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Proverbs
Chapter 3 - A Most Valuable Heritage
Blissful Existence (vs. 13-18)

Proverbs 3:13-18: How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.

For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.

She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.

Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.

Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.

There are certain fundamentals that we should be teaching; conveying within our households. Deuteronomy 6:7 tells us that we should be teaching the word of God diligently when we rise up, when we sit down. It should be a part of our lives. Everything that we do should be pointing to God. Unfortunately, there are many things that we do talk about in our homes and there are many things that we do teach, but oftentimes that which is most important, we leave out. Proverbs is really this wonderful book that begins to reveal a father teaching his son that which is most important, and it is the wisdom, literally, of God that he wants to endow him with. What are the benefits of the wisdom of God? Well, ultimately, as we're looking today, the benefits are happiness. What parent, what person doesn't want happiness for somebody that they love? So, we're going to be looking at specifically that, but as we've been going through this chapter, what we've seen is that there are specific things that we should be telling our children.

If you look at the beginning of Chapter 3, it is clear that we should be telling our children to love the things that God loves. Scripture is telling us, "Son, you need to keep the commandments of God." Now, it's not simply just talking about the do's and don'ts of God, but about loving the

things that God loves. Two of the things that he emphasizes in this particular paragraph is a lovingkindness and mercy; truth. These are the things that God loves, and we should be not only emphasizing these things but encouraging our children to love these things. Now, where does the word “love” come in? Well, if you look in the passage, it says this,

(Proverbs 3:1) “My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments.”

I think that's one of the big problems that we oftentimes face because we settle for people doing things and we settle for us doing things by virtue of just simply the deed. “Well, we did the right thing.” But the question would be, was your heart in it? That really is a question that needs to be encouraged with our children. Not only, “Did you do the right thing?” but “Was your heart in it?” And begin to point to them the necessity of their heart being in it, because just as a reminder, man looks at the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. That's what He judges. Scripture says that He will judge the intent of our hearts. I mean, there are a lot of things that we may do wrong, but God isn't going to judge the things that we do by virtue of the result. The results in God's hands, but God is looking at the heart that does them. Abraham was clearly not perfect in the things that he did, and David was clearly not perfect in the things that he did, but what was clear in both of their lives is they had a heart for God. David was a man after God's own heart. So, we see that the eyes of God are looking to and fro, seeking somebody whose heart is wholly His. That's what He's looking for. That's one thing that we should be teaching our kids. Love the things that God loves. Get them in the Word. What does God love? You can actually see in the commandments. I mean, does God want you to get along with one another? Well, I think it's pretty obvious in the commandments. I mean, don't be jealous of what somebody else has and envious of things that they have and don't take what somebody else has. I mean care about the people around you. Well, the commandments are telling us the heart of God; the things that He loves, and He wants us to love Him with all of our heart. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. It begins in Deuteronomy 6, it is the great Shema, the great call to prayer, in that we should be requesting this and encouraging this.

So, he starts off in Chapter 3 with telling us that there should be a wholehearted love for the things that God loves. The second thing that he really reveals within the passage is that you cannot trust yourself, nor man. You need to trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding and in all your ways acknowledge Him. What would be the result of this? He'll direct your paths. See, the benefits are really clear, the favor of God, the direction of God. I mean, don't you want that? I mean, God knows what He's talking about. So, obviously, I want the direction of God. Where does it begin? It begins with you loving what God loves and trusting Him more than anyone else. How do you trust God more than anyone else? Well, I

mean, they're going to be decisions that you're going to be making throughout your life. The question is, what does the word of God say about this? This is why you should be in the word of God, because it's actually telling you what to do in every situation. I mean, times change in the sense of new-fangled inventions, but everything is basically the same. There's nothing new under the sun, as Ecclesiastes says, and the same problems that they had many years ago in antiquities times are the same problems that we wrestle with. So, there is an answer. How do you deal with these things? Well, let the word of God dwell in you richly. Don't lean on your own understanding. What does the word of God say? There have been many times where my initial knee jerk reaction was, "I think I ought to do this." Then I start getting in the word of God and the word of God goes, "No, I don't think so." Oftentimes the word of God is going to go against your feelings. Just as a reminder, Proverbs says, he who trusts in his own heart is a fool. So, it is not within you to know right and wrong. You're not going to trust in your own heart, nor are you going to lean on your understanding, but you're going to acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He'll direct your path. That's a great promise, and we want the direction of God. We want the favor of God. We want the healing of God in our lives. According to the passage, if you look with me in verses 7 through 8, it begins with just walking humbly with God. I mean, how much time do we actually spend encouraging our kids to walk humbly; to not think too much of themselves?

