

# Wisdom and the Good Life

Proverbs 3:1-26, 32, 22:17-19

3:1-26, 32

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.

She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare 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; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew. My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared... For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence.

22:17-19

Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the Lord, I teach you today, even you.

**What  
do  
you  
want  
out of life?**

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Why is it important to have a philosophy [of life]? Because without one, there is a danger that you will mislive— that despite all your activity, despite all the pleasant diversions you might have enjoyed while alive, you will end up living a bad life. There is, in other words, a danger that when you are on your deathbed, you will look back and realize that you wasted your one chance at living. Instead of spending your life pursuing something genuinely valuable, you squandered it because you allowed yourself to be distracted by the various baubles life has to offer.

-William B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life*

**Get Wisdom.**

**Wisdom will bring you into  
“The Good Life” (Prov. 3)**

**Peace & Prosperity (v2)**

**People will like you (v4)**

**Physical health (v8)**

**Material wealth (v10)**

**Blessed life (vs13, 18)**

**Sound judgment (v21)**

**Safety (v23)**

**Sleep (v24)**

**Security (v25)**

**Wisdom is the path  
of the good life.**

**Not a path to the good life, the  
path of wisdom is the good life.**

If we have love but not wisdom, we will harm people with the best of intentions. If we have courage but not wisdom, we will blunder boldly. If we have truth but not wisdom, we will make the gospel ugly to other people. If we have technology but not wisdom, we will use the best communications ever invented to broadcast stupidity.

-Raymond Ortland, Proverbs Wisdom That Works

Where is the life we have lost in  
living?

Where is the wisdom we have  
lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have  
lost in information?

-T.S. Eliot

Education is not primarily a heady project concerned with providing information; rather, education is most fundamentally a matter of formation, a task of shaping and creating a certain kind of people. What makes them a distinctive kind of people is what they love or desire—what they envision as “the good life” or the ideal picture of human flourishing. An education, then, is a constellation of practices, rituals, and routines that inculcates a particular vision of the good life by inscribing or infusing that vision into the heart by means of material, embodied practices.

-James KA Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*

**The “constellation of practices” for wisdom**

**v.1 Obedience**

**v.3 Love**

**v.5 Trust**

**v.7 Humility**

**v.9 Generosity**

**v.11 Discipline**

**\*The rituals, routines, rhythms of wisdom**

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

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

**Prov. 3.5-6**

**The goal of Proverbs is  
to foster, not self-  
reliance, but faith in the  
LORD.**

**“LORD”**

**(Tetragrammaton)**

**YHWH (YAWEH)**

**“I am” “He is”**

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Exodus 34.6-7