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Blessings from Instruction Proverbs 3:1-12

Keywords: Parenting, Fatherhood, Proverbs, Wisdom, Proverbs 3:1-2; Child-Rearing

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

1. Introduction.

- a. The responsibility of a father is a heavy one. To one who desires to do it correctly and in a God-honoring manner it requires much diligence and prayer.
- b. There comes a point in time when each father must see a child grow up and move off into life. At this time the father often tries to give some words of wisdom.
- c. Illustration of my father's letter to me before I left for Houston.
- d. So too, Solomon is writing to his son, seeking to instill convictions that will carry him throughout life.
- e. Read Proverbs 3:1-12

Propositional Statement

We will see in these verses six blessings as a result of obedience to specific admonitions. Solomon, commanding his son, shows how six blessings, extending into every part of one's life can be secured

2. Background Material.

- a. The book of Proverbs are full of "truisms." If not understood then the book is mistreated by those who read it.
- b. These verses are a continuation of Solomon's instruction to his son in the prior chapter.
- c. Flow of the text:

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- i. In verses 1-2 and 11-12 we find the style used by Solomon as "reasons." They function also like bookends to the section.
- ii. In verses 3-10 we find the style used as "if-then" conditional.
- iii. With the exception of verses 9-10 all of the points being made involve a negative and a positive command.
- iv. Notice how the conditional aspects of his instruction are bracketed by simple declarations of fact.
- v. Notice also how he starts with the human father and his instruction and ends with God the Father and His instruction and discipline.

3. (Blessing #1) Obedience brings earthly happiness (1-2).

- a. He commands him not to forget the teachings he has heard and to keep the commandments.
 - i. Probably referring to the lifelong instruction he has received to this point.
 - ii. The subsequent verses embrace the essence of what he has taught his son.
- b. Notice in verse two how these teachings are undergirded by life experience. Experience that has shown that to follow these directives will result in a good life.

Application

This is a great reminder to all of us who are responsible to train up children. We must ask ourselves if we are living out and teaching wisdom to them. When they leave home will they have a reservoir of wisdom to draw from?

Fathers do you understand this? Your task with your children, first and foremost, is to instruct them in life and worship. Mothers, your tongue is to drip with wisdom from the Word toward your children. We are not called to be our children's friend; rather we are called to be their primary teacher in the things that truly matter.

4. (Blessing #2) Gracious living brings a good reputation with God and man (3-4).

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- a. In his second point he is telling his son what underlying attitudes must be present within his life and actions.
- b. Notice in verse three: "Do not leave . . .," the sense here is one of forsaking, becoming destitute, or failing.
 - i. Kindness is the word hesed. The idea is steadfast love, lovingkindness, and when referring to God and Israel involves a covenant-keeping love.
 - ii. Truth takes the idea of not the validity of facts but rather faithfulness, trueness.
 - iii. These two words together are used to describe a proper and fitting relationships of man to man and also God to man.
- c. Along with this prohibition he also commands them to "write and bind" these two character qualities on their heart and wear them before man.
 - i. The idea of writing on their heart is due to the understanding that "heart" refers to the seat of a man's will, intellect, and emotions. Solomon wants these traits to be inscribed on the heart as the Law was inscribed on stone.
 - ii. The binding around the neck was to display these traits. They were to be as an ornament to be displayed humbly before God and man.
- d. Notice now in verse four how a life embodying these two character qualities will bring forth a high reputation before both man and God.

Application

How do you rate with regard to these qualities? When people who know you describe you what are the adjectives used?

But what a wonderful epitaph on your gravestone it would be if it was to say, "Here is the earthly tent of a man who showed kindness and faithfulness to all. While here on earth he found favor with man, now, in heaven, he finds eternal favor with God."

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Are your words kind? Are you faithful with your word and life? If so rich blessing awaits you.

As you look backward on your child-rearing a good question to ask is whether your children, now as adults, are ones who love and model these qualities. It matters not if they are a ditch digger or a CEO. Have they kept grace and truth near to them? Do they walk in them? And is it because they saw you model it before them for 18+ years?

5. (Blessing #3) Trusting in God brings His hand upon our lives (5-6).

- a. This third blessing is well known to most believers. These two verses have been memorized by many.
- b. Notice in verse five how again Solomon drives home his point by using a negative and a positive command.
- c. He says to "trust" God. This word involves a feeling of security in something, a sense of complete confidence. An illustration would be a soldier's trust in a rope for rappelling. This trust is to be total.
 - i. The source of the trust is to be God alone.
 - ii. He also commands the son to acknowledge God in every way.
 - (1) This is similar to James 4:13-17.
 - (2) Or in another way Luke 12:15-31.
- d. Solomon flatly states that he is not to lean on his own understanding.
 - i. This is so natural to man. Our sin causes us to foolishly place our trust in our wisdom.
 - ii. Jeremiah 17:5-8 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when

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heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

- e. The promise is a logical one. God will make straight the paths.
 - i. This is a wonderful word picture. The idea is not one of guidance. The picture is of God taking a path, usually winding, full of holes and obstacles and making it straight and smooth.
 - ii. Isaiah 40:3-4 "A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain."

Application

What is the condition of your path? As you look forward do you see obstacles and problems?

Are you permeated with the consciousness of God everywhere you go?

What is the method that you are using to remove those obstacles? Are you trusting in that weak arm of man or the mighty arm of our Almighty God?

