



A Child Blessed by God

Proverbs 3:1-10 | May 10, 2020

English Translation for Rev. Jeremiah Cheung

The Book of Proverbs contains 31 chapters and can be divided into three sections:

- Chapters 1-9 make up the first section. It can be called a long passage of instructions or proverbs for my son. The author is instructing young people as a father.
- Chapters 10-30 form the second section. It is a compilation of short proverbs. The author instructs about life using proverbs or mottos.
- Chapter 31 is the third section: it is a proverb about a noble wife.

Today is Mother's Day. Allow me to greet every mother a "Happy Mother's Day!" Today I will share a message from Proverbs 3:1-10, which explains how we can become a child blessed by God. May all of us parents be proud of our children.

I recently found an article – a son's recollection of his relationship with his father – quite interesting. Let me share a bit of it with you. In the article, he says:

When I was four, I thought my father could do anything.

When I was five, I felt like my father knew everything.

At six, I thought my father was smarter than anyone else.

At 10 years old, I realized my father didn't know everything.

When I was 12, I felt there were things my father didn't know.

At 14, I felt my father was too stubborn.

At 21, I felt my father was too backward, in fact, hopelessly backward.

When I was 25, I felt my father knew too little.

At 30, I suddenly find that my father has rich life experiences and I realized it was best for me to ask my father first before doing anything.

When I turned 35, I felt I shouldn't make any decisions without consulting my father.

At the age of 40, I was amazed at how wisely my father handled various matters.

When I was 50, I realized that, while I still have the opportunity, I should seek my father's advice more.

I don't know if you will agree with this article, but didn't we all see our father as superman when we were young? Then, as we grew older, we see him as stupid. However, upon reaching 35 and when we reach our middle ages, we begin to realize how wise our fathers are because of all their life experiences.



In Proverbs 3:1-10, the author takes the role of a father, teaching his children. The theme of this section is: Be a child blessed by God. In this passage, the author proposes three guidelines: Trust in God, Fear God, and Honor God.

I. Trust in God

Bind love and faithfulness around your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart

V.1-4 “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 peace and prosperity. 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.”



As a parent, the first principle we must teach our children so that they will be blessed by the Lord is to **trust in the Lord**.

In Hebrew, the word ‘trust’ carries the concept of safety. The father tells his son, “Do not forget my teaching.” Teaching here refers to the Torah (God’s Law). As a father, he teaches God’s law to his children so that they will become children of the Law, that they may obey the Law. And in this way, God’s love and faithfulness are bound around the child’s neck and written in his heart. It is bound around his neck such that people can see. For something to be carved in his heart means that it flows out from his heart. This means God’s law flows out from inside the person. Such a person will find favor before God and men.

The best example in the Bible is Joseph. Joseph was unique in that he often found favor with God and with men. Genesis 37: 3 says, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons”. Israel had 12 sons, but his favorite was Joseph. Did he play favorites? Yes, he seemingly did; but look at V.2. “Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.”



While we agree that their father had a favorite, we also have to acknowledge his brothers' lack of love and faithfulness; we have to note how their lives were defined by deeds of violence. There was a reason why Joseph was favored in his home; it was because he obeyed the law of God; love and faithfulness were bound around his neck.

After Joseph was sold to Egypt as a slave, he found favor in the eyes of his master, Potiphar. Genesis 39: 3-4 reads: "When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."

Joseph was faithful in his work and so his master entrusted everything to him. When his master's wife tried to seduce him, Joseph told her: "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Joseph found favor in his master's house because he obeyed God's law. Love and faithfulness were bound around his neck.

Because he chose purity, Joseph was falsely accused and sent into prison. Yet while in prison, Joseph did not complain against God nor men. He continued to hold on to God's love and faithfulness. In Genesis 39: 21-22, we read, "The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there." Joseph was blessed in prison because he obeyed God's law. Love and faithfulness were bound around his neck. Because he was faithful to obey God's word, no matter where he was – at home, in Potiphar's home (where he worked), in prison (in times of difficulty), he always found favor in the sight of God and man.

In the nineteenth century, there was a spiritual leader by the name of George Müller, whose life is a testimony to the verses in Proverbs 3:1-4. He trusted God's word wholeheartedly. God's word was bound around his neck and carved in his heart. All his life, he found favor with God and with men. He built five orphanages by faith and took care of more than 10,000 orphans in his lifetime, but he never asked for a single cent from men. He held on to the promise of Psalm 81:10 all his life: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." The Lord moved people from all over the world to send George Müller money. In his lifetime, he received 1.5 million pounds in donations – an astronomical figure in the nineteenth century. Most importantly, he was a reader of the Bible. He had read the Bible more than a hundred times. God's word was bound around his neck and engraved in his heart.



II. Fear God

Lean not on one's own understanding, shun evil, be healed

Verses 5-8 says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. 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."

As a parent, the second guideline to teach one's child so that he will be blessed by God is to fear God. A truly god-fearing man will demonstrate two characteristics:



1. *Lean not on one's own understanding*

The Hebrew word for 'wise' refers to the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

The word 'Heart' refers to our thoughts. Our thoughts greatly influence how our lives turn out. A person who fears God will not make decisions based on his own wisdom, instead, he will seek God's will. When Abraham was 75 years old, the Lord commanded him to leave his father's home and go wherever He directed Abraham to go.

The book of Hebrews says that Abraham hadn't known where he was going. It is difficult for a man to migrate at the age of 75. The Chinese say: "If it survives at all, an old tree would still be critically injured when it is transplanted." Abraham had not known where he was going. If someone had said to him, "You are 75 years old, where are you bringing your household of more than 300?" Abraham would have replied, "I don't know." How would his relatives have responded? "Have you gone crazy? What are you thinking?!" Abraham would have been unable to answer because nobody goes out not knowing where he is going!

