

# A Father's Counsel

by Warren Wiersbe

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of learning God's word, obeying God's will, using God's wealth, and heeding God's warning to live a successful and fulfilling life.*

**Duration:** 38:14

**Scripture:** Proverbs 2:1-5, Proverbs 2:8, Proverbs 3:1-12, Proverbs 4:18

**Topics:** "Counsel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Proverbs chapter 3 and emphasizes the importance of following God's counsel. He highlights five admonitions given by God in this chapter. The first admonition is to learn God's Word, emphasizing the importance of studying and understanding the Bible. The second admonition is to obey God's will, acknowledging Him in all aspects of life. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's guidance and not leaning on our own understanding. Lastly, he encourages listeners to fear the Lord and depart from evil, emphasizing the blessings and protection that come from following God's counsel.

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## Transcript

Reading the Word of God from Proverbs chapter 3, where a father speaks to his son. My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments. For length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, bind them about thine neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find grace and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones.

Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction.

For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than

the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone that retaineth her. Wise counsel from a father to his son. A famous man once said that older people love to give good advice because it saves them the trouble of being a good example.

And I suppose all of us in our quote-unquote younger days did not appreciate it when dad or mother said, now look, I want to have a little talk with you. And for many of us, dad and mother are no longer here to have a little talk with us. And whether we appreciate it or not, they made a lasting investment in our lives.

Suppose that you had 10 minutes in which to give to your son or your daughter or your niece or your nephew the kind of counsel that that child would need for the rest of his life. What would you say? What would you say? Ever thought about that? Let's trust that it won't happen, but suppose you are in some kind of an accident and you're rushed to the hospital and your family gathers around you and the doctor says you have just 10 minutes to live. What would you say? Better say something important.

It's the last chance you have. Well, we don't know how much time we have in which to share our counsel and God's counsel with those we love. And so perhaps it's good that we're looking here at Proverbs chapter 3 to discover how one father counseled his son.

21 times in the book of Proverbs you find my son, my son, my son, my son, hear the instruction of your father. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thee not. My son, walk not in the way with sinners.

My son, forget not my law. Over and over again, 21 times, my son, my son. And rather than hearing a human voice talking to a boy, let's listen to God's voice.

If you're a Christian, you belong to God's family. You're his son, his daughter. And in verses 1 through 18 of Proverbs chapter 3, the father shares with us his counsel.

And if we follow this counsel, he's going to bless. If we follow this counsel, he's going to keep his promises. If we follow his counsel, we're going to make a success out of life.

There's no reason in all the world why anyone has to make a mess out of life. There's no reason in all the world why we should take what God has given us and waste it, ruin it, wreck it. When Almighty God gives to us this kind of counsel that we have in Proverbs chapter 3, he gives to us five admonitions.

And these admonitions are worth obeying. In verses 1 through 4, he says, learn God's word. Verses 5 through 8, obey God's will.

Verses 9 and 10, he admonishes us to use God's wealth. Verses 11 and 12, heed God's warning. And verses 13 through 18, seek God's wisdom.

Now let's take these admonitions individually and trust the Spirit of God to speak to our hearts. If you're here today without Jesus Christ, you'll want to open your heart and trust him. If you are one of God's children, you'll want to, I'm sure, yield to his word and let God have his way.

The first admonition, verses 1 through 4, learn God's word. My son, forget not my teaching, but let thine heart keep my commandments. For length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God in man. Learn God's word.

Now what is God's word? God's word is God's law and God's commandment. This universe runs by God's law. There isn't a computer in Chicago that would work if God had not built laws into this universe.

When visitors come to Chicago, they find their way down to the Museum of Science and Industry, a very attractive, interesting place where you go around pushing buttons, watching things work. None of those things would work if God didn't have laws built into this universe. All that a scientist does is think God's thoughts after him, whether he knows it or not, and discover the laws that God's built into the universe and then cooperate with them.

Now, if we cooperate with the laws of God in the universe, there is power and there's progress. If we fight against the laws of God in this universe, there is weakness and there's defeat. You fight against the laws of nature, they'll kill you.

You fight against the laws of health, they will kill you. You walk into a laboratory and fight against the laws that God has built into the elements, you'll blow the thing up. Now, the word of God is the law of God, and in this law, he has laid down certain principles.

