

Jul 6, 2019

Proverbs 3:1-12

Everyday Wisdom:
A Wise Future

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

Last week we celebrated our **high-school graduates** Caleb, George, and Mackenna. When I surprised them by asking for one thing we could pray for them George asked for prayer that it would all “**end well.**” Now we weren’t exactly sure what that meant—the end of **college**, the end of **life**? But I think he meant successfully wrap up the end of **this stage** of his life and **smoothly transition** into the **next stage**, college.

I remember one of the things I **worried** about a lot when I was a high school graduate was **my future**. What was I supposed to do? What should I get a **degree** in? What did God **want me to do**? And those of us who are **future-oriented people** probably worry about similar things like this. What job does God want me to do? Where does he want our family to live? Or maybe how will I pay the bills or where will I go to school?

Today in Proverbs God doesn’t tell us what is going to happen in the **detail we might like** but he does say that if we **trust and obey him with today he will take care of the rest**. **A wise future is not a worried future** but something **completely different**.

I want to give you my **big idea** up front. Here it is. *Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest.* As we walk through this life God gives us the **gift of confidence** in him—that if we seek him and his ways he will make it worth it. The first verse of **Proverbs 3** introduces us to this **future-hope**.

1 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
2 for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.

If we seek to **understand** and **obey** God’s teachings and commands found in the Bible one of the benefits God **may grant** us is a **long, peaceful, and prosperous** life. But this is different than the **prosperity gospel**, which promises that you **will** get what you want if you just have **enough faith**. This is saying that as we **treat others well** and live the way God intends **natural blessings** will result. But Proverbs are **not so much promises for this life** as they are **principles for this life** and **promises for the life to come**. A life lived God’s way **will generally result in long-life, peace, and prosperity** in this life and will **most certainly result in long-life, peace, and prosperity** in the **life to come** with Christ Jesus. While the **short-term benefits** of Proverbs aren’t **guarantees** the **long-term benefits** are. *Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest.*

Verses 1-2 act as an **introduction** to **verses 3-12**, which includes **five-admonitions** (speaking with authority) that all fall **under** this **umbrella concept** of “**How to submit your whole life to God:**” **First**, if you want God to take care of your **future**...

Submit your heart. (v3-4)

3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man. (NIV)

What type of love and faithfulness are we to have? As these verses come **right after verses 1-2** I think it's first talking about a **love for God and his Word**. We find this same thing in a famous passage our verses in Proverbs are **echoing, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema** (which is Hebrew for "hear"), which goes like this:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (NIV)

The **Shema ties** loving God with **loving and knowing God's** words. You can't love someone **without listening** to them. We talked about ways we can **receive God's Word** last week—by **believing** it, **memorizing** it, **accepting** it. *So submit your heart to God by loving his word. Simple, right?*

When I talk to most people I find we want to love God's Word but find it **kind of boring**. The Bible is **super long** and can be **hard to read**. And if that's what it **means, at least partially**, to submit your heart to God, then that can be **frustratingly difficult**. Most of us **don't immediately love the Bible** when we **pick it up**.

I want to share a **personal story** with you that you **might immediately judge me for** but I think some parents will be able to relate to. When **Elijah was born** and I picked him up and I held him for the first time... **I did not feel an overwhelming sense of love**. I know some people's story is that the moment they picked up their newborn baby child for the first time they felt their **hearts melt**, but that **wasn't my story**. I was **grateful** he was **here** and that he was **healthy** and I **loved him in theory**, but I wasn't crying or overwhelmed by emotions. It took me about **3-4 months to really warm up** and begin to **develop** that **feeling of love** for him. And now I'm **just a mess** for him. I **love him so much**.

My point is that for many of us it **takes time to develop love**. Mark recently told me "love" is spelled "t-i-m-e... time." If you want to love to God, if you want to submit your heart to him, **spend time with him**. Spend time in the **Word**. If you have trouble doing it **alone**, then study God's Word with a **friend** or in a **group**. Maybe you won't love it at first but the longer you spend with God's words the more you will **begin to develop** that feeling of love over time.

What's the **reward**? The **benefit**? **God** will be **pleased** and **others** will (**Lord willing**) see a **life well-lived** and **give you their favor**. They'll respect you and treat you fairly as you treat them with respect and fairness. **How do we submit our whole-lives to God? It starts with submitting our hearts.** Second...

Submit your will. (v5-6)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)

This is our **next foundation verse** because so many people have found it to be an encouragement. What does it mean to not lean on your own understanding? We're **not to separate our will** from **God's desired will** as expressed in the Scriptures. So if God says to **live a certain way** (even if we find it **hard to understand** or **difficult to do**) we **must submit** our will to his will. This **all comes down to trust**. Do we trust God, who **made us** and **created us** and **knows how we work**, or do we trust **ourselves**?

Remember in my second sermon in Proverbs how I talked about the two paths? God gives each of us the opportunity to walk down **path #1** “the way of the foolish” or **path #2** “the way of the wise.” **Sometimes we think** this means God is going to tell us our **exact path**, like he’s going to **map out our lives** for us. That doesn’t seem to be how God works or what the Bible says. God **rarely tells us what to do** but he **always tells us how to do it**. Let me **repeat** that. God rarely tells us what to do but he always tells us how to do it—that’s what it means to walk in **the way of wisdom**.

