

# Proverbs 3:21-26

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-3/proverbs-321-26/>

*Solomon implores his audience to treasure wisdom and speaks to the benefit of doing so.*

On the heels of emphasizing the eternal nature of *wisdom*, Solomon advises his audience to *let them not vanish from your sight*. The *them* being referred to is wisdom, understanding, and instruction—the building blocks of reality (see notes on Proverbs 3:19-20). If these are the basis of reality, it makes sense that our best course of action is to keep our hearts, minds, and vision tuned to them.

Solomon reiterates: *keep sound wisdom and discretion*. The word for *keep* here is the Hebrew word “natsar” and it means “guard” or “preserve.” Like any immense treasure, it needs security. We need to watch it and protect it to prevent our lives from detaching from reality. The reason for this is self-evident; if wisdom is so valuable, it would be absurd to do anything less than focus on it (*sight*) and to *guard* it within us. Without our *sight*, our perspective, and our discernment centered on wisdom, we are in deep trouble. We are detached from what is real and set up to make decisions that will be self-destructive. We detach ourselves from reality and misalign ourselves from God’s design for our lives.

If we cling to *wisdom*, knowledge, and *discretion*, *they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck*. To Solomon’s young audience, he is speaking about the keys to healthy and vibrant existence. *Wisdom*, in other words, will unlock the true path to success and give the young explorer the key to living effectively. This phrase *life for your soul* also alludes to the Creation event. The root Hebrew words for *life* (“Chay”) and *soul* (“Nephesh”) are present in Genesis 2:7:

“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (“Chay”); and man became a living being (“Nephesh”).”  
(Genesis 2:7)

The picture here is that just as God breathed *life* (“Chay”) into man, that he might become a living *soul* (“Nephesh”), *wisdom* breathes *life* into our souls, that we might live a fullness of *life* as it was intended by our Creator.

This way to *life* should not be misunderstood; Solomon isn’t prescribing wisdom like a parent telling their child to eat vegetables just because “they are good for you.” Wisdom includes the veggies—*sound wisdom and discretion* are the substance of life. But wisdom is also an *adornment to your neck*. It is the joy of life as well as the substance of it. It is not a call to disgruntled obedience despite your desires; it is a way to fulfill your truest and deepest desires, desires that are far truer than mere appetites. Walking in wisdom is like clothing yourself in something you enjoy and are proud of. This is Solomon’s way of describing the full reach of wisdom’s value.

The passage continues to highlight the value of wisdom. It does this in two ways. Showing how wisdom affects our perspective on circumstances and how it affects the development of our character.

When someone puts their sight on wisdom and keeps it, they *will walk in their way securely and their foot will not stumble*. It will protect them from facing the consequences of foolish choices—it will guide them through any circumstances, whether the circumstances were welcomed or dreaded.

Does this mean wisdom will prevent bad things from happening to us? No. To *walk securely* means to walk in wisdom even in the face of obstacles. The phrase *your foot will not stumble* means you will be able to walk in wisdom even through the irritations of encountering stumbling blocks.

Solomon says we will be able to do this because the focus is on our character rather than our circumstances. This will be the case in all aspects of our lives. *When you lie down*, it is not that your circumstances will be ideal. Rather, *when you lie down* (to sleep) *you will not be afraid* because you have the safety of wisdom, of sound discretion. You will have hope and understanding. You will trust what you cannot control, and make sound decisions in what you can control. In short, you will exercise good character. A character able to endure any obstacle. *When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet*—not because you have comfortable circumstances, but because you have the peace that attends wisdom. Not because you are in control of everything around you, but because you trust The One who is.

Solomon makes this clear in verses 25 and 26. He instructs: *do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught*. The phrase *do not be afraid of sudden fear* means that we should not be afraid of terrible, unexpected situations. Life is full of moments where things go horribly wrong, but we don't have to worry about these moments. The idea is that we should not spend time fretting about the possibilities of unwelcome, dreadful circumstances that might befall us. Each day is full of potential for death and disaster. And inevitably we will experience such days.

Nor should we fear *the onslaught of the wicked when it comes*. By saying *when it comes* Solomon acknowledges the reality of living in a fallen world. Each of us can expect to be negatively impacted by evil and wickedness along the way. Wisdom allows us to set aside worry, for we know when the time comes, these negative circumstances cannot change who we are. They cannot soil our character. They cannot steal from us our ability to make choices that are pleasing to God. Will bad things happen? Of course. Wisdom allows us to take captive the fear of these inevitable bad things (including our own death) by asking ourselves, "If that happens, will I be able to trust God?"

That is Solomon's recommended cure for anxiety about future events. Solomon advises we simply say to ourselves, "When bad things come, *the Lord will be my confidence and will keep my foot from being caught*." The phrase *foot being caught* brings to mind being tripped so you fall. We can contemplate possible disasters, many of which might actually occur, and say "That might happen, but if it does, I have the opportunity to trust God, and if I do that and act in

wisdom, I am still on the path to my best interest, my fulfillment—the disaster cannot trip me up.” That allows us to live in the peace of wisdom. This peace is rooted in a perspective founded on reality that spans into eternity. Nothing that transpires can prevent us from living in wisdom and trusting God. As we adopt that perspective, we can free ourselves from self-destructive anxiety.

Many people are bound by anxiety and fear of imagined future disastrous events. Every human, to some degree, projects possible events or actions that might lead to an unwanted outcome. Stair steps to a disastrous conclusion. It is common for people to seek to “control” one of those steps, and in doing so imagine they are controlling the future, and preventing disaster. This of course means we are trapped in a double illusion: first that we know the future, and second that we can control the future.

Wisdom allows us to acknowledge the reality that the future will include undesired, negative circumstances, while allowing us to focus on two things we can actually control: trusting God and acting in wisdom. If we do both of these things, we please God and fulfill our design. Our *foot* will not be *caught*.

We do not need to *be afraid of sudden fear*, future difficulties that will come whether we worry about them or not. We do need to fear making foolish choices, and wasting our stewardship. Proverbs offers us a path to wisdom that avoids both. As we have seen in this chapter, the starting place for wisdom is to fear God. When the inevitable onslaught of the wicked comes, you can be *confident* because you are guided by wisdom, so your stewardship and path to fulfillment is secure.

Wisdom empowers your ability to make good choices and to align yourself with God’s design. This is the heart of good stewardship and effective character. If we have both of these, we win at life. Accordingly, you do not have to *fear* circumstances or the snares of foolishness because you have placed your trust and your hope in the Lord, the starting place for wisdom.

### **Biblical Text**

**My son, let them not vanish from your sight;  
Keep sound wisdom and discretion,  
22 So they will be life to your soul  
And adornment to your neck.  
23 Then you will walk in your way securely  
And your foot will not stumble.  
24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid;  
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.  
25 Do not be afraid of sudden fear  
Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;  
26 For the Lord will be your confidence  
And will keep your foot from being caught.**