And if we cooperate with these principles, God cooperates with us. All of the universe cooperates with us. If we fight against these principles, we are fighting against the very universe that God has built, and we're fighting against the will of God.

It seems to me that the most important thing any of us can do is to learn God's word. Now, he's telling us here not simply to get it into our minds. He does say that, forget not my law, remember my law, get it into your mind.

He twice says, get it into your heart. God wrote the original Ten Commandments on stones. God's not doing that today.

2 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul says that the Holy Spirit of God is taking the word of God and writing it on human hearts. When you were saved, God took your heart and cleansed your heart and began to write his word upon your heart. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

Campbell Morgan used to say, that's the best book, thy word, in the best place, my heart, for the best purpose, that I might not sin against thee. He's talking here not simply about a student who studies the word intellectually, outlines it, and analyzes it, penetrates it. He's also talking about the devoted child of God who takes this word and writes it on the heart.

What is in the heart is what controls the life. He even goes so far as to say that the word of God should control your neck. Bind them about thy neck.

Now, the Jews took this literally and they made little boxes with the scriptures in it and they put it on their forehead, put it around their neck, put it around their arm, but he's not talking about that. He's saying, let the word of God that's in your heart control your neck and you won't look in the wrong direction. Samson

did not let the word of God control his neck and consequently he could not control his eyes and consequently he could not control his life.

Let thine eyelids look right on. It's a good thing spiritually to have a stiff neck and let the word of God control us. Learn God's word.

Now, what's the consequence of this? Length of days, long life, and peace shall they add to thee. I visited the grave of one of the most godly men who ever lived, Robert Murray McShane, stepped into his pulpit in Glasgow to preach. It was as though he stepped out of the very presence of God.

He died at the age of 29. And someone says, well, he must not have been a very good Christian because the promise is length of days and long life. David Brainerd, coughing up blood from tubercular lungs, ministering to the Indians, died at the age of 30.

To the Old Testament Jew, God's blessing was material. If you'll obey my law, your flocks and your herds will multiply, your wife will have a lot of children, your crops will always be the best, the rain will always come, the enemy will be defeated, and you'll live a long life. All of us know wicked people who have lived long lives.

I suppose just about every family may have a relative, shirt-tail relative or otherwise, who has lived like a demon all of his life, but he's lived a long life. Our Lord is not talking here about length of days calendar-wise. There are godly people who have died young, there are wicked people who have died old.

Now generally speaking, if we learn God's word and obey God's will, it will spare us the many things that shorten your life. Even Paul says godliness is profitable both for this life and the life which is to come. He's talking here about the kind of life that we live, not quantity but quality.

What he's saying is if you learn the word of God, get it into your mind and remember it, get it into your heart, let it control your will, let the word of God fill you. What he's saying is life will be meaningful and life will be full and life will be accomplishing things. Robert Murray McShane is ministering today to more people than he ministered to when he was pastoring.

His sermons and his books, with that touch of holy living upon them, are blessing many, many people. Learn God's word. My friend, do you know more about the word of God today than you knew last week? Now I know we've learned more about other things, but do we take time to get into this book and discover the laws and the principles of God? You say I'm too busy, then you are too busy.

The first essential for successful living, learn God's word. Every once in a while some saint approaches me and says, now I don't know much about the Bible, and quite frankly nobody knows much about the Bible. I've been studying the Bible for over 30 years and still there's so much.

The more I study the dumber I feel, but I'm glad for what I know. Mark Twain used to say it's not what I don't understand about the Bible that bothers me, it's what I do understand. That's a good point.

Learn God's word. And those of you who have been too busy to spend time in this book, you confess your sin to the Lord and get back to the Bible. Now he follows this in verses 5 through 8 with a second admonition, obey God's will.

Where do you find God's will? In God's word. When you find God's will in God's word, obey it. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.

That doesn't mean you don't use your brains. When he says lean not unto thine own understanding, he doesn't mean we shouldn't examine the situation, get all the facts we can get, weigh the situation, think it through. What he means is don't depend upon that.

You see down in verse 7, be not wise in thine own eyes. We must realize how difficult it is sometimes to discern the will of God. He says use your mind, learn everything you can, but don't depend on that.

Sometimes what appears right to us logically is wrong scripturally, and sometimes what appears to be wrong logically is right scripturally. Obey God's will. In chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Proverbs, and you ought to read these chapters, one word is emphasized over and over again, path, path, path.

