

Don't Do That!

(Proverbs 3)

8/16/17; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Just last month, a picture of Vice President Mike Pence made it rounds in the news..

He was visiting the Kennedy Space Center in Florida along with Florida Senator Marco Rubio...

As they were being given a tour of the facility, Pence and Rubio came upon a display of materials that are used to build objects that NASA sends into space...

And as NASA officials were offering an explanation of the display, some reporter snapped this picture...

It is a clear shot of Pence touching the materials with his hand right below a sign that reads "DO NOT TOUCH."

Well, the internet went crazy with all sorts of comments from serious and ugly to creative and funny...

In the aftermath of the picture, NASA released a statement that said there was no danger to the vice

president for touching and no damage to the materials either...

Pence even had so fun with the picture, saying that the only reason he touched it was because Rubio doubled dared him to do...

Though the action was harmless, it is a great illustration of how the wisest of people often ignore the simplest of warnings...

“DO NOT TOUCH” is clear and needs no further explanation, but even the most intelligent people have trouble obeying it...

Well, we come tonight to what may be called the “do not” chapter of Proverbs..

11 times in this chapter alone, we read the words “do not” followed by a command from the Lord...

Now, chapter 4 is going to have 9 occurrences of the phrase “do not,” and we are going to see the phrase in other parts of the Bible, but nowhere do we see it as frequently as we do in Proverbs 3..

Now, the setting for Proverbs 3 is again the instruction of a father to a son...

And as parents, we realize that much of parenting is helping our kids understand what not to do..

In fact, parents of toddlers say “do not” quite often...

I can remember times of taking John Andrew with us to visit someone else’s home and I found myself telling him “do not” more than I talked to the people we were visiting...

And though we want to be instructive and teach how “to do” certain things, we recognize that “do not” are a valuable part of instruction..

So, we are going to take a listen to a father continuing to teach his son in Proverbs 3 tonight, and we listen to the conversation, we also are going to be reminded of what “not to do” in life..

So, let’s begin this journey in verse 1 of Proverbs 3...

And though it is a hard chapter to outline, I have simply divided it into 3 sections...

I. What Not to Do, Part 1 (1-12)

II. What to Do (13-20)

III. What Not to Do, Part 2 (21-35)

So, let's begin our journey through Proverbs 3 is verses 1-2 with ...

I. What Not to Do, Part 1 (1-12)

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

It does not take long before the first “do not” appears in chapter 3...

As a father reminds his son to not forget his teaching...

And urges his to keep the commands of the Lord..

Followed by a principle of life...

Which is this..

Those who keep the Lord's commands generally experience long life and peace...

Now, we know like any proverb that there are exceptions to this principle.

Some very obedient Christians die young and some lives are filled with persecution and not peace...

Yet, the general rule is forgetting the Lord's teaching and disobeying his commands leads to shorter life and a lot of drama...

The instruction then moves to some specific actions that the son needs to take...

Verse 3...

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 [b]repute
In the sight of God and man.***

The second "do not" of chapter 3 is a warning to the son to stay kind and in the truth...

Your version may say mercy and truth...

But this is the idea of being a well balanced person in the world...

You are kind and merciful and compassionate to all, but you never compromise the truth...

The NT speaks of this balance as the book of Ephesians calls believers to “speak the truth in love...”

You see, godly wisdom calls for a balance of truth and love in our lives...

Now, here is why truth and love must be balanced...

Too much of either one and you can cause more harm than good...

Picture the Christian who always speaks the truth but never in love...

He is just a loud gong or a clanging cymbal...

No one listens to him due his abrasiveness...

But then on the other end, you have a person who is so kind and merciful and filled with love that they never speak the obvious truth...

For those people, their words are pleasant but they contain no help...

Believers are those who speak the truth in love...

We are committed to the truth but we aren't so arrogant that we can't speak to people in a loving and kind way...

That is the instruction to the son from the father...

