

-Save This Page as a PDF-

Don't Forget Wisdom

3: 1-4

A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

Worry is one of the more acceptable character faults, right alongside gluttony and perfectionism. After all, everybody worries, and no one quite knows how to stop. Also, the primary victim of worry is the worrier, so it seems harmless enough. But worry is a serious business. It not only causes a number of significant physical ailments, but worry can also trigger serious emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety, and even compulsive disorders. Even more, worry is a spiritual problem, as both a symptom of foolishness and a precursor to sin. **Solomon** therefore offered a solution to this age-old sickness of the soul.



The father (to see link click [Ak - Obey Your Parents](#)) encouraged **his son** to cultivate good relationships within **his** community, which we might call “horizontal relationships.” This describes a cause-and-effect principle not unlike a law of physics or a principle of life. Drop a weight, and it will fall. Eat sensibly, exercise regularly, and your body will be fit. Live within your means, save money, and you will build wealth.⁶⁴ **My son**, this is **the third teaching** from **the father** (see [Aj](#) -

Proverbs for the Youth), **do not forget my instruction** (Hebrew: *torah*, meaning *teaching*). **Store my commands in your heart (3:1 Hebrew)**. The **instruction** was not to be **forgotten**. **Not to forget** is to remember, and to remember something in **the Torah** means more than mere mental retention. To remember, or not to forget, means to obey! **The son's** obedience is to be more than a superficial matter; it is to be the core of **his** personality.⁶⁵ In **Solomon's** day, **he** called on **the Israelites** to write **his teaching** on **their hearts**; but today, **Yeshua** sends **His Ruach** to write **ADONAI's Word** on the **hearts** of all those who believe in **Him** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Eo - I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el](#)).

The first motivation for obedience comes in the form of reward. **For they will prolong your life many years and bring you shalom and prosperity (3:2 NIV)**. But before we go on, there is a problem here. So, let's address it up front. **The wise father** offers us **length of days and years of life (3:2)**, **favor** and a **good reputation (3:4)**, **barns filled with plenty and vats overflowing with good wine (3:10)**, and **riches and honor (3:16)**. Is this the **prosperity** gospel? You know what I mean . . . the idea that **God** is out to make you healthy, rich, and comfortable, putting you on top of the heap because you are **His** child. Is this chapter saying that? Can we trust this counsel? Can we swallow it whole? I offer two answers.

First, the prosperity gospel is found *nowhere* in the Bible. It is coldhearted materialism in religious disguise. It chooses Bible verses selectively to fit a name-it-and-claim-it (some would call it a blab-it-and-grab-it) theory. But it does not love **God**. It wants to use God for selfish, immature purposes. Where does the prosperity gospel say, as the gospel clearly says in **Philippians 3:7-11** (paraphrased), "I have lost everything, and I'm okay with that, because I've gained **Yeshua**. I have been stripped bare. I have nothing left. All I have is **Messiah**, and I'm content, because **He** loves me and that satisfies my heart?" *That* is the gospel and *that* is true prosperity.

Second, the rewards **ADONAI** offers us here in **Proverbs 3** are good. No doubt. **He** will give them out to **His wise** children as **He** sees fit. But every believer's life is complicated; there are consequences to our sinful behavior. **Verses 11** and **12** make it clear that **Ha'Shem** disciplines us ([Hebrews Cz - God Disciplines His Children](#)). **He** sends both earthly blessings and earthly sorrows. Our **Lord Himself** said: **In this world you will have trouble (John 16:33b)**. Think of **Yeshua**. **He** **suffered** at the cross and **prospered** in the resurrection. And the resurrection is

the prosperity you will want when your health utterly fails you, as it will. If your story is limited to the blessings of the here and now, you are in trouble, because your **vats overflowing with good wine** will also run dry. But if your life in this world is only the title page to your eternal story, and **God** gives you some **barns** and **vats** for the present, okay. Just be sure you set your heart not on the gift, which will certainly fail you, but on **the Giver**, who will certainly never fail you. We must always remember that **this world is not our home; we are looking to our everlasting home in heaven (Hebrews 13:14 TLB).**⁶⁶

The commands are, in part, our blueprint for living. All things being equal, those who follow **God's** way of living as taught by **the wise father** will **live longer** than those who flaunt those same **commands**. But more than simple longevity is envisioned here. **A long** life of suffering or strife is not something to be prized. **The father** added the qualification that **the long life** of **the obedient son** would be characterized by **shalom**.⁶⁷ **Hebrew word shalom is a comprehensive term meaning "wholeness," all the factors which make existence complete and worthwhile. Health, prosperity and a happy domestic life lose their value when conditions threaten their destruction. Consequently, the supreme blessing which God can bestow is peace, since it is the foundation upon which everything desirable rests.**

Two other qualities are also said to accompany an obedient life: **truth and kindness** (see the commentary on **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**). These two words are often found together (**Exodus 34:6b; Psalm 86:15, 108:4, 115:1, 117:2, and 138:2**). The very character of **ADONAI** is described by these terms in the Torah: **ADONAI, ADONAI is God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, rich in truth and kindness (Exodus 34:6b-7a)**. These words thus describe **God's** attitude toward **His** covenant partners: **YHVH** stays involved and takes care of us. Our **verse** in **Proverbs** personifies **these** abstract qualities of **the LORD** and says **they** will be constant companions to the one who obeys, which would include **the fathers' son**.

The next verse reverts to caution. **The father** counsels **his son** to live a life characterized by covenant **truth** and **kindness**. **He** reminds **him** to **never let truth and kindness leave him! He** asks **him to tie truth and kindness around his neck as a reminder** (the literal interpretation of this led to the use of phylacteries among the Jews). These commands are also seen in **Exodus 13:9** and **Deuteronomy 6:8**. **The wise father** pleaded for **his son** to **write them deep within his heart (3:3 NLT)**. **This is a metaphorical phrase based upon the**

Torah (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bw - Sh'ma Isra'el**), to express the idea of keeping the instruction ever fresh in mind. If obedient, then you will find favor with both God and others. An important point is made here that service to God cannot be kept separate from the service of others, they are intertwined.

This verse provides the final motivation: **favor** and a **good reputation**. In this way (that is, by obedience) **you will earn a good reputation (3:4 NLT)**. This verse may have influenced the wording of **Luke's** summary of **Yeshua's** growth to maturity: **And Yeshua increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:52)**. When **truth** and **kindness** become a natural part of our interactions with others, favor and **good reputation** become our reward. These will go a long way toward preventing problems, as well as draining our worry tank. In addition, we will be honored and sought after for our **wisdom**.

As you reflect on your most troubling problems, which are caused by conflict or poor relationships with others? What worries might you unload by making peace with someone, even if you must accept some pain and loss of some kind in the process?⁶⁸