He says the believer is on a path. That's right. One day we stepped off of that broad road that's going to destruction, and we trusted Jesus Christ.

We went through that narrow gate into that narrow way, and we're on a path now that leads to life. Now he says when you're on this path, you better do the will of God. In chapter 2, he says that God's will will protect our paths.

You'll notice in verse 8, he keepeth the paths of judgment. He preserveth the ways of his saints. Verse 11, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.

The whole emphasis in chapter 2 is if we obey the will of God, he will protect our path. In chapter 3, the emphasis is he will direct our paths. He'll show us where we're supposed to go.

Trust in the Lord. Lean on him, not on your own understanding. Acknowledge him, and he will direct your path.

In chapter 4, it gets better. The emphasis in chapter 4 is that he will perfect our path. It'll get better and better and brighter and brighter.

Verse 18, chapter 4, but the path of the just is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As we obey the will of God, he perfects us. It's a delight to see a little baby come into a family.

It really shakes things up. Life is not quite the same when there's a little one in the home, and one of the joys of parenthood is watching that child being perfected. You're thrilled with every stage of growth and development, and then one day you have the joy of giving that child in marriage, and it starts all over again, and there's always a new stage of development.

That's chapter 4. As we obey the will of God, he protects our path, keeps us out of the messes people get in, and he directs our path. We're doing what he wants us to do, and he perfects our path, and there's that constant growth and development. Now how does this happen? It doesn't happen by accident.

He tells us here that God wants all of my heart, and God wants me to acknowledge him in all of my ways. All. A-L-L.

Not part. Not just a part or half of my heart. I will give all to thee.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. And so God says to me, you want me to direct your path? You want to obey my will? All right. Give me all of your heart.

Don't hold back anything, and acknowledge me in all of your ways. That word acknowledge means fellowship. Fellowship with me in all of your ways.

If there's something in your life you can't bring me into as a partner, get rid of it, and I'll direct your path. Obey God's will. It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones.

Did you know that the will of God is to the Christian what health is to the body? He's saying as we obey the will of God it makes us spiritually and emotionally healthy. We have a healthy attitude toward life. We don't go around sour, sick.

Now in 9 and 10 he gives us a third admonition. Learn God's word and this leads to obey God's will and this leads to use God's wealth. Honor the Lord with what? Your singing.

Doesn't say that. Honor the Lord with your praying. Doesn't say that.

Honor the Lord with your substance. Substance, money, checkbook, automobile, apartment, furniture, food, clothing. The things that God gives to us.

God said to Moses it is God that gives you the power to get wealth. And Moses warns us in Deuteronomy when wealth increases, don't forget God. When you've eaten and you're full and your houses are full and your vineyards are full and your flocks and your herds are full, don't forget God.

It's God who gives you the power to get wealth. What he's saying is simply this. If we're going to be successful in life don't leave God out of your checkbook.

You say well the pastor's not going to talk about tithing. He doesn't even mention tithing. If you're content with tithing you need to grow.

He says honor the Lord with thy substance. That means the way we use everything. Is God honored by what I bought? Is God honored by the way we're using this? Is God being honored in what he's given to us? I'm always happy when God blesses his people materially.

God sometimes chooses not to. Some of the choicest saints I have visited in my ministry have been poor people. God's provided enough for them to eat and to have all that they need but he's not given them the excesses.

I'm always happy when God blesses one of his saints with material blessing and I'm happier when that saint honors the Lord with what he's got. You see he talks here about the first fruits. Now the Jews knew what the first fruits were.

You mention the word first fruits to a Jew he knows what you're talking about. When they took their harvest, when they came and reaped the harvest, the first fruits were taken and given to God. What he's saying is God owns everything.

You better acknowledge that. You remember that farmer that Jesus talked about? He had a bumper crop and he didn't have enough room for it. He said what am I going to do? I have all of these goods.

I'll tear down my barns. I'll build bigger barns and I'll say to my soul you have many goods laid up for many years eat drink and be merry and that night God said to him you fool this night your soul is required of you. You're going to die.

Who's going to get all these things? A lot of lessons in that parable but the main one is this when he looked at the blessings of life they were a mirror in which he saw himself. Solomon is saying here the blessings of life should be a window through which we see God. When you look at your paycheck or your house or your car is your first thought God God gave me this and I'm going to use this for God's glory.

He's warning his son against a selfish kind of living. Jesus puts it in these words but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Learn God's word obey God's will use God's wealth and honor him in it.