Romans 12 says don't think more highly of yourself than you ought, but to have sound judgment. It is that pride thing when you think about it, that actually brings about all kinds of illnesses. I mean, where does anger and anxiety come from? Where does bitterness come from? The very destructive things within your body, oftentimes isolation and detachment come from an arrogance and a pride. If you think about all of the emotional deprivations that a person could have, they pretty much begin with arrogance and pride. If you'll teach your child humility, there will be healing that takes place.

(Proverbs 3:7) "Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

(Proverbs 3:8) It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones."

You want for your child to be richly satisfied and clearly feeling secure and stable. Where does that come from? Well, you find security and satisfaction, strangely enough, by putting God first. I remember sitting down and talking to our kids when we first started giving them an allowance and initially, it wasn't very much granted, maybe \$0.50, but we had this little discussion, "Ok, now, you've got \$0.50. What are you going to do with that come Sunday?" And we wanted them to start thinking about giving God first. Why would you give God first? What benefit

would that be to me? Well, giving God first is that which conveys, "I believe that everything comes from You."

(James 1:17) "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."

And as Malachi so aptly puts it, "Give to me and see if I don't open the windows of heaven; see if I don't take care of you." Where does security come from? "Well, it comes from me hoarding and stick it in the bank and putting it under my pillow and not letting anybody touch it." That's not security, that's paranoia. Security comes from you putting God first, and in that, you know that God is pleased and it's His favor that will watch over you. I mean, He's the one that causes the rain to fall. He's caused the sunshine to come upon those that He desires. Really, if you look at Scripture, famine is an interesting picture of how God begins to reveal His control over your life, but the Bible tells us that God is pleased, and if God is pleased, His favor comes upon you, and He will watch over you. I can't think of a more secure moment in my life than realizing that God is watching over me, that He's got my back. He promised He'd never leave me nor forsake me, and if God is for me, who could be against me? So, I'm good. It is a security that you can give your children. I mean, you want them to have that sense of security, and amazingly enough, there is a sense of satisfaction that goes beyond abundance.

The way that it's put within the passage is,

(Proverbs 3:9) "Honor the LORD from your wealth
And from the first of all your produce;

(Proverbs 3:10) So your barns will be filled with plenty
And your vats will overflow with new wine."

"New wine" is actually an interesting metaphor for "joy". The passage is telling us that God wants to give us far more than we could even ask or think, but you have to believe. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him, and you must first believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. We believe that. These are things that we teach, and in teaching them, we guarantee the favor of God, we guarantee the direction of God in their life, we guarantee His healing in their life, and we guarantee a sense of satisfaction and security. Now, we know that there are going to be times that you and I, our kids are going to be off on the wrong path. The last thing we want them to do is have a wrong response to that because it is in the right response that God begins to do a great work in their lives so that when we need correction, instead of hating it, we celebrate it. "Thank you, God." Because as the psalmist says, "If You hadn't stepped in, I surely would have gone the wrong way" and how grateful we should be every time He does correct us because who the Lord loves, He corrects. I mean, if you're

without correction, you're really not His kid. The very sign that He loves you is the sign that He corrects you.

(Proverbs 3:11) “My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD
Or loathe His reproof,

(Proverbs 3:12) For whom the LORD loves He reproves,
Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”

Up to this point, we've clearly seen the things that we need to be proclaiming, but what's wonderful about verses 13 through 18 is it actually begins to show us something greater than material things that we're actually giving as a heritage to our family, and what is that? Happiness. I mean, I don't care how much stuff you give a kid, in fact, sometimes the more you give them, the more miserable they become, but we understand that there is a happiness that we can begin to give our children by virtue of pointing to them where it comes from. So, in this particular paragraph, we're going to be looking at today, we're going to see where happiness comes from. This paragraph is going to be framed by the word “happy”.