Keep kindness and truth hung around your neck and never let either one leave your life...

And then there is a principle that follows that advice
...

You will find favor with God and man..

In general, people who are kind and speak truth have a good reputation with others and with the Lord...

Look, people appreciate those around them who speak the truth...

This applies to believers and unbelievers...

In the world, there is an appreciation of the truth whether people believe it or not..

And certainly, kind and merciful and loving people have good reputations...

So, the principle is this...

Be a speaker of truth and be kind and you will have a good standing with God and men...

From there, we come to one of the most well known verses in the book of Proverbs...

As the father continues to teach the son, he turns his instruction from the son's outward action to his inner being...

Verse 5..

5

***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.***

And the instruction here is a call of trust in the Lord, with the "do not" section coming in the second half of verse 5...

DO NOT lean on your own understanding...

In other words, the opposite of trust in the Lord is trust in your own understanding...

And there is where the battle lies in every human heart..

Will I trust the Lord or my own thinking?

Yet, the principle is clear...

Trust in the Lord and acknowledge Him by submitting to what he says and the Lord make your paths straight...

In other words, people who trust in the Lord find their going through life easier than those who trust their own wisdom...

Their paths will be straighter than the paths of those who refuse to trust in God...

From there, we move to verse 7 which begins with another "Do not"..

7

***Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.***

8

***It will be healing to your [c]body
And refreshment to your bones.***

Once again, the reader of Proverbs is called to step away from his own wisdom and fear the Lord...

And the fear of the Lord keeps us from sin and evil...

And what is the principle of staying away from evil?

Healing to the body and refreshment to the bones..

So many people fail to relate the connection between righteous living and a healthy body...

So many sins lead directly to health problems...

Uncontrolled sexual immorality leads to disease and even death...

Uncontrolled greed and gluttony lead to short and long term health problems..

Anger and impatience are also connected to poor health...

So it is safe to say that sin can lead to poor health...

Therefore the instruction to the son from the father is to rely on God's wisdom, avoid sin and thereby keep his body healthy...

Again, there are no guarantees here but clear principles of living by godly wisdom...

The instruction continues in verse 9....

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.***

Couple of thought here...

One, it is never too early to teach kids about the importance of giving to the Lord...

The father here is teaching his son to give to the Lord from his wealth..

And also notice that giving to the Lord is from the best of what we have...

The consequence of such generosity to the Lord is the God blesses the one who obeys...

Not only blesses by fills and overflows their life with goodness...

The barns will be full and the wine will overflow...

I know we Baptists dont like to think about overflowing wine, but I'm just preaching the Bible....

Verse 11...

11

***My son, do not reject the [d]discipline of the Lord
Or loathe His reproof,***

12

***For whom the Lord loves He reproveth,
Even as a father corrects the son in whom he
delights.***

The final “do not” of this first section is a prohibition of rejecting the Lord’s discipline and correction...

Look, the Christian life is a life in constant need of correction...

At times, the Lord disciplines us directly through the events of life, and sometimes his discipline comes through people he puts in our path...

Our response to that correction is a very good indicator of our view of God...

If we consistently resist his correction we prove over time that we aren’t His children..

That is why being teachable is great evidence of salvation...

Teachable people prove that they respect authority...

Rebellious people prove that they aren’t under anyone’s authority...

People who resist the Lord's correction resist His love because he corrects out of love for His people...

So, the principle is clear...

Be teachable and prove that you belong to the Lord...

From there, we move to verses 13-19 in a section of Proverbs chapters 3 where we take a break from all the "do nots" to listen to what to do...

II. What to Do (13-20)

I will read this whole section and then we will draw out a couple truths before moving to section 3..

Verse 13...

*13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.*

14

*For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.*

15

*She is more precious than [e]jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.*

16

*[f]Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.*

17

*Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.*

18

*She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.*

19

*The Lord by wisdom founded the earth,
By understanding He established the heavens.*

20

*By His knowledge the deeps were broken up
And the skies drip with dew.*

The teaching of the father to the son in verses 13-19 is simple....

