

PROVERBS SERIES THREE
FIVE STREET-SAVVY SAYINGS
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Proverbs 3:1-12

The difference between fortune cookies and Proverbs is that the Book of Proverbs is God's Word. The Proverbs are true—we can bank our lives on them.

The theme of Proverbs is Wisdom versus Foolishness. Proverbs 1-9 pleads with us to “Get Wisdom” at any price. In Proverbs 1-9 the father gives advice to his children. Is your life working or not? The common denominator among those adults whose lives are going well is that they had a wise father. Foolish parents do not seem to imprint their children with wisdom very well.

Proverbs 1-9 can be seen from several perspectives. One approach is to read these opening verses and learn the practical application of living life following God's divine pattern and “advice.” The other approach is to view chapters 1-9 from a parental perspective. Here we find the values and behaviors we want to imprint upon our children long before they reach the age of eighteen.

Let me teach for a moment about the nature of Proverbs and say a word about interpreting them.

WHAT IS A PROVERB?

A Proverb is a brief, pithy saying which expresses a general truth through a specific example.

“Like father, like son” excels in brevity. “Like mother, like daughter” (Ezekiel 16:44).

Proverbs are generalizations drawn from experience. The exceptional, the unusual and the unprecedented are beyond the range of proverbial wisdom.

Proverbs Have Diverse Applications. “Like father, like son” is true in contexts other than family relationships.

Solomon's proverbs display characteristics which set them off from most other nonBiblical proverbs. They are almost always composed of two thoughts in various parallelisms.

WHAT PROVERBS ARE NOT.

Some Christians make an interpretive mistake when they try to make proverbs some other kind of literature. The two kinds of literature most often confused with proverbs are *laws* and *promises*.

Proverbs are not inflexible laws of God's creation, admitting no exceptions. A casual reading of almost any chapter in Solomon's proverbs will yield an abundance of proverbs which have exceptions. Consider, for example, Proverbs 26:4-5:

Christians sometimes confuse proverbs with inviolable promises. Because the Proverbs are Scripture, they suppose that God Himself will guarantee the performance of every proverb. This puts a strain on many Christians' faith when they “claim God's promises in prayer.” When the exceptional occurs, they think God has failed to fulfill His promise. However, proverbs in Solomon's collection (Proverbs 10-31) are not promises made by God. They are guides which direct people in successful living. Consider Proverb 22:6. The one exception to this rule seems to be Proverbs 1-9. Proverbs 1-9 are presented as divine dividends which result from the wisdom filled life. Take them literally. Proverbs 10-31 are collections of proverbs which are generalized truths.

**FIVE STREET-SAVVY SAYINGS; OR,
FIVE THINGS FATHERS NEED TO IMPRINT ON THEIR CHILDREN BEFORE THEY REACH THE AGE OF
EIGHTEEN; OR,
FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO RESOLVE BEFORE YOU REACH THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN.**

Proverbs 3:1-2: My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.

1. Saturate Your Heart With Love And Faithfulness.

Proverbs 3:3-4: Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

“Work hard and love people and you will do well in this world!”

Observe carefully the words: “Love and faithfulness.”

God urged the Israelites to bind the words of the Law on their hands and keep them in their hearts (Deuteronomy 6:6-9); here love and faithfulness receive equivalent status.

Faithfulness means reliability (See Psalms 15:4; 24:4.).

2. Trust That The Lord Knows What Is Best For Your Life, So Do It His Way.

Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

To receive God’s guidance we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to Him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33).

Leaning has the sense of putting our whole weight on something. Listen to and be corrected by God’s Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God’s leading. He will make the paths so clear that you cannot miss them.

3. Be Afraid Enough Of God That Committing A Sin Frightens You.

Proverbs 3:7-8: Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

The first two phrases are connected. We will miss the correct interpretation if we separate them.

We are talking about a lifestyle that wants to ignore the fear of the Lord. God says, “That lifestyle will cost more than you will want to pay someday.”

4. Write God A Check For 10% Right Off The Top As Soon As You Receive Your Salary Check.

Proverbs 3:9-10: Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

“Firstfruits” refers to the practice of giving God the first and best portion of the harvest (Deut. 26:9-11). Many people give God their leftovers. If they can afford to donate anything, they do so. This is backwards.

Giving to God first helps us conquer greed, helps us properly manage God’s resources, and opens us up to receive God’s special blessings.

5. Receive Discipline With Gratitude and Understanding.

Proverbs 3:11-12: My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Hebrews 12:5-12: There is a right way—and a wrong way—to respond to Discipline.

1. Don’t get bitter.
2. Don’t give up.
3. Don’t fall into sexual sin.
4. Submit to the Father of our spirits and live.

Proverbs 3:13-14: Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.