If you look with me in verse 13,

“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom...”

You see the phrase there? “Blessed,” “*ešer*” is another word for “happy”. So happy starts off in the text and if you look at the end of it in verse 18,

“She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.”

So, it starts off with the Hebrew word “*ešer*” which makes reference to a happy person, probably be described as, “oh, happy man,” and then at the end it uses the word “*āšar*,” which is a derivative of “happiness.” So, how do we get happiness? Where does it come from?

The passage starts off this way in verse 13,

“How blessed is the man...” (How happy is the man)

“... who finds wisdom...”

Now, the passage is not necessarily talking about the fact that you have a head knowledge of wisdom. Actually, the word there for “finds” has more of a connotation of acquisition. That is to say, you acquire wisdom. It has a sense of, in the perfect tense that it's a completed action. In other words, it's like it's become a part of you, and that's really the emphasis of the phrase. In other words, happiness comes from having wisdom become a part of you; not just something that you know, but something that's a part of your life.

As you look throughout Scripture, one of the things that you begin to realize is that it really, especially in the Old Testament, portrays the reality of life. The reality of life is that people aren't naturally happy. I mean, it seems to be kind of an elusive dream. It's kind of like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. You keep looking for that stuff and it just doesn't seem to be there. In fact, where is the end of the rainbow? As you begin to strive, you get more frustrated. Scripture reveals a lot of this frustration and oftentimes disappointment.

One of the most endearing passages of Scripture in all the Bible to me is the woman at the well. You come to John 4, and here's this woman, she keeps coming back to the same well over and over and over again. Whose well is it? Well, the text says, it's Jacob's well. It's part of her forefathers. I think a lot of times that we try to find some sort of satisfaction and some sort of relationship, perhaps in our heritage. Even now, you can buy these things, you can test your DNA to try to find out who you're related to. People go, "Wow, that's just a very comforting." I don't know how long that lasts, probably about 10 minutes, but there is a sense of comfort. I think she's an interesting picture of having this dryness, this need for something. So, she comes to this well and it's an interesting picture of refreshment of water, but she has to keep coming every day. One of the questions that Christ says is, "How would you like to not have to come here anymore? How'd you like to have living water?" Of course, she's not getting there with Him, but the point is that He realized that she was searching for something. Of course, she's had five husbands and the one she's living with is not her husband, Jesus says, and she goes, "Wow, You really know me, don't You?" You can't help but walk away from the text realizing that this is a woman that's been looking for a relationship. I have found a lot of times the people that are the most disappointed and the most frustrated over their life are the people that have higher expectations. I mean, if you could imagine that maybe she was looking for somebody that actually would love her exclusively and no one else. How hard is that to find? The places that she began to go were all the wrong places. You feel that as you go all the way back in the Old Testament into the Book of Samuel. At the very beginning of Samuel, you have a woman by the name of Hannah, and her husband has another wife, and that wife has children, but Hannah doesn't have any. She so desperately wants some sort of significance. She wants to be exclusive with her husband, but none of these things will ever happen with him. In both cases, both women are looking for some sort of satisfaction and relationship, but it seems like the harder they look, the more carnage they leave until they just come before God and go, "You're going to have to fill this void. You're going to have to do this." People are looking for happiness, and unfortunately there's a lot of frustration in the process.

I am reminded of the psalm in Psalm 73 in particular that Asaph writes, and in that particular Psalm he begins to convey the fact that he's looking at all these rich people and all these powerful people, and all these oppressive people, and he's going, "Wow, they really have it made." And you could hear the misery in the Psalm, "I came close to falling on this one because

it seems like God doesn't love me and He's giving them all the money. He's giving them all the power. I'm basically, obviously, a nobody in God's sight." And God goes, "The problem is you're looking for the wrong things." But it is so true that we actually began to pursue happiness by virtue of the possessions that we have or the relationships that we feel like we deserve, or maybe the heritage that we long for, but we come up short and frustrated. Though we want happiness, and we actually think this is the road to happiness, the fact of the matter is we just come up empty. Solomon did this investigation.