Some people are wasting wealth some people are spending well. God's people should be investing well. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

We hurry on in verses 11 and 12 there's a fourth admonition when he says to his son heed God's warning. My son despise not the chastening of the Lord neither be weary of his correction it's a sign of his love. I was admonishing my Sunday school class this morning not to judge people because of sickness or difficulty.

Don't you ever walk up to somebody and say oh if you had faith this wouldn't have happened. You see chastening is not punishing. A father chastens a son because he loves him.

A judge punishes a criminal because he upholds the law. If the only reason I chasten my children is to uphold the law they'll leave home. A home is not built for the upholding of law it's built for the sharing of love.

Now my father in heaven looks down at me sometimes I need to be purified. Sometimes there's sin in my life and God has to deal with me. I've been stubborn and I haven't listened to his admonition.

I have not heeded his word and so God says all right I have to spank you. God chastens to purify. Sometimes God chastens to perfect.

This word chastening in the New Testament means child training. Baby comes into the home the baby's helpless. The baby has to be trained.

You train the child how to feed himself. You train the child how to dress himself. Wouldn't it be a horrible thing for a 40 year old man to have to be dressed? He's trained how to walk and how to use his hands.

Someday he may go to surgical college and learn how to use those very deft tools. Child training. Now God has to train his children.

He won't he will not have spoiled brats and sometimes God has to chasten me to purify me and sometimes he chastens me to perfect me and sometimes he chastens me to prepare me. He knows what's coming. I better prepare him for what's coming.

Lord why is this happening? You don't know now but you will know. And the father says to the son now don't despise God's chastening. Don't get angry at God.

Don't argue with God. Don't run away from God. Don't say I'm through nobody loves me.

Don't have an evangelical pout and don't get weary of it. How many times have we heard our parents say how many times do I have to tell you? How many times has God had to tell us some things? Now be honest. Sometimes God has had to take his word and hit me over the head with it.

Like the farmer who hit the mule with the shovel and said you first of all have to get his attention. God has to take a baseball bat sometimes and just he does it in love. You say if he loved me he wouldn't do it.

No. You and I have seen parents who have allowed their children to run everything. The parents ought to take the children and discipline the children because when power is disciplined there's construction.

When power is not disciplined there's destruction. And God helped that child whose parents don't love him enough to discipline him. And God helped that person who marries that child who wasn't disciplined.

Heed God's warnings. When Peter was out walking on the water he began to sink and he knew he was sinking and cried out for help. At least he knew he was beginning to sink.

Some of the Saints don't know they're beginning to sink. Some of them are ten foot under and don't know they're sinking. Peter was smart enough to know he was in trouble.

He cried out for God's help. The last admonition he gives is in verses 13 through 18. Learn God's word.

That's the beginning of everything. Thy word have I hid in my heart. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Obey God's will. When we obey God's will then we're in the place where God can direct us and perfect us and protect us. Invest God's wealth.

Be a steward of what God has given to you and give him first place in your checkbook. Heed God's warnings and finally 13 through 18 seek God's wisdom. Happy is the man the woman that findeth wisdom that getteth understanding more precious than rubies.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. We live in a world that has a great deal of knowledge and very little wisdom. Now the word of God never criticizes knowledge.

It criticizes stupidity. It criticizes ignorance. Some of the Saints of God think that the more ignorant you are the more spiritual you are.

If that's the case why did God write a book? Why did he call a brilliant man like Moses to lead Israel? A brilliant man like like Paul to write the New Testament? God puts no premium on ignorance. A little midget minded man came up to John Wesley one day and Wesley was a brilliant fellow. Wesley wrote a grammar of Latin.

He wrote a Hebrew grammar, wrote a Greek grammar, wrote an English grammar. The complete works of Wesley in my library sit in the shelf like this, thick books, brilliant man, Oxford scholar. And this midget minded man said to Wesley, God doesn't need your intelligence.

Wesley said, I never said God needed my intelligence but neither does God need your ignorance. We've had too much of this attitude among some people. He says you seek wisdom.

Now the Bible never ever criticizes knowledge as long as you got wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. If we have wisdom we can use knowledge.

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. All of us know people who are so smart they're stupid. They've died by degrees.

They've wandered about the earth in sheepskins. They have learned everything there is to learn and they can't tie their own shoes. We know people like this.

