

This morning we're going to read Proverbs 3, 1 through 12.

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.

For length of days and years of life and peace will add to you.

Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you.

Bind them around your neck.

Write them on the tablet of your heart.

so you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Honor the Lord with your wealth,

and with your first fruits of all your produce.

Then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof.

For the Lord reproves him who he loves as a father, the son in whom he delights.

Thanks, Mike.

Let's pray one more time.

before we unpack those last two verses.

We're not going to cover the whole chapter today, or last four verses, sorry.

Last two couplets of this chapter.

Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word that is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Not just in the good times, but in the difficult times as well.

So Lord, I just ask that...

These five loaves and two fish that you gave me to feed your people today would feed those who are rejoicing and those who are suffering, those who need encouragement and those who need correction.

Lord, we trust that your spirit will move and speak as we unpack your word today.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

So last week we were told at the beginning of this chapter, chapter three, one through eight is what we covered last week.

And we were encouraged, commanded even to not forget the Lord's teaching, to trust the Lord with all of our heart, to put all of our weight on him, to keep our eyes fixed on him and not ourselves or our circumstances.

Now there's two times in life, two phases of life, two stages of life, if you want to put it that way,

where I think we're most likely to forget the Lord and his teaching.

When we're most tempted to start leaning back on our own understanding, two times when our eyes tend to start wavering off of the Lord and back onto ourselves and our circumstances.

When we have plenty,

and when we're suffering.

You know, when we have plenty and things are going good, it's easy to feel as if we don't need the Lord.

Sometimes it's difficult to remember why we need the Lord.

It's easy to forget that the one who provided all of those good things is also the one that we serve and look to for those good things every day.

But also when things are not going well, when we're met with pain and difficulty, it's easy to feel as if the Lord has forgotten us, that he no longer is for us, but against us.

Two unique temptations, but two times where we're tempted to, again, grab the reins of our life back from the Lord, to lean back on our own understanding, to not acknowledge him in all of our ways.

And we see in these couple of verses at the end of this address, so Proverbs 3, 1 to 12 is a standalone address.

within the intro of Proverbs.

And at the end of this address in verses nine to 12, we're reminded that the wise don't just remember the Lord in the highs and the lows, but the wise honor the Lord in the times of plenty and in the midst of suffering.

Because in both, God demonstrates his love.

Both in times of plenty and in times of suffering, God demonstrates his love through the plenty and through the suffering.

And therefore, the wise recognize this

And honor the Lord.

So in times of plenty, first couplet, verses 9 to 10.

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.

Then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

So we see a big principle here and it's stated right up front.

It's the first line of this couplet in verses 9 and 10.

Honor the Lord with your wealth.

Big principle, you could put it this way.

Your wealth ought to be used to magnify God and not you.

Your wealth ought to be used to magnify God and not you.

This verse, if you'll remember, is coming on the heels of verse 7.

You know, 8 comes after 7.

In verse 7, we looked at last week, it says, "...be not wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

It will be a healing to your flesh and a refreshment to your bones."

So this comes on the heels of this command, this other couplet that tells us not to be wise in our own eyes.

One of the ways that we do this practically, one of the ways that we practically demonstrate that we're not viewing ourselves as wise in our own eyes, but that we fear the Lord, is how we handle our wealth, is to honor the Lord

with our wealth and not ourselves.

You can kind of see how that goes together, right?

If I'm wise in my own eyes, I'm going to want to honor myself.

If I fear the Lord and God is big in my eyes, I'm going to want to honor him with everything I have, including my wealth.

One of the reasons everybody

Regardless of nationality and culture, one of the reasons everybody wants money is because it's one of the main ways, if not the way, that people honor other people, right?

Or people honor something.

We honor something by giving.

giving money to it, or we recognize an honorable job or a job that's unique, right, that is only a few people can do, who are uniquely qualified to do by paying them a lot of money to do it.