If you look with me in Ecclesiastes 2, you can see that he's going through an investigation about finding some sort of joy. I like the way that it's put in Isaiah 22:13, it uses the phrase "gaiety and gladness." That's happiness, right? I don't think so. Yeah, you can have a moment of laughter, you can have a moment of gaiety, if we can put it that way, but it's not happiness. It oftentimes drowns out those feelings of misery. The way that Ecclesiastes 10:19 reads, a feast is made for laughter, and wine makes a life merry. So, if you want to get merry, just drink. The only problem is you have a hangover after that and then things just seem to get worse after that. The point is that man tends to try to fabricate happiness, and his perception is that he's the one that makes it happen. This is probably the biggest mistake that he makes. We even have it in our governmental thoughts, the pursuit of happiness. How are you going to get that?

If you look back in Ecclesiastes 1:16,

"I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom..."

Here again, it's very interesting because when you look in Proverbs, it says that one who acquires wisdom will be happy. Yet, Solomon, who is the wisest man on the planet, was not happy. That's Ecclesiastes. So, the question is, what's the difference? The answer is in this passage if you look with me in Ecclesiastes 1:16, "I said to myself..." Now, one of the first problems that he has here is he's talking to himself. Beyond this, he sees himself as the source of wisdom.

"I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

(Ecclesiastes 1:17) And I set my mind to know wisdom..."

This is his second mistake. He didn't set his mind to know God, he set his mind to know wisdom. The acquisition of Wisdom is happiness. Question is, how do you get wisdom? Now, I want you to keep your finger here because we're going to come right back, but I want you to go back to Proverbs 2.

If you look with me in Proverbs 2, we've already gone through this, but I just want to emphasize that God is looking for the one who comes to Him for the answers. That's basically how chapter

2 starts off, "If you'll receive my sayings and the commandments of God, and if you long for these things." It's a heart longing for God's direction. If you'll go on in the passage, it says if you have this heart that will seek,

(Proverbs 2:5) "Then you will discern the fear of the LORD
And discover the knowledge of God."

Now, that's where we're wanting to head, because of the fact that if you drop on down within this passage, he begins to tell you actually where wisdom comes from.

It says this in verse 7,

"He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

(Proverbs 2:8) Guarding the paths of justice,
And He preserves the way of His godly ones.

(Proverbs 2:9) Then you will discern righteousness and justice
And equity and every good course.

(Proverbs 2:10) For wisdom will enter your heart..."

An interesting way of putting that. Where does that come from? Back up into verse 6.

(Proverbs 2:6) "For the LORD gives wisdom..."

Scripture seems to convey that if you seek His will, He gives wisdom. The one who acquires this wisdom, i.e. from God, is happy. So, we want the wisdom from God. That's the wisdom that God gives because according to text, He actually puts wisdom in your heart.

Now, what we have in Ecclesiastes 1 is wisdom in the head and the sense, "I've come upon this by virtue of my own great mind." In fact, if you look in Ecclesiastes 1:17, "I set my mind to know wisdom..." Now, it also makes reference to heart within that particular phrase, but the emphasis is that his heart was on the wisdom rather than on God. Because if your heart is on God, then God gives the wisdom. I know it sounds like semantics, but it's a very important difference. You can't love anything more than God, and by loving God, then God gives.

So, if you go on, in Ecclesiastes Chapter 2, what we have is somebody trying to find some kind of facsimile of happiness by virtue of the things that he does, the things that he experiences, or the experimental happenings of his life.

So, if you look in Ecclesiastes 2:1,

"I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure..."

What is he wanting to do? "I'm looking to enjoy myself." I mean, how many of us have tried to do this? How many of us are still trying to do this? "I'm going to be happy if it kills me." So, as he began to experiment, he began to realize, "Ok, that's stupid. That's stupid." I mean, one by one, he goes through them.

(Ecclesiastes 2:2) "I said of laughter..."