Find wisdom, son...

In other words, the words of the father are meant to motivate the son to seek out and live by the wisdom of God...

And the benefits of gaining God's wisdom are then laid out...

First of all, he who finds wisdom and undemanding is a blessed man...

And just how is he blessed?

Verse 14 says he is blessed with riches...

The profit of wisdom is greater than the profit from finding and selling gold or silver...

Not only is wisdom profitable, wisdom is more rare than a precious jewel...

In other words, godly wisdom will set you apart as a diamond in a pile of coal..

Then verse 16, reminds us that wisdom generally leads to a long life filled with honor...

Verses 17-18 remind us of a couple things we saw in chapter 2...

Wisdom leads to a pleasant and happy life...

Generally speaking, wisdom is soothing and settling to the body and brings joy to the soul...

And then we are reminded that wisdom and understanding are not just unimportant things, but they were the very things that the Lord used to create the heavens and the earth..

Look at verses 19-20, which tell us that God's wisdom was the instrument used in the creation of the heavens and the earth...

And then we are given an example of God's wisdom in creation that it constantly at work...

Verse 20 says that God's wisdom can be seen in the water cycle...

The breaking up of the deeps is an expression that describes the evaporation of water from the earth's surface mainly evaporation over the oceans of the world...

This evaporation rises to form clouds which then drop water from heaven onto the earth in the form of rain...

Or evaporation also lead to condemnation where water is collected out of the sky as surfaces cool at night and we wake up to dew on the ground...

Either way, God's wisdom created a water cycle that is necessary for life to exist and prevents water levels from rising to high in the oceans...

The book of Job talks about God establishing a water cycle...

But we also see it explained here in Proverbs as an example of the wisdom of God...

And the point is clear...

God's wisdom made the world, and if a person wants to know how to live best in this world, he needs to find and search for the wisdom that God offers..

We now must move to the final section of Proverbs 3, which I call...

III. What Not to Do, Part 3 (21-35)

So, there has been a call to wisdom and a picture of the blessings of wisdom, and now we move to a section where the father encourages the son to stay and live in wisdom...

Verse 21...

21

***My son, let them not [g]vanish from your sight;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion,***

22

***So they will be life to your soul
And adornment to your neck.***

23

***Then you will walk in your way securely
And your foot will not stumble.***

24

***When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.***

25

***Do not be afraid of sudden fear
Nor of the [h]onslaught of the wicked when it
comes;***

26

***For the Lord will be [i]your confidence
And will keep your foot from being caught.***

We return to our list of what not to do by hearing the father want his son to not let wisdom vanish from his sight...

And look, this is easy to do...

It is easy to ignore the wisdom of God at times..

In times of great stress and anxiety, the greatest temptation is to turn to our understanding of the world and rely on our wisdom...

To let God's wisdom vanish before our eyes...

So the command here is "do not let Godly wisdom leave your life.."

In other words keep it around and live in it...

And then we are reminded of more benefits of this kind of living...

Verse 22..

Wisdom is life to the soul...

Verse 23...

Wisdom is a source of security in an unstable world...

Do you know how many people live everyday in fear?

Fear of strangers...

Fear of worldwide war..

Fear of terrorist attack...

Fear of getting sick..

Fear of going broke...

Everybody wants security but it is impossible to find in an insecure world...

However, wisdom helps us live securely..

Helps us walk so as not to stumble...

You can even sleep well, according to verse 24....

There is nothing like a good night's sleep...

Seeking and finding and living and staying in God's wisdom leads to a good night's sleep...

Verse 25 says that wisdom removes our fear of the sudden attack of criminals and evil people...

Again, this is no guarantee but in general godly wisdom keeps you from suffering from anxiety and walking in fear....

And the reason for that is found in verse 26..

Godly wisdom leads you to confidence in the Lord...

In other words, you are able to accept what happens to you as being from God...