You know, why do billionaires continue to strive for more money after they have billions?

It's not just about the money, right?

It's not just about the things that the money can buy or the security that the money brings, but it's about the honor, right?

It's about the

the acclaim and the respect that having all of that pays into.

I don't know if you've noticed, there's rare occasions where a sports team, like baseball, basketball, football, whatever,

where a player who's not the best player on the team is making more money than the best player on the team.

That's usually never a good situation, right?

This is usually cause for a lot of fighting and a lot of bitterness because there's just this understood, right?

This understood kind of agreement with everybody that the best player ought to be paid the most amount of money because money demonstrates honor.

With money comes power, status, security,

And underneath all of those things is a desire for honor and recognition, right?

To be recognized as smart or prudent or, you know, wise with our money.

And simply put, the author here is telling us to use this honoring power, right?

To use this honoring power that money has, that your wealth brings with it for the Lord and not yourself, right?

Use that honoring power of your money to adorn the Lord, to magnify the Lord and bring recognition to him and not to yourself.

Use your money to make God look good, right?

To make God famous, right?

and not draw attention to you and make yourself look good and make yourself famous.

This is why God has made the world after all, right?

He's made the world to show us his glory, to magnify his name.

He made you for his glory, to magnify his name and draw attention to him.

And for as many people to see how great and awesome he is, why would your wealth be any different, right?

If he's made you, he's made this world, he's made everything around us to magnify God to glorify his name, why would your wealth be any different?

Your wealth is not an exception to that principle.

Your wealth, your money, and your stuff were entrusted to you by God as an investment.

And he's expecting a return in the form of kingdom growth and expanded praise and worship for his name from his monetary investment in you.

So that's the big principle.

Honor the Lord with your wealth, right?

Honor the Lord with your wealth.

That's one of the reasons, the main reason, right?

He's giving it to you is to honor him with it.

But the devil's in the details.

That's probably not the correct phrase that I should be using from the pulpit, but the difficulty is in the details here.

Because that's a big principle that could be applied a bunch of different ways.

But the author of Proverbs here doesn't let us just broadly apply it.

He gives us some very specifics.

We should have left the live stream off longer.

First thing he says, right?

First thing he says about how we're to honor the Lord with our wealth is with our wealth.

What does he mean by this word with?

Well, with can be taken a couple of different ways in English, but the sense of the Hebrew here is from.

honor the Lord from your wealth, which is actually how the NASB translates it.

It just doesn't read as well, honor the Lord from your wealth.

It's a little confusing, especially when you're reading it publicly.

So I think that's why the ESV translates it with.

But they mean from, right?

It means from, it's from your wealth.

Now, what's the difference, you ask?

Well, I'm glad you asked because I spent a lot of time thinking about this, and I will share with you what I think the difference is.

You can honor the Lord with your wealth, like I said, in a lot of different ways that don't involve giving it away.

So I could use my wealth to take my wife on a date and foster children.

good communication in my marriage and a healthy marriage.

And that would be honoring the Lord with my wealth.

Or I could give my kids an allowance and teach them how to be financially responsible with my wealth that I'm giving to them.

And that would be honoring the Lord with my wealth.

Or I could buy expensive, healthy food to eat and nourish this body that God gave me and take very good care of the temple that he's given me.

And that would be honoring God with my wealth.

We should always honor God with our wealth.

Regardless of what we're using it for, it should be for a purpose that is in line with the world that he's made.

and with the principles and the commands that he's given us.

We should always honor God with our wealth, but that's not what he's talking about here.

He's not talking about honoring God with our wealth.

He's talking about honoring God from our wealth, giving some of it away as a sacrifice and a tribute to God.

Sending it out

That's what he's talking about.

So that's what this gift of the first fruits was to the Lord.

This church financially runs on the sacrificial giving of its members because that honors the Lord.

Nate and Amy.

Operate on the sacrificial giving of God's people because that honors, and this is an important because, because that honors the Lord.

