

Proverbs 3:1-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-3/proverbs-31-4/>

Solomon encourages his audience to remember God's commands and to ingest his teachings into the deepest recesses of their being. This will bring the great benefits of peace and extended life.

The Book of Proverbs weaves several voices, or characters, through its structure. Sometimes Lady Wisdom shouts to the audience. Sometimes Solomon is communicating in the third person. Here, he continues in one of those paradigms—the first-person illustration of a father giving advice to a *son* (or a teacher to a young pupil).

In the first verse of chapter 3, after laying out the purpose of the book, imploring the power of wisdom and the foolishness of ignoring it, the father continues to teach the *son*. In verse 1, this includes an important plea for remembrance—*do not forget my teaching*.

Throughout Scripture, believers are commanded to remember God and His Kingdom. Jesus commands His disciples during the Last Supper to remember Him. The Old Testament Israelites are often condemned for “forgetting” God and turning from His ways. Humans are prone to lose sight of what we once had, what we once knew. In the first two chapters, Solomon makes it clear that foolishness is nothing more than a perversion of wisdom—evil is nothing more than a perversion of good. When we *forget*, we leave room for these perversions to take root in our lives.

So the young *son* is reminded here of the need to *not forget my teaching* but instead to *let your heart keep my commandments*. We must allow our heart to hold true to that for which it was created. *Keep* God's commands. Do not lose them or pervert them to our own imperfect ends.

Solomon returns to his main point from chapter 2—choosing the way of wisdom is in our best self-interest. It will prolong life and bring *peace: for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you*. God's commandments are not just arbitrary rules we have to follow because the boss says so—they are what is best for us, keys to win favor and a good name.

The nature of Proverbs is not one of formulaic guarantees. So, of course there are exceptions—plenty of wise people die young or face persecution. Other wisdom literature books (Ecclesiastes and Job) are focused on the exceptions. What Proverbs is doing is setting out the general rule of reality—principles and most likely outcomes. There are no guarantees in a life of “hebel” (“vapor”; see Ecclesiastes 1:2). But generally speaking, reality is such that aligning with truth is the best path to our best self-interest, which often includes *length of days*. The general principle is that life is extended beyond what it would otherwise be.

Fighting against reality takes a toll on our physical as well as spiritual self. Foolishness is always self-destructive. When we embrace reality, we can have *peace*, in large part because we know that God is in control of all things, while we have control over very few things. So we can rest in that reality. But, as Proverbs emphasizes throughout, it is completely within our control to gain

and live in wisdom, and in doing so fulfill our design. No one can stop us but ourselves. Adopting this perspective brings *peace*. Having *peace* lengthens life.

To reiterate this point, Solomon doubles down: *do not let kindness and truth leave you* is another call to remember the father's *teachings* and to keep The Father's *commandments*. Hold tightly to these realities, the treasures of the kingdom of God. Do not *let* them *leave you*. They only leave when we let them go.

Wisdom is not an activity you turn to; it is a perspective to be chosen and a way of life in which to walk. To keep yourself from losing wisdom, Solomon urges you to *bind* kindness and truth *around your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart*. This is figurative. Solomon wants us to wear wisdom like we would wear precious jewelry. But he wants his students to adorn themselves with God's *commandments*. And to write them on the *tablet of their heart* to serve as a constant reminder. Make them sacred, core to the very sense of self.

Not only will this help physically—bringing peace and prosperity; it will help you *find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man*. This favor is recognition by God and by others of the inherent truth being manifested in your attitude and action. When we live rightly, it affects both our character and our ability to influence others. It sustains us from the inside out. The word translated *favor* appears as “charis” in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the “Septuagint”). “Charis” is often translated in the New Testament as “grace.” The grace of God is *favor* He bestows upon humans because He decides to do so, for His own reasons. In this case, God tells us one of the reasons He bestows favor; God favors those who choose to live in the principles of wisdom.

Biblical Text

**My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments;
2 For length of days and years of life
And peace they will add to you.
3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favor and good repute
In the sight of God and man.**