Which the implication of that particular word that is used actually means "hollow laughter." Have you ever seen people just kind of laugh and after a while you're going, "Ok, stop." Psychologists oftentimes say that a person that laughs a lot is very angry. That's pretty interesting.

"I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?""

"I started going exploring; maybe I could find something."

(Ecclesiastes 2:3) "I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine...."

"Ok, I'm going to start drinking and see if that happens." And "Ok, that doesn't work."

(Ecclesiastes 2:4) "I enlarged my works..."

"Maybe I can find happiness in the things that I produce. I'm going to do really great works."

(Ecclesiastes 2:5) "I made gardens..."

(Ecclesiastes 2:6) "I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest..."

I mean, one of my little sprinklers go bad and it takes me a long time to fix that, but I can't imagine irrigating a forest. Think about that.

(Ecclesiastes 2:7) "I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed..."

Well, maybe if you just have a lot of stuff. You know how people get collections? The only problem with collections is you've got to dust them. That's the only problem.

"... I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem."

That should make you happy, if you have more than everybody else. You have more than your neighbor, if your car is better than your neighbors, your house is better than your neighbor, doesn't that make you happy?

(Ecclesiastes 2:8) "Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces..."

“And if one woman is good, a thousand is better.”

We know according to 1 Kings 11:3 that he had 700 wives, 300 concubines. Put them together and you have an even thousand. I don't know if he planned it or not.

(Ecclesiastes 2:9) “Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me...”

(Ecclesiastes 2:10) “All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure...”

This guy's got to be the happiest man on the face of the earth.

(Ecclesiastes 2:11) “Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity...” (“*Hebel*”- another word for breath)

“... and striving after wind...”

I don't know if you ever tried to catch the wind? Pretty frustrating.

“... there was no profit under the sun.”

There's no benefit.

Verse 26 is really what we've been talking about up to this point. How do I get this sense of joy as well as wisdom? Where does happiness come from, and how would I get the wisdom that brings the happiness?

(Ecclesiastes 2:26) “For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy...”

I mean, he, he realizes this. If you've ever had one of those days where you're just kind of moping around the house and you don't even know why you're moping? You ever had one of those days, or sometimes you just feel this darkness come over you and you don't even know where that came from? I mean it happens, and you can try all sorts of things, “I'm going to get me a cheeseburger” or something to try to make you feel better. You can go after certain things, but you're still feeling empty inside and you're still feeling that nothing matters. I've found one of the greatest joys of my life is when I get back into Scripture, and I just began to not only meditate on that day and night. It kind of reminds us of Psalm 1, doesn't it? I mean, “How blessed is the man.” One of the big problems that we have is that we're hanging around the wrong people, listening to the wrong stuff, and then that darkness starts coming in, right? But how happy is the man who meditates in the word of God day and night. He'll be like a tree firmly planted by the water. Actually, within the passage that we're looking at, he's going to be talking about tree of life which gives that sense of stability. “Tree” always gives that sense of the stability as well as benefit to others. So, God is saying, “Your life is for a purpose, and it's

not only just for you, but also to help others. It's to benefit others, but I can bring forth fruit all the time." And there is a sense of joy that like with a tree, it just keeps bearing fruit. It doesn't stop. You don't have to keep cultivating it. How wonderful that is. It's like a tree firmly planted by the water. Whatever you do will prosper, Scripture says.

Psalm 119:2 kind of puts it into context. Psalm 119 is such a long chapter, isn't it? Literally going through the Hebrew alphabet declaring the wonderful words of life. If you look in Psalm 119, it says this, and once again uses the word "'ešer" which is "happy".

(Psalm 119:2) "How (happy) are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek..."

"Wisdom with all their heart."

Not wisdom, "who seek (Him) God with all their heart," and He gives wisdom. That's a better way of finding it. As those who seek God, then He bestows wisdom on those that He loves. It's a gift. That wisdom and that joy that comes from that divine wisdom is only something God can give.

Psalm 128, if you look with me. Oftentimes our thought is, "Well, I may be happy, but what about people around me? You know who's going to fix them?" I mean, quite frankly, one of the reasons I'm so miserable was I'm trying to fix everybody.