This is the mode that brings the most glory and the most honor to God.

We don't turn giving into transactional processes for the general running of the church and the general support of God's workers.

We don't turn it into a transactional process where we say, you know, come give to the church and get a blessing or come give to the church and get a chicken dinner or come give to the church and get a plaque that publicly declares your financial contribution to the world.

That brings honor to you, right?

That brings honor to you.

This transaction highlights your means and your ability.

We honor the Lord by giving generously and quietly

to honor him and draw attention to him and not ourselves, right?

That's why we operate the way we do, because giving, right, our wealth ought to be used to honor God and draw attention to him.

All right, so honor the Lord from your wealth, from your wealth, not just with your wealth, but from your wealth.

And then he mentions this idea of first fruits.

He says, honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.

The first fruits are the best fruits.

They're not just the ones that you can spare without majorly upsetting your lifestyle.

You know, in an agrarian culture, giving the first fruits meant that you were giving your tithe or your tenth that was commanded in Hebrew law.

You gave that before you brought in the rest of the harvest.

You gave that before you had secured yours.

So you gave God what came in first, and then you trusted the Lord to keep the harvest going smoothly and well.

And if you farmed at all, you know that that's not always the case, right?

That sometimes you get a rain when you're not supposed to, or you can't get to the produce and stuff like that.

And so your gross income there might not be as much as you thought it was in the first place.

Anyways, there's this idea of you're giving God what's best and trusting him to provide, which honors the Lord, right?

When you're trusting God to provide for yourself, when you give to him first,

and honor him first, and bring glory to his name first, and then lean on him to provide for you with the rest that honors God as your provider and your sustainer.

And we honor God with the best of our wealth, and he gets really practical and says, of all your produce, right, of all your produce.

Practically speaking, this means that giving ought to be calculated off of gross income.

saying this, this is Proverbs saying this, right?

Of all your produce, calculate the 10th, the tithe, which is, again, is Hebrew law, where we're under grace and we have liberty with the amount that we give.

I understand that.

But here in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, he's talking about the first fruits, the 10th that they were commanded to give.

And he says they give that to calculate that off of all of your produce, your gross income.

That means that God ought to get our best and he ought to get our best before taxes.

right before the government takes its chunk because that's what honors God.

Catching the theme, right?

That honors God and brings the most glory to his name when we magnify God and demonstrate that he is worth more to us than anything and he's more important what he says and what he requires is more important than any other institution, right?

Any other institution that may have a claim to our income.

So those are the details.

Those are the details of the command.

The big honor God with your wealth, and then he gives us some details that apply to all of us.

We all honor God with our wealth in different ways, and each situation is going to be unique, but there's some details to that command that apply to all of us.

But then following the command, and in following the pattern of the rest of this chapter, he gives us an incentive.

He gives us an incentive to keep this command.

He says, then your barns will be filled with plenty.

Emphasis on then.



Then your barns will be filled with plenty.

And I'm just going to ignore that other part because this is a Baptist church.

This is a Baptist church.

We don't acknowledge that he says your vats will be bursting with wine.

We're not allowed to acknowledge that here as a Baptist church.

So we're going to talk about barns.

And I'll maybe mention the vats once in a while.

And you can do with that what you will.

Notice that he doesn't say so that, right?

Notice that he doesn't say so that.

He says, then your barns will be filled with plenty.

He doesn't say honor God with your wealth so that your barns will be filled with plenty.

He says, then your barns will be filled with plenty.

Incentive isn't necessarily motive.

We give to honor God, right?

That's the whole point of that first chunk.

Give in order to, give so that God will be honored.

Our motivation in giving is to honor God, not to fill the barns.

That's not the motivation.

But he gives that as an incentive and to establish a principle.

you know, so God's not fueling greed here, but he is communicating a principle and a truth, and that truth is you can't outgive God, right?

