

Big Idea: Today's decisions shape tomorrow's reality.

Primary Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

Supporting Scripture: Proverbs 3:7; Romans 8:28; Matthew 7:14

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- Have you ever gone back and replayed a decision you made... not a huge, life-altering thing, but just something small... and thought, "I had no idea that was going to matter as much as it did."
- That's what *Choose Your Own Adventure* books are built on. Every few pages, the story stops and makes you pick what happens next.
- Two options. Two completely different outcomes. And the trick is you never know which choice leads to the treasure and which one leads to the dead end until you're already there.
- We've spent four weeks in a series built around that idea.
- Week one was wisdom. Week two was friendships. Week three was your words. And here we are... week four. The last one.
- The thing is... the ending in those books isn't decided at the end. It's decided somewhere much earlier.
- You're on page 14, you pick the tunnel over the bridge because it looks faster, and you don't find out until page 68 whether that was the right call.
- Every choice feels like just a choice in the moment. But they're adding up the whole time.
- Most of us treat our choices like they exist in isolation. *This one doesn't really count. That was a one-time thing. It won't matter in the long run.*
- Proverbs has been pushing back on that idea for four weeks now.
- Small choices compound. The page you turn today is already setting up the next one.
- A lot of us respond to that reality in one of two ways.
- Some of us try to control everything. We work the problem, plan carefully, stay one step ahead of whatever might go wrong.
- And then some of us go in the other direction entirely. We've stopped trying. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen, so why be intentional about any of it.

- That might feel like peace, but it's not. It's just a different kind of stuck.
- Proverbs has something better than either of those options. And that's exactly where we're headed today.
- So let's get started.

SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)

- Proverbs was written primarily by King Solomon, one of the wisest people who ever lived.
- It was written for young people facing real decisions. Not pastors. Not scholars. Young people. People your age.
- Solomon's not broadcasting general wisdom anymore. He's writing directly to his son.
- And what he tells him isn't about being smarter or planning better or staying one step ahead. It's about something underneath all that.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3:5-6 – NLT)

- That word *trust* in the original Hebrew carries the idea of leaning your full weight on something. Actually putting your weight on it. Like the difference between standing next to a chair and sitting down on it.
- Solomon is telling his son to sit down. Actually commit. Actually trust. Lean on God instead of your own ability to figure things out.
- And then... "*do not depend on your own understanding.*" That one stings a little, right? Because we *like* our own understanding. We trust our instincts. We think we've got a pretty good read on things.
- But Solomon is saying something that's both humbling and freeing at the same time... you don't see the full picture. You never will. And that's okay... because God does.
- Next is "*Seek his will in all you do.*" The everyday stuff. The lunch conversation. The thing you scroll past without thinking. The seemingly small choice nobody else is watching you make. All of it.
- God will show you which path to take. Maybe not before you take it. Maybe not the way you're expecting. But the direction will come. You bring the trust. God provides the direction.

7 Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. (Proverbs 3:7 – NLT)

- Wisdom doesn't start with a better plan. It starts with actually knowing who God is and trusting that over whatever you've got on your own.
- That's not weakness. That's wisdom.

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. We can trust God over ourselves.

- You don't have the full picture. You never will. And neither does anyone else around you.
- God can see every page at once. The choice you make today, the consequences downstream, the things that are going to matter five years from now that you can't possibly see coming yet. The invitation is to stop trusting only what you can see and start leaning on the One who sees all of it.
- That's not giving up control. That's actually the wisest move you can make.

2. Small steps create big change.

- Every small choice you make in that direction is adding up.

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:28 – NLT)

- The small daily choices. The quiet moments nobody sees. All of it working together toward something you can't fully see yet. But God can.

3. The right path usually isn't the easy one.

- I think sometimes we do students a disservice when we make following God sound like it just makes everything smoother and simpler.
- Jesus was actually really honest about this. And what He said is worth paying attention to.

14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it. (Matthew 7:14 – NLT)

- Jesus isn't softening it. The road is difficult.
- Choosing to trust God over your own instincts is difficult. Saying no when everyone around you is saying yes is difficult. Forgiving someone when every part of you doesn't want to is difficult. Doing the right thing when nobody is watching is difficult.
- Difficult doesn't mean wrong. Difficult doesn't mean it isn't worth it. Some of the best things in your life are going to cost you something.
- The narrow road Jesus is describing isn't a road full of miserable people grinding through life. It's the road that actually leads somewhere.
- You don't walk it alone. The whole point of Proverbs 3 isn't "try harder and figure it out." It's trust the One who already knows the way.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Bring one decision to God.

- Pick one decision you're already facing and bring it to God before you decide.
- The prayer could be as simple as, "God, I want to walk with you through this. What do you see that I'm missing?"
- Then actually pause. Give God a chance to speak to you before you move.
- That's what Proverbs 3:6 is describing. Seek God's will in all you do. And it starts with one decision this week.

2. Start one daily habit.

- This week, start one small habit that puts you in front of God every day.
- Maybe it's the challenge we mentioned week one where you read a chapter of Proverbs every morning. There are 31 chapters... one for every day of the month.
- Maybe it's a two-minute honest prayer before you get out of bed.
- Maybe it's something you do right before you go to sleep.
- Pick one thing. Make it specific. Put a reminder somewhere you'll see it.
- Do it every day this week.
- One small step every day compounds into something you won't be able to ignore a month from now.

- And if you want to go further, tell someone what you're starting. Because saying it out loud has a way of making it real.

3. Take your next step.

- There's something God has been putting in front of you... a conversation you've been avoiding, something you need to let go of, a direction you know you're supposed to move in... and you've been putting it off.
 - Waiting until you feel more ready. Waiting until it feels less scary.
 - Only it's probably not going to ever feel less scary.
- Proverbs 3 is telling us that you just have to take the next step and trust that God will show you what comes after.
- So this week, whatever that step is for you... take it.
 - And if you're not sure what it is, that's actually a great thing to bring to your small group conversation tonight and let the people around you help you figure it out.