(Psalm 128:1) "How blessed (happy) ..."

Ok, we're starting off with "happy" again.

"... is everyone who fears the LORD..."

Well, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, right? Once again, seeking Him. "Seek Him first and all these things will be added unto you," right?

"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.

(Psalm 128:2) When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,
You will be happy and it will be well with you."

Guys, even your wife will be happy.

(Psalm 128:3) "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants..."

You use olive oil for lamps or lights. So, they'll be lights in this world, but more specifically, olive oil for healing or for soothing. They'll be soothing to you. When's the last time the kids were just soothing to you?

"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine

Within your house,

Your children like olive plants

Around your table.

(Psalm 128:4) Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed

Who fears the LORD.

(Psalm 128:5) The LORD bless you from Zion,

And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

(Psalm 128:6) Indeed, may you see your children's children.

Peace be upon Israel!"

You mean I don't have to fix everybody around me, but I have to be right with God, and then God begins to fix people around me? Could it be that simple? Wow.

So, as you go back to Proverbs, we're not going to cover everything, but that was just the introduction.

(Proverbs 3:13) "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom..."

The acquisition of it once again is very clear.

(Proverbs 2:6) The Lord is the one who gives wisdom.

(Proverbs 2:10) The Lord causes wisdom to enter your heart.

So, obviously it's from God.

"How blessed (happy) is the man who finds wisdom

And the man who gains understanding."

It then begins to describe it in this way,

(Proverbs 3:14) "For her profit is better than the profit of silver..."

The context, of course, being of one going into trading. One of the reasons why they make reference to tradesmen is because they're trading their trade for money and their hope is they'll come out on the upper end of that; so that silver will be worth more than the labor that they put in. I mean, you wouldn't want to work to just make it even, because why work? But if in fact you could do a trade and you could get silver, which would be worth more. So, the

perception is that which God gives you is of greater value than what you could work for. Let's put it another way, working for God's wisdom gives better return, and it does take work. It does take some labor, but it's of more value than the silver that you could work for.

It then goes on and says,

“And her gain better than fine gold.”

One of the reasons why people like gold is their perception is you get gold, obtain it and then it sits a little while and then hopefully it increases in value, and that's because it has this intrinsic value of worth. So, you finally get something, and you go, “Ok, now the value is going to go up, and God says, “I've got something that goes up better than that; something that's more dependable, something that's more solid than that.”

(Proverbs 3:15) “She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.

(Proverbs 3:16) Long life is in her right hand...”

“Long life.” We oftentimes misunderstand that particular phrase. Let me put it another way, “eternal life.” The same word is used in Psalm 23. You're familiar with Psalm 23, right? “The Lord is my shepherd”?

(Psalm 23:1) “The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.”

I'm not going to read the whole thing but drop on down to verse 6,

“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD (“long life”) forever.”

That's the same word. So, when he says, “Long life is in her right hand,” the wisdom from God gives you forever. That's a wonderful promise, isn't it?

(Proverbs 3:16) “Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.”

Enrichment. The left hand is not the substandard, it's almost like the inheritance. Long life, you need a long life to enjoy it, but God gives you an abundance with that. I mean, how wonderful it is, in Christ, we become joint heirs with Christ. Think about that.

“Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.

(Proverbs 3:17) Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.”

I won't go into this particular text, but Psalm 25 gives a wonderful picture of that. All of her paths are peace. Once you start thinking right, once you start going to God and letting Him reveal things to you, then everything begins to be pleasant. If you've ever been in a house that's in disarray and disorder, and then they finally give their lives to Christ and they begin to surrender their lives, and they begin to do things God's way, it's amazing the peace that begins to come over the household and the pleasantness of the household as well. It just takes all those things out.

(Proverbs 3:18) “She is a tree of life...”

Once again, the emphasis being that which is beneficial to all and that which is secure and solid and that which produces fruit.

“... to those who take hold of her...”

This is the key phrase, “take hold of her.” That goes back to the acquisition.

“...those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.”