God gives more, generally speaking, remember Proverbs is talking in generalities, generally speaking, God gives more to those who honor God with their wealth, right?

Generally speaking, God gives, you can't outgive God, God gives to those who honor

Why might he do that?

Just speculating here.

Why might God give more to those who honor him with their wealth?

Well, it's quite obvious, right?

So that they can honor him more.

Perhaps he gives more to those who honor him with their wealth so that they can continue to give and continue to honor him with more and meet more needs.

Now, I'm not just talking about giving to the church.

I'm not just, you know, we've got an opportunity to give here this morning with Nate and Amy that, you know, supporting them directly.

That's not through the means of the church.

But there's a lot of ways that you can give to draw attention to God.

You know, primarily through the supporting of his work through the local church, but many ways, other ways as well.

Matthew Henry puts it this way in his commentary on verse 10.

He says, God will bless you with an increase

Kind of a tongue twister, but I think you get the point or get the gist.

We also know that physical barns and vats aren't the only way that God provides for us.

We know that physical barns and vats aren't the only way that God provides for us.

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 8-9, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich,

yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Is he talking about full barns and vats there?

No, he's not talking about that.

He's talking about being rich with his righteousness, right?

Rich in character, rich in wisdom that we're talking about that comes through his imputed righteousness to us.

So God's enriching us

In more ways than simply full barns and vats, even though that's the general principle that is being given to us here in Proverbs.

God gave his best through his son.

God gave his best, his first fruits, so to speak, to enrich you.

What are you gonna do with them, right?

What are you gonna do with it?

Are you gonna hoard it?

Are you gonna spend all that stuff that he's blessed you with on yourself?

When we see God's generous nature

in the face of Jesus, when we truly see it and recognize it and that hits home, that that is someone worth honoring, right?

That's someone worth honoring with all that we are.

And if we experience full barns and bursting vats this side of heaven, great, you know, we'll continue to honor him with those.

But if he chooses to give us full barns and bursting vats in eternity, we're totally satisfied with him

and the ways that he has enriched us through his son here in this lifetime as well.

So we honor God in the good times, but we also honor God in suffering, right?

So he gives us two scenarios here, in good times and in suffering.

Verses 11 to 12, he says, My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father, the son in whom he delights.

We'll start with the details this time, and we'll end with the big principle.

Notice, he starts this little couplet the way that he started the whole address.

It says, my son.

Chapter 3, verse 1, my son, do not forget my teaching.

Verse 11 here, my son, do not despise the Lord's discipline.

Just really practically speaking, I've been trying to address my son as my son, and I think there's an effect there.

I think he, even though it's a little weird, it's a little odd,

And it kind of came out of nowhere the first time.

I think he recognizes the affection there, but also, you know, a little bit of sternness in there with it as well.

So dads out there, that's a freebie.

Address your son as son.

I think it's a healthy thing.

All right, but anyways, we feel it, right, when we read it, right?

We feel it when we read it.

The father concludes his address the way that he started it, with an affectionate address, an affectionate yet stern address to his son.

He's reminding the son, even as he's getting his attention, of who he is, that he's loved by the father, and he's a recipient of all that the father has, right?

So he's about to say something hard.

But he wants the son to keep in mind, to have top of mind, who he is in relation to the father.

Loved and a recipient of all that the father has.

And he tells him, he gives him a two-fold command that's really one.

He says, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof.

You know, there's two typical responses when the Lord brings difficulty and suffering.

One, we despise it, we get angry, we get defiant, we kind of stiffen our neck.

and say, I know better, right?

I know better than you.

Or we get weary.

We get depressed.

We just kind of go limp and give up.

You know, like, well, what can I do, right?

God's in control.

He obviously doesn't like me right now.

What can I do?

And we just throw our hands up and give up.

The Father's saying not to do either.

Don't do either.

Receive it from the Lord and grow.

But what exactly are we receiving?

It says to receive discipline and reproof.