Make the time now parents to talk with your children as they grow about how to rightly interpret everything that is around them. Make it God-centered. Move their thoughts from small, trivial thoughts to grand ones. Show them how in all things you and your spouse does it is because you are in the drama of God, displaying His victory.

6. (Blessing #4) Simple godliness brings physical blessing (7-8).

- a. Solomon now warns against self-confidence in our wisdom. This is closely linked to the preceding verse for obvious reasons.
- b. He tells his son not to be puffed up in his own wisdom, and most certainly not to judge for himself how "wise" he truly is. This so perfectly fits with the attitude of a young man but is certainly applicable to us all.
 - i. Albert Barnes said that "the great hindrance to all true wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it."

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- ii. Another man said, "Wisdom is to trust in God; to trust in yourself and in your own wisdom is unwisdom."
- iii. God, through Job, said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."
- c. Notice in verse seven that the positive command is in two parts, with regard to the will the command is to "fear God," and with regard to the lifestyle the command is to "turn away from evil."
- d. In Ecclesiastes Solomon said it this way, "Fear God, and keep His commandments."
- e. What will happen to us if we obey these commands? (8)
- f. The body will be strengthened.
 - i. The word body literally means "navel, or umbilical cord." Just as in Judges 5:30 the "mouth" refers to the whole person, and in Titus 1:12 gluttons are referred to as "slow bellies;" so too, the navel was representative of the whole man.
 - ii. The bones being refreshed referred to the marrow itself becoming soft and invigorated. The idea is similar to that of an old man, whose bones have become hard and brittle, becoming young again; no more arthritis, no more aches, instead, strength and vitality course through the system.
- g. It is implied here in these two verses that physical health is tied to our spiritual condition.
 - i. Paul agreed when he mentioned to the Corinthians that the reason for some of them dying or becoming ill was due to unconfessed sin.
 - ii. David, describes the effects of his sin in Psalm 32:3-4 "When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."

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Application

What about you? Are you so lost in admiring your own wisdom that you have no fear of God anymore? Have you made friends with sin and have the heavy hand of God upon you?

Even though this passage is written in the context of the Old Covenant there is still the reality of a connection between obedience and sickness in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 11 and the Lord's Supper.

7. **(Blessing #5) Honoring God with your wealth brings increase (9-10).**
- a. This next point is simple and straightforward.
 - b. Notice, however, what Solomon says in verse nine about what occurs when you give of your wealth.
 - i. You honor God.
 - ii. Why?
 - (1) Because Deuteronomy 18:8 says that it is God who grants a person to gain wealth.
 - (2) Because in doing so you are actually creating an eternal inheritance for yourself — Matthew 6:19-34.
 - c. What is the result of this? God's greater blessing upon the giver. All He is asking from any of us is that we honor him by giving Him a portion back of what He first gave us.

Application

Are you honoring the Lord with your wealth. Is the firstfruits of your labor going to the Lord? Are you modeling to your children that your true hope is not found in the treasures of this age but in the next?

8. **(Blessing #6) Submitting to God's discipline brings security in your position (11-12).**
- a. Notice how at the end here he starts out the same way as he did in verse one, "my son."
 - b. Just as the son was not to forget his father's instructions, so too, he is not to reject God's discipline.

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- i. This is a fitting ending for a section which is intended to convey valuable life lessons to live by.
 - ii. He tells his son not to "reject or loathe" God's instruction. The concept of rejecting here is one of belittling or spurning.
 - iii. "Loathing" is a very strong word, it means to despise, or to have a deep-seated aversion to something.
 - iv. In this context the aversion is towards God's sovereign plans for one's life.
- c. Solomon points out that intrinsic to this discipline is the motivation of fatherly love.
- i. The idea is that God's corrections are essentially nothing but revelations of His educating love and fatherly faithfulness.
 - ii. As the writer of Hebrews so aptly explains it, (Heb 12:5-11) "And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? -- "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."
 - iii. How quickly we forget that it is because God delights in us that he disciplines us. He is deeply concerned and interested in our lives, He desires the best for us, and truly He knows our propensity towards sin.

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9. Conclusion.

- a. Reiterate what has been learned.
 - i. (Blessing #1) Obedience brings earthly happiness.
 - ii. (Blessing #2) Gracious living brings a good reputation with God and man.
 - iii. (Blessing #3) Trusting in God brings His hand upon our lives.
 - iv. (Blessing #4) Simple godliness brings physical blessing.
 - v. (Blessing #5) Honoring God with your wealth brings increase.
 - vi. (Blessing #6) Submitting to God's discipline brings security in your position.
- b. Our Father in heaven has not left us to figure things out on our own.
 - i. He has shown us what He delights in. To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly before Him.
 - ii. He has given us the ability and freedom to do this through the provision of Jesus Christ who has freed us from the power of sin.
 - iii. He has given us the power to do this by granting to His children the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us to walk in His commandments.
- c. If I were to sum up the primary task of the parent in light of our passage today it would be to be diligent in instructing our children in the ways of God.
 - i. This means that the gospel, then, is to flow through everything, informing us on the reason why we even seek to honor God.
 - ii. And it means that we must learn to have such a kind of theology that we reflect our devotion to our Creator and Father in all things.
 - iii. James said it this way, "Prove yourselves to be doers of the Word, not merely hearers only." You could just as easily change that to say, "Prove yourselves to be followers of Jesus, not merely watchers only."

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Community Group Questions

- Which of the points stood out most to you as you listened? Why?
- What are the challenges you face in being a person who can instruct well the ways of God? (This is not merely for parents, but all) How does the Church play into this responsibility?