What is he talking about? Well, he's talking about something that goes beyond, once again, just being in the head. “Thy word have I treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You.” There has to be this sense of treasury. Look, we all fight with that. “Ok, I'm going to do my devotions today. I wonder where I'm going to read today.” Sometimes, it may even seem dry to you, but the problem isn't Scripture, the problem is you. Where is the longing? I oftentimes keep bringing people back to that whole Jacob wrestling with the angel. You've got to wrestle and say, “I'm not leaving until You give me a blessing here.” But that's that heart that God is looking for.

I've got to end with this text and there are a lot of other passages that I'm not going to have time to cover, but if you look with me in John 13, Scripture gives this wonderful picture of His love for us. You can know about God's love, and I know I've read it, “God loves the world.” I've read that, but what has to happen is the knowledge of that love has to somehow get here. There has to be a sense of understanding. As Proverbs 3 would say, you not only acquire wisdom, but you also get understanding. That's where it goes into the realm of “This means something to me.” And this is where the word of God becomes wisdom from above. Until it goes into the heart, there is no wisdom from above. It's an interesting passage to me, because if you look in John 13, it says at the end of verse 1 that it was clear that He loved his own and

He loved them all the way to the end. I would say, even though they were faithless, He remained faithful.

(John 13:3) “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God.”

I just want to stop there. What we have is the highest, most privileged position ever being conveyed. There's no one more superior than Christ. The statement wants us to know that. No one greater than Him. He's the one that knows the Father and all things have been handed over to Him. That's like you can do anything you want. I mean, literally anything you want, and what does He do? He begins washing the disciples' feet. Now, the point that's about to happen here is Christ is about to give His disciples wisdom; that which demonstrates the highest value, a divine value, and that is loving somebody more than yourself. This is the highest wisdom that you could attain to. If you will live this way, all the paths will be peace. All the paths will be good if you'll live this way. The problem is they're hearing that Christ loves them, they just can't seem to get it in here. So, Christ begins to convey in a very real way His love for them, and He washes their feet. Peter initially reacts by saying, “You can't do this.” And the point is that he's not yet understanding. He knows what Jesus is doing. He sees it. It's being calculated in the brain, but he doesn't comprehend what God is doing. Christ begins to share this love, and He says in verse 13,

“You call Me Teacher...”

They go, “Yeah, we've been learning a lot of good stuff.” He goes, “We've got to get you wisdom in your heart.” So, He's begun to display a love that goes beyond, and He turns to them and says this in verse 14,

“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”

What do you think you ought to be doing? You think you ought to be serving one another? You think you ought to be giving of yourself? I mean, look, we can have sermons all day long about how we should be servants and walk out and then be so demanding of everybody else, because the fact that it's in our head, it just hasn't gotten in our heart; if it's not in our heart, then you'll never be happy. It's not until you do these things that you'll be happy.

(John 13:15) “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

(John 13:16) “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.”

(John 13:17) “If you know these things, you are blessed (happy “makarios”) if you do them.”

What He has just done is, He has shown them how you get this knowledge into divine wisdom. It is in putting to practice the things that you do, not because you have to do them, but because you love the Savior. His love being displayed to us is what we fall in love with, and by virtue of us falling in love with that, then we begin to actually embrace what He does. As we begin to embrace what He does, we then begin to long to be like Him. As Ephesians 5 says, "Be imitators of God and walk in love, just as Christ." Once we start doing that, once you and I start taking that and we put it to practice, the love comes; the happiness comes. A very interesting journey, not one that you would suspect, not a way that you would naturally get there. Believe me, other people have tried to go all sorts of different ways, but they've only been frustrated and exasperated and clearly vexed in their pursuit.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us and for the joy and the happiness that You will bring us when we surrender our lives to You; when we love what You love; embrace what You've done for us and begin to put to practice the very acts that You have displayed towards us. In a way, we say that we actually do believe that Your way is greater when we began to practice those things. We know it's not by virtue of the practice that actually brings us happiness, but it is the virtue of the fact that You are pleased with us that You bestow upon us happiness, and that's why we come to You.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Looking for happiness? People have searched high and low. They've done a lot of things, spent a lot of money. There is something more valuable than gold here, because it can't maintain your joy; it can't bring happiness. Ah, but God will open your heart and just pour it in.