Do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof.

I think within these two definitions, and I'll just try to make it simple this morning, I think you have two things here represented in these two words.

You got discipline and reproof, and you got one on one side, one on the other, and like a sliding scale in between.

You can think of discipline as training.

As training, like you're going to go lift weights.

You're going to train to run a marathon.

If I were to go out and try to run a marathon right now, I'd probably die.

It wouldn't be good.

I'm not in shape.

I've not been running like I should be.

And I've definitely not been running to the extent that I could go out and run a marathon.

So God is bringing this difficulty, this hardship into our lives to train us.

We're not where we should be spiritually.

We're spiritually out of shape, and God is honing us, stretching us, and molding us into something better, into somebody that can run a spiritual marathon, right?

So he's disciplining us like Mitch and Rocky or whatever.

You know, he's the trainer.

That's one side.

On the other side, there's reproof and correction, which is more like corporal punishment.

It's the rod, right?

The rod is talked about quite a bit in Proverbs.

It's this...

He's allowing us to feel the consequences of something specific that we did, right?

Something specifically bad that we did so that we will hate it and cut it out, right?

So he's allowing us to feel some of the negative consequences of some bad things.

That's reproof, that's correction.

So you got discipline.

We may not have done anything wrong, but he's just whipping us into spiritual shape.

And we've got correction and reproof, which is you did something bad and you need to feel the consequences so that you hate it and cut it out.

I would say that anytime suffering comes into our life, it's a mixture of both, right?

There's always sin in our hearts and we're always spiritually out of shape.

And he's doing more of one than the other probably, but he's doing some of both when he brings suffering into our life.

And really only God knows.

Only God knows what that ultimate purpose is, like where our suffering falls on that meter.

But God is strengthening us and like he's doing both of those things at once, right?

He's strengthening and he's removing.

He's refining and he's correcting.

He's disciplining and he's reproofing.

And frankly, again, God's the only one that knows the mixture.

And I think sometimes when we dig into like, why did he bring this difficult thing into my life?

And I gotta know specifically why.

That's where we tend to go down a bad path mentally sometimes.

and ask questions that we shouldn't necessarily have the answer for.

But what the point is, is that suffering is a severe mercy.

That's the point that he's making with these two verses.

It's severe because it hurts.

It's a severe mercy because suffering hurts and nobody likes it.

But it's mercy because it's for our good and we don't deserve to have God working for our good.

That's why it's mercy.

If our hope and faith is in Jesus, the suffering that he brings is for our good to refine us and correct us.

We deserve destruction in hell forever.

Destruction, right?

Like we deserve to be separated from God for forever.

But that's not what we're getting.

He's treating us better than we deserve.

He treats us, if our hope and faith is in Jesus, as sons.

And fathers love their sons.

Fathers don't let...

Their sons destroy themselves through foolishness and sin.

They correct them and they discipline them.

So when things are going really hard, right, when things are going tough, don't conclude that God hates you if your faith and hope is in Christ.

God is for you and not against you.

His discipline is a mercy, albeit a severe mercy in your life.

I've read this quotation before, but it's one that I've personally got to come to over and over again.

And I think that you'll benefit from hearing it again.

John Newton, author of Amazing Grace, slave trader gone abolitionist.

He was a pastor towards the end of his life, second half of his life.

And he would write letters to his congregants, especially if he wasn't able to get out the door to meet them.

This is a letter that he wrote to one of his congregants.

He says, her sister is sick and she was taking care of her sister at home.

He said, your sister is much upon my mind.

Her illness grieves me.

Were it in my power, I would quickly remove it.

The Lord can, and I hope will, when it has answered the end for which he sent it.

I wish you may be enabled to leave her and yourself and all your concerns in his hands.

He has a sovereign right to do with us as he pleases.

And if we consider what we are, surely we shall confess we have no reason to complain.

And to those who seek him,

His sovereignty is exercised in a way of grace.

