of God
    - a) Don't be arrogant
    - b) Serve and build up each other
    - c) Honor each other

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<sup>22</sup> ראשית *rēšît* - "head, first, or chief." This is a reference to the rich, noble, "heads" or "upper crust" of the people. In context, they are there because they have oppressed the poor to their own advantage. In a touch of irony, the prophet uses this word again in verse seven. The ראשית *rēšît* head of peoples will be at the ראשית *rēšît* of the exiles. Their punishment will reflect their crime.



- d) Return good for evil
  - 7) 13:8, 10 - Love is the fulfillment of the law
  - 8) 14:1 - 15:7 - The application of Love
    - a) Do not insist on "my" rights and freedoms if it injures a brother
    - b) Bear the weaknesses of the weak
    - c) Since the "righteous" shows no partiality and accepts both the weak and strong, so should we.
8. 1 John 4:7-8
- a. We should love each other because God is Love
  - b. If we do not love, we do not know God
  - c. A lack of knowing God leads to a lack of Love
  - d. A warped view of God leads to a warped love, which is not love
  - e. 1 John 4:17-20 - Perfect Love
    - 1) John had been talking about God being love
    - 2) John had also been talking about how we should love
    - 3) He concludes by saying this is how we have perfect, or "completed" love.
    - 4) Perfect love is love received from God and returned to others
    - 5) This may be what Jesus had in mind in Matt 5:48 when he says we are to be perfect, or "complete" as God is complete.
9. I would recommend learning to think "theologically" if you do not already do so.
- a. Ethics are grounded in God's character.
  - b. Weak ethics might be a result of an inadequate, erroneous, or warped conception of God and his character

## F. Observations

1. The climax of chapter three deals with how we treat others
  - a. God always has a concern for people
  - b. God is a God of righteousness, justice, and mercy
2. We should be good, honest, fair, and righteous consistently
  - a. There is a connection with the ethical instructions at the end of this chapter and v.6 - In all your ways "know" him
  - b. The character of God and the knowledge of God are the foundation to Christian ethics
3. Contrasts sums up those who God favors and who God is opposed to:



- a. God gives favor and blesses the:
    - 1) Upright - Those who are people of integrity
    - 2) Righteous - Those who are just, fair, and good
    - 3) Afflicted - Those who are poor, lowly, and humble
    - 4) Wise
  - b. God is opposed to and curses the
    - 1) Devious - Hypocritical, uneven of character
    - 2) Wicked - Those who are evil
    - 3) Scoffers - Those who are arrogant and unteachable
    - 4) Foolish
4. You cannot be right with God, and wrong with others



### Discussion Questions for Proverbs 3

(v.1-10)

1. We usually think of Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding" in the context of grief. Does the context (v.6-7) of this chapter cause you to see this in a new way? If so, how?
2. How is trusting in the Lord with all your heart related to acknowledging (or knowing) God in all your ways and with honoring God?
3. What are some specific ways you can honor God?

(v.11-20)

4. Verse 14 uses financial or business language - "her profit..." What does the discipline of the Lord in verse 11 have to do with business practices?
5. Is it possible to become wealthy by ignoring the principles of godly wisdom we have been learning in this study? So why follow the principles of godly wisdom in business practices? How is the "profit" or "product" more precious than gold?
6. What does the images of creation - wisdom as a "tree of life," and - God "founded the earth by wisdom," communicate to you? What can you learn about your business practices or employment from this?
7. In what way can God through wisdom bring security and confidence to you? Compare the value of this to wealth.

(v.21-35)

8. Why is there so much emphasis on how you treat others at the conclusion of this chapter? How is treating others well a wise thing to do?
9. What do these instructions about how to treat others reveal about the character of God? How important is the character of God in ethics?
10. What connection would "in all your ways acknowledge/know Him." have with ethical instructions?
11. What can you do to know God better?