He's saying to us here, seek God's wisdom. You see, knowledge has to do with facts. Wisdom has to do with truths.

Knowledge has to do with what happened. Wisdom has to do with why it happened. Knowledge takes things apart.

Wisdom puts things together. Knowledge helps you to make a living. Wisdom helps you to make a life.

There's a difference. Knowledge knows all about prices. Wisdom knows about values.

Knowledge deals with a little part of life. Wisdom deals with all of life. Knowledge puts you in touch with this world.

Wisdom puts you in touch with the next world. The great need of the hour is for wisdom. He says wisdom is the most precious thing you can have and it is.

It is. How do we get this wisdom? We heed God's warnings. How do we get this wisdom? We obey God's will.

How do we get this wisdom? We study God's word. This word is the word of wisdom and the result of this wisdom is not an easy life, but a pleasant life. The result of this wisdom is a peaceful life.

There are problems, there are storms, there are burdens, there are difficulties, but the person who lives by wisdom is lifted up above the toys and the games in the playpens of life. He's a mountaintop person. He has perspective.

He has strength because he has the wisdom of God. We need this today. People are tripping over the cracks in the sidewalks.

What are they going to do when the boulders start falling? People complain because the breeze is too warm. What are they going to do when the storm starts blowing? If you've run with the footman and you're weary, said Jeremiah, how are you going to do when the horses start? And what are you going to do in the swelling of Jordan? You get down there in the jungles of Jordan. If you couldn't make it up there on the highway, what are you going to do down there? Wisdom.

In the Bible, Jesus Christ is God's wisdom. He's the wisdom of God and He's the power of God and in Him are hid all the treasures of God's wisdom. And when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, not only does He forgive you all your sins, not only does He assure you of eternal life in heaven and abundant life right now, but He gives to you His wisdom.

This is why the humblest, uneducated saint can be wiser than the college professor. Not smarter, but wiser. In the first church that I pastored, we had a dear lady.

She's still living, loves the Lord, was a great help to me. I don't think she went past eighth grade, perhaps not that far. But she read her Bible on her knees and she prayed over her Bible and she wept over her Bible and oh, the wisdom that woman had.

Here I was a young seminary student and I could say words like logos and things like that, you know. I had my Greek New Testament, my Hebrew Bible, and I'd listen to what she had to say about the Word of God. I'd never heard that before.

And so finally I decided once a week I'd just stop at her house and we'd pray together and I'd listen. It was like a postgraduate course in the things of the Lord. Where did she get her wisdom? From God.

That's a beautiful thing when you can take knowledge and skill and blend it with wisdom. Oh, that's great. I think it was William Lyon Phelps, professor at Columbia University, who said if I had to make a choice between a university education and a knowledge of the Word of God, I'd take the knowledge of the Word of God.

Seek God's wisdom. And that begins with Jesus Christ. So here's a wise father talking to his son and he's saying something like this to him.

Son, you're going to make it. You've got life ahead of you. Daughter, you've got life ahead of you.

You're going to make it. You're going to make it if you start with Jesus Christ. You trust Jesus Christ as your Savior.

You yield to him. Give your life to him and learn God's word and obey God's will and invest God's wealth. Put God first in your money.

Heed God's warnings. He spans you. Listen and seek God's wisdom.

And you put all that together and you'll have God's blessing. And the path of the just is the shining light that shineth more and more and more and more unto the perfect day. An easy life? No, but a pleasant life.

A burden free life? No, but a peaceful life. A life of material wealth? Not necessarily, but an abundant life. A beautiful life.

A life that one day will step from earth to glory. My son, are you his son? Are you his daughter? Have you trusted him? You say, yes, I have. Then these are the admonitions for us to follow.

If you haven't, trust him today. Gracious Father, it rejoices our hearts that we are your children. We don't deserve it.

And since trusting Jesus Christ and being born again, we've done nothing to merit it. And yet you've saved us. Now help us to heed your admonitions.

Help us, Heavenly Father, not to be careless with our lives. Oh, may our lives count. May we make a difference in this world, in our community, in our family.

Oh, gracious God in heaven, take the young people of this congregation, direct their lives. May they put their lives wholly in your hands. Take each of us, Father, even that one who is straight away, bring him back.

That one who has been sinning. Oh, God, convict and cleanse. And may each of us be in that place of your blessing, no matter what it may cost.

I pray for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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