All shall work together for good.

Everything is needful that he sends.

Nothing can be needful that he withholds.

I'll read that again.

Everything is needful that he sends.

Nothing can be needful that he withholds.

You have need of patience.

And if you ask, the Lord will give it.

But there can be no settled peace till our will is in a measure subdued.

Hide yourself under the shadow of his wings.

Rely on his care and power.

Look upon him as a physician who has graciously undertaken to heal your soul of the worst of sicknesses, sin.

Yield to his prescriptions and fight against every thought that would represent it as desirable to be permitted to choose for yourself.

When you cannot see your way, be satisfied that he is your leader.

When your spirit is overwhelmed within you, he knows your path.

He will not leave you to sink.

He has appointed seasons of refreshment and you shall find that he does not forget you.

Above all, keep close to the throne of grace.

If we seem to get no good by attempting to draw near him, we may be sure we shall get none by keeping away from it.

Bruce Waltke makes an observation about why this address ends talking about discipline and reproof.

We've given a lot of commands and a lot of incentives along the way.

Great, wonderful

incentives and promises.



Why does he end on a downer?

Why does he end talking about reproof and discipline?

Waltke observes, as the loving father, God desires the son to experience the blessings of the even verses.

But the condition to realizing this goal is satisfying the obligations of the odd verses.

You gotta do the odd verses to get the evens.

Therefore, he imposes discipline on the son

to conform him to the obligations, and so in this way proves his love.

The wise honor the Lord in times of plenty and in the midst of suffering because they both demonstrate God's love, right?

He gives us the incentives with the requirements, right?

The requirements aren't to become God's child.

We're already God's children.

The requirements are to experience the fullness of

of God's blessing and who he is.

And God wants us to experience those blessings and that fullness.

And that's why he makes the requirements clear.

And not only does he just give us the requirements, but he brings the discipline and the correction that we need into our life to help motivate us and drive us to keeping those requirements, just like a loving father does for his son, that corrects his son, does not allow him to continue going down a bad path.

You know, there's going to be highs in your life.

There's going to be lows in your life.

You probably have not experienced the lowest point in your life yet, and you probably have not experienced the highest point in your life yet.

There will be times when we're susceptible to honoring ourselves and outright, even outright, rejecting God.

After seeing God's heart for us in the highs and the lows in this passage and in the face of Jesus,

It's my prayer this morning that we would desire like Paul in Philippians 3.10, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings.

That I may know the power of his resurrection and that I might share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we just honor you this morning and your wisdom.

We're in awe.

of your wisdom and your insight to both the highs of our life and the lows of our life.

Lord, we can't begin to comprehend your plans for molding us and shaping us into your image.

Lord, we know there's thousands, millions of things that you are doing in us  
and around us every day.

So Lord, would you give us a fresh perspective today as we walk out of here as a result of these four verses.

Would you fix our eyes on Jesus in a new and fresh way and see how much you love us when you're showering us with earthly blessings that we don't deserve.

And may we give those away, holding them loosely for your glory.

Amen.

And may we also know and feel your love for us when you're taking things away, when you're calling us to go through a difficult time, knowing that you're producing a richness of character and spirit that we can't produce on our own.

Lord, we look to you, trusting you because of the proof that we have on the cross that you are trustworthy and that you love us.

and we turn it all over to you today.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

Let's just stand one more time, and I'll read Philippians, another little chunk of Philippians, as a benediction over us as we leave.

As you go, we do have the plates, an opportunity to put into practice what we've just heard out of Proverbs, and we do have the plates at either door as a love offering for the kidders, so you can make use of that as well.

Paul says in Philippians chapter four, 17 to 22,

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

I have received full payment and more.

I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you have sent.

A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen.

Amen.

I have a friend, a faithful friend, and Jesus is his name.

He will not leave, he stands by me, my shepherd he remains.

I have a friend, a mighty friend,