You are confident that HE can protect you and you are confident that he will care for you even if evil comes your way...

There is no substitute for a confidence in the Lord...

Proverbs 3 then ends with a final set of instruction of how wisdom influences our interaction with others...

Verse 27...

27

Do not withhold good from [j]those to whom it is due,

When it is in your power to do it.

28

Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back,

***And tomorrow I will give it,”
When you have it with you***

So often we put off helping others in hopes that they will forget and move on to someone else...

This proverb would say if you are able to help someone in their time of need, act now...

Even a little help is of more value when it is needed than a lot of help after the time has passed...

If an opportunity to help someone comes your way and you are able to meet the need immediately, then do it...

Putting it off often comes from not wanting to share or be inconvenienced rather than a real need to delay...

Godly wisdom says help now if you are able...

Verse 29....

29

***Do not devise harm against your neighbor,
While he lives securely beside you.***

Most disputes in the world occur between neighbors...

And that is true even with believers and their neighbors...

How sad when we can't get along with people who are unsaved...

How horrible is our witness to the lost by fighting with them...

Verse 29 says that planning evil against a neighbor is prohibited by godly wisdom...

Paul even said in the NT that he would rather suffer wrong and end a dispute than sue someone else and lose his witness to the lost...

Verse 30 and 31 continue instruction on how to treat others...

30

***Do not contend with a man without cause,
If he has done you no harm.***

31

***Do not envy a man of violence
And do not choose any of his ways.***

Once again, disputes and quarrels with others are of no benefit to the believer..

Godly wisdom says avoid those things...

WE are also told to resist begin jealous of a man of violence...

Now why would we envy a violent man?

Probably because he has power and riches...

Yet, wisdom tells us to stay far way from such men...

And the close of instruction in Proverbs 3 is a contrast of the unwise man and the wise man...

Like we saw in Proverbs 2, God gives us the end view of those who reject wisdom and those who find wisdom...

Verse 32...

32

***For the devious are an abomination to the Lord;
But [k]He is intimate with the upright.***

To put this in the simplest terms...

The Lord rejects the unwise but embraces the wise...

Verse 33..

33

***The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked,
But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.***

The Lord curse the house of the unwise and blesses the house of the wise...

Verse 34...

34

***Though He scoffs at the scoffers,
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.***

The Lord shows no mercy to the unwise but gives grace to the wise...

And finally, verse 35..

35

***The wise will inherit honor,
But fools [!display dishonor.***

The wise will be honored and the unwise dishonored...

Now clearly, none of the blessings are guaranteed in this world...

Many times unwise fools prosper in the world, but the Lord has the final say...

And the reward of the path of wisdom is not always seen in this world but it will be seen in the world to come...

Conclusion

What are some nuggets we can take with us tonight from Proverbs 3?

First, *wisdom has practical benefits...*

Think of all the things mentioned here that people desire in life...

Long, happy life....

Long, healthy life...

Long, safe life...

Happiness, health and safety are byproducts and promises of seeking godly wisdom...

This isn't poetry in Proverbs 3 that is meant to sound good...

These are principle benefits of seeking godly wisdom...

It has practical, real world benefits to those who seek after it and find it...

Second and lastly, *wisdom has personal benefits*...

Godly wisdom can help you be a more likable person...

That is the principle of Proverbs 3:4...

Living in godly wisdom leads you to a place of favor in the eyes of people in the world...

And godly also helps you avoid strife with people in the world...

Some people think that trouble with others seeks them out...

I often remind that if they constantly have drama with a number of people...

It may not be the people, it may be them...

Wisdom helps with that...

Because wisdom makes you kind and truthful and keeps you away from silly disputes...

And that is really the kind of people I hope we all want to be...

Think of Jesus' life...

Trouble on all sides of him and yet he constantly loved His Father and His neighbor while always speaking truth...

That is wise living looks like, and that is the life we should seek to imitate...

Let us pray...