I'm not saying we shouldn't use our mental faculties, but sometimes God's will is beyond our understanding. I like this reminder in Psalm 136:4: "To him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever."



The Lord is a God who works great wonders and sometimes we cannot understand what He is doing and neither does He discuss it with us.

Someone once asked me why I chose to come to the Philippines. Actually, I had planned to be here for only three years. When I graduated, the head of our bible seminary told me, "After your three-year stint in the Philippines, come back and help out in the seminary." I nodded in agreement. But it is now my 32nd year in this country. If God had told me back then, "You will be in the Philippines for 30 years. You will meet your wife and you will have three children. I will lead you to pastor a church called CBCP. And in the future, a discipleship center will be built. Okay?" You know what, I probably would have said no.

It's not that I am not happy with the family I have, or you, my congregants, but I think I simply would not have been able to take it all in. Praise the Lord, He is a God who alone works wonders. I cannot lean on my own understanding; instead, I must submit to His ways.

2. Shuns evil

A God-fearing man refuses to rely on his own understanding and instead obeys the will of the Lord. He also will keep himself from evil.

When the Lord pointed out his servant Job to Satan, He said, "He (Job) is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Why would a man who fears God shun evil? We need to understand what fear of God means. In English, the word used is fear. What does fear mean? Is it a fear of God's anger and punishment because God is seen as a disciplinary officer? No. In the Chinese translation, the word used is 'awe'. Not only is there fear but also respect. The Lord is like a loving and strict father. We love Him and at the same time respect Him. We stay away from evil, not because we are afraid He will punish us, but because we fear to grieve Him.

The first person in the Bible to look at sin from this perspective is Joseph. When his master's wife wanted to seduce him, Joseph told her, "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Joseph loved God and he did not want to grieve God's heart. The second man who viewed sin in this way was David. Convicted in his heart when Nathan rebuked him for his sin, he uttered, "I have sinned against the Lord." David returned to the love of God because it brought him to repentance and moved him to shun evil.

A person who shuns evil will find healing in his body and in his spirit. Sin brings disease, whether physical or spiritual. A person who fears God will receive healing from the Lord.



III. Honor God

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.

The third guideline for fathers who want their children to be wise men who follow the Lord wholeheartedly is to honor God. What does it mean to honor God? In a practical sense, it means giving to the Lord. We must honor the Lord with our wealth and the firstfruits of all our crops. You may ask, isn't wealth the same thing as firstfruits? No. To give our firstfruits means giving to the Lord the best.

By doing this, your barn will be filled to overflowing. A person who honors God will also be honored. This is the same as what Malachi 3:10 says: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." For there to "not be room enough to store" means to overflow.

Today I want to address the young people on the principle of giving and tithing. I began the practice of giving my offering to the Lord 36 years ago and I started by tithing. I was still studying in the seminary then. The church gave me HK\$ 400 each month. After spending a portion of it on some basic expenses, I would only have 160 dollars left. I would give my tithe of 40 dollars, which left me with 120 dollars. This money would be used to cover my travel fares and meals on weekends since the seminary canteen closes on Saturdays and Sundays. I used to fast and pray because I had no money to buy food and I would walk home because I had no money for fares. But God is faithful. It was simply God's test for me. By God's grace, I was able to complete my four years of theological training. When I came to serve in the Philippines, I never stopped tithing. And I can really testify that God has never let me suffer any lack; in fact, God's blessings have exceeded my expectations all these 32 years.

More than 10 years ago, I had an operation because of gallstones. That was my first time to go through surgery. I had four doctors - a surgeon, a gastrointestinal doctor, and two cardiologists. Dr. Dy Bun Yok was my cardiologist. He was abroad at that time but had asked his son to see me.





When he came back from abroad, he took care of me. Because my gallbladder was inflamed, I was in the hospital for a week. Yet when I was discharged from the hospital, the hospital owed me money. Someone had made a 100,000-peso deposit to the hospital to cover my bills. Only one of the four doctors charged a professional fee and at a special rate, too. As a result, my bill only amounted to P70,000 pesos. So the hospital ended up owing me more than P20,000 pesos. They told me to claim it after a week and the amount was indeed refunded. The Lord truly causes blessings to overflow!

To my young friends, today is Mother's Day. To be blessed by God, there are two kinds of giving that we must not scrimp on:

- First is the money offered to God, which we call the tithe. Bear in mind that the tithe (10%) is not an offering. This is the Lord's. The Lord gives us 100%. We just give Him 10%.
- The second is the money we give to our parents. Some parents do not need their children's money, but children must understand that in special circumstances, you must use your money to honor your parents, such as on Mother's Day, birthdays. Give a gift or treat them to lunch. In some families, children have to shoulder the needs of the family. Let me encourage you - do not resent that, for the Lord himself will repay you.

When I first came to the Philippines 32 years ago, I would send almost all of my earnings to my mother. Later on, whenever I returned to Hong Kong, I would give my mother some money. The Ten Commandments say we must honor our parents. It is the 5th of the Ten Commandments but also the 1st of the commandments to talk about human interpersonal relationships.

Church, if you wish to be a child blessed by God, you must do these three things: (1) Trust in the Lord: bind love and faithfulness on your neck, engrave it on your heart, so that you will find favor in the sight of God and man. (2) Fear God and shun evil so that your body and soul will be healed. (3) Honor God. Honor Him with your wealth and you will experience surplus. May we all be children of God, blessed by Him.