- God rarely tells us **what job we are supposed to take** but he always tells us to **do a good job** that is **ethical, fair, and just**.

Proverbs 22:29

Do you see someone skilled in their work?
They will serve before kings;
they will not serve before officials of low rank. (NIV)

- God rarely tells us **where to live** but he always tells us to **treat our neighbors well**.

Proverbs 3:29

Do not plot harm against your neighbor,
who lives trustfully near you. (NIV)

- God rarely tells us **who we are supposed to marry** but the **kind of person** we should marry.

Proverbs 12:4

A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown,
but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones. (NIV)

It’s as we do these things that God will take care of our **futures**. It’s as we walk **down the path of wisdom** that we can be confident that it will **end well**. *First, submit your heart and second, submit your will.*

Before we move onto the **third way to submit your whole life to God** I want to play a **brief minute** and a **half video** of **one businessman** describing his **love for God’s Word in Proverbs** and how he learns to **trust God’s ways** in them ([play video](#)). *Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest. First, submit your heart, second, submit your will. Third...*

Submit your perspective. (v7-8)

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.
8 This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones. (NIV)

Proverbs isn’t like our **modern-day self-help books** that tell us **how great we are** and **how we can do it**. It does just the **opposite**. It tells us not to think of ourselves **too highly** but to think of **God highly**. There’s a **parallel** here between being “wise in your own eyes” and “shun[ing] evil.” To be wise in your own eyes—to think you have it all figured out—is **evil**. To be wise in your own eyes is **really really bad** in the book of Proverbs. It’s **worse** than being a **fool**.

Proverbs 26:12

Do you see a person wise in their own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for them. (NIV)

I was sitting outside the **library** in **Falmouth** this week and I looked over at a tree that had **red leaves** and it was one of the **most beautiful trees** I'd ever seen. Its leaves were a **vivid red**, it was **full**, it was **lush**. But then I **wondered** if I was seeing it right because I was wearing **sunglasses**. I took them **off** and the tree became a **dull dry red**. My **lenses** were **distorting reality**—making it **look better than it actually was**. I put my sunglasses **back on** and it became vivid-red again. Have you ever heard the expression “**rose-colored glasses**”? Sometimes we see things for **better than what they are**. Proverbs **warns us** that this is nowhere more true than when we are looking in the **mirror**. We don't see ourselves for who we are but for **who we want to be**. We **all** think our **reasons** and **motivations** and **actions** are better than they actually are.

But there is a way we can **change our perspective**. We need **brothers** and **sisters** in **Christ** who **love us enough to tell us what we really look like**. It's as God uses them to **change our point of view (POV)** that we can **walk** down the **path** of wisdom. It's actually as God is **changing** our perspective that we can see how he has **taken care of our past** and have **faith** he will **take care of our future**. *Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest. First, submit your heart, second, submit your will, third, submit your perspective.* Fourth...

Submit your money. (v9-10)

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;
10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine. (NIV)

Proverbs is **brilliant**. Maybe you think it's going off on a **tangent** but the **author Solomon knows exactly what he's doing**. When we **start to worry about the future** what's one of the first things we do, we **close up our wallets** and our **generosity dries up**. We **cling** to our **money**.

Proverbs 11:24

One person gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

If we **trust** God will provide for all our **needs**, even **in want** we can still find ways to be **generous** and give to the Lord and others. We can give **confidently** and **joyfully** that he will take care of us. *Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest. First, submit your heart, second, submit your will, third, submit your perspective, fourth, submit your money.* Fifth...

Submit your sin. (v11-12)

11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
12 because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in. (NIV)

Come to God's Word and receive your Heavenly Father's **loving correction**. We have a Heavenly Father who loves us so much he is willing to **correct us**. Here's the **Gospel connection**. He loves us so much he was willing to **discipline** his **one and only Son** in **whom** he **delighted** so that you and I can be forgiven. The Father allowed his **perfect Son**, a Son who had done no wrong, a Son who **always submitted** to his Father's will, to be **punished** as a **guilty sinner** so that you and I can be **counted as righteous**. It's like the Father sees us through **rose-colored glasses** because of the **blood** of Jesus. His life was **cut short** so that you and I can experience an **eternally long, completely peaceful, and unimaginably prosperous** life to come.

At the end of the day it's **impossible** to **perfectly submit** your **heart** and **will** and **perspective** and **money** and **sin** to the Lord. If you walk out of here and try to do it in your own strength you'll become **disenfranchised** that Christianity doesn't work. It's impossible to perfectly submit to God. But **Jesus did**. And by doing so **he won us** eternal life. And now, **empowered** and lead by the **Holy Spirit**, you and I can **begin to submit** our **hearts** and **wills** and **perspectives** and **money** and **sin** to the Lord and one day when we're welcomed into eternity God will **finish** the job he started—making us perfect like Christ.¹

Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest.

Don't worry about the future. God will take care of it. Focus today on walking down that **path** of wisdom and God will lead you where he wants you. ***Submit your heart, your will, your perspective, your money, and your sin. Submit your whole life to God and he will take care of the rest.***

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon, which includes endnotes and references. Read [our story here](#).

Jul 6, 2019

¹ Jesus too says, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt 6:33)
(NIV)