

Season of Prayer
“New Year’s Resolution: Trust in the Lord”
Proverbs 3
Pastor Eric Reebals
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I am the pastor of discipleship and evangelism here at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Pastor Reeder said recently that intentionality and regularity are the key to veracity and tenacity in our personal times with the Lord. I had to look up veracity and tenacity. I think he is challenging us that when we consistently meet with the Lord and study His Word as a priority in our life then this critically important meeting reveals to us that which is truthful and honest in our lives and our time becomes more and more of a habit that cannot be shaken. That is what we hope happens in our lives as we follow Christ, as we spend time in His Word and Lord willing on a more consistent level in the coming year, 2020.

So the title for this study is New Year’s Resolution – trust in the Lord. What if someone asked you about your quiet time? Could you say to them ‘Yes I persistently and consistently meet with Jesus where I’m learning from His truth’? May that be true in our lives as we prioritize our time in God’s Word. In this study we will look at the difference between making a New Year’s resolution and resolving to live for Christ.

New Year’s resolutions tend to be mystical and even sort of jokingly non-committal in our commitment. We joke about how they don’t last and certainly that’s not what we’re looking for as we look at this in this study. So how can we resolve to live for Christ? Let’s consider what Proverbs 3 tells us and encourages us with.

Proverbs 3:1–12 says *[1] My son, do not forget my teaching,*

but let your heart keep my commandments,

[2] for length of days and years of life

and peace they will add to you.

[3] Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;

bind them around your neck;

write them on the tablet of your heart.

[4] So you will find favor and good success

in the sight of God and man.

[5] Trust in the LORD with all your heart,

and do not lean on your own understanding.

[6] In all your ways acknowledge him,

and he will make straight your paths.

[7] Be not wise in your own eyes;

fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

[8] It will be healing to your flesh

and refreshment to your bones.

[9] Honor the LORD with your wealth

and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

[10] then your barns will be filled with plenty,

and your vats will be bursting with wine.

[11] My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline

or be weary of his reproof,

*[12] for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Prayer:

Father, we love You and we thank You so much for Your Word. Father, open our eyes, our hearts, our ears and help us to understand Your Word and to apply it to our lives. Thank You so much for giving us Your Word and for this passage we will study today. May Your Spirit speak to us, challenge us, and cause us to resolve to live for Jesus and I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

This Proverbs was written by King Solomon. He is known as a man that God blessed with wisdom and understanding beyond measure which is what I Kings 4:29 tells us. Solomon, inspired by the Holy Spirit tells his son and us to treasure God's commands and live by them in Proverbs 3:1 which says *[1] My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.* They are so important that they should be the center of our affection in our heart. Psalm 119:11 says *[11] I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

Who wouldn't want what it says in Proverbs 3:2? Proverbs 3:2 says *[2] for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.* It is a long life filled with the perfect peace of God. This is not the peace the world offers or of having everything but lacking joy. It is the peace of knowing that whatever happens God has a plan for it in your life and it's for your good. John 14:27 says *[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* Christ offers us that perfect peace and here in John He is talking about when He sends His Spirit to live inside of us and propel us to have that peace. If we are lacking that peace then we either don't know Jesus as our Lord or we have forgotten that true peace is only found in Christ, having His Spirit and entrusting Him no matter what He brings into our lives.

Proverbs 3:3 says *[3] Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.* This is being persistent to remember the steadfast love and faithfulness of the Lord. God's covenant love for us is a faithful commitment He made. He made the covenant to us and meets the requirement of the covenant on our behalf. That is God's steadfast love for us. While we were separated from God in our sins and without hope, in Jesus Christ He made a perfect way for us on our behalf.

My beautiful wife, Tiffany, received a necklace for Christmas which adds to her beauty. By putting it around her neck it's like it becomes a part of her. Likewise when we write something on the tablet of our heart, it shows that we love it and when we write God's commandments on the tablet of our heart and bind it around our neck, it shows that we love God.

Proverbs 3:4 says *[4] So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.* Do we love and appreciate God's steadfast love for us? Do we love His commands and do we understand that they are meant for our good? By keeping them we show God that we love Him. One of my favorite verses is John 14:21 which say *[21] Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.* This is an awesome promise that Christ connects to keeping His commands.

Proverbs 3:5 says *[5] Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* As believers we have to daily work at not trusting in our riches or our strength or in our wisdom. We have a new heart in Christ but our mind has to be renewed daily. Jeremiah 9:23 says *[23] Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty*

man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches.” In other words, don’t trust yourself. Trust the Lord.

Proverbs 3:6 says [6] *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* How are you doing in acknowledging and submitting to the Lord everything? I often fail miserably. Perhaps it’s when you are stuck in traffic or that things around you may seem to be in chaos or when difficult things happen or even when wonderful things happen. Do you acknowledge His goodness and His sovereignty in your life? In whatever happens we are called to trust God, to remember His steadfast love and to acknowledge His goodness even in the face of difficulty because He is in control even when it doesn’t make sense to us. He is taking us in a straight path.

Jeremiah 9:24 says [24] *but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.* Steadfast love, justice and righteousness are not something that the Lord does but it’s a part of His unchanging character. It’s impossible for God to do anything else than to show His children steadfast love, justice and righteousness. It is who He is and it’s a part of His immutability. He doesn’t change. What a wonderful thing that we can all rejoice about! I think it’s something worth boasting about and praising God for.

Proverbs 3:7 says [7] *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.* Being wise in your own eyes is really just another way of saying pride and it’s the opposite of trusting the Lord. It is self-dependence. Being wise in our own eyes feels like one of the most difficult things we do. In America it seems like we have become 21st century know-it-alls. We have taken beliefs that have been held for centuries and recklessly changed them over the past few decades – redefining marriage, making gender arbitrary, if you believe in God’s absolute truth then you’re known as a bigot and an intolerant person.

This is what the world would tell us but as followers of Jesus Christ we love God and our fear of Him is that of fearing a loving Father who lovingly disciplines us in order to protect us from evil. It’s like when a child gets spanked for sticking their finger in the electrical outlet and the child fears getting that spanking over gaining the bliss of the electrical outlet. We don’t want them to stick their finger in there and because we love them we discipline them. That’s how God treats us. He is protecting us. He is not a killjoy. He is not doing it because He enjoys being mean to us. It’s because He loves us and He is governed by His steadfast love for us.

Take a minute to consider what mistakes we could have avoided in our lives if we had turned from evil at its first sign because we feared the Lord’s discipline. When Jesus was tempted by the devil He said “It is written (in His Word)...” and He uses Scripture to turn away from evil. We need to resolve to know the Word of God and to become daily students of the Bible. Joshua 1:8 says [8] *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

Proverbs 3:8 says [8] *It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.* Trusting in the Lord is life affirming and ultimately eternal life giving. Recently I came across this verse in one of my quiet times and it encouraged me so much. It’s Jeremiah 39:18 which says [18] *For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have put your trust in me, declares the LORD.* Think about that. You shall have your life as a prize of war. The wonderful news is that we don’t have to enter into that war. Christ entered into the war on our behalf and He won the victory. If we will trust in Him then we’ll be saved.

Proverbs 3:9 says [9] *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.* This is just one of the ways we honor the Lord which is by giving Him the first fruits of our wealth. It's not that He needs them but He gives us a tangible way to bring Him glory by expressing through giving that He is more important than our material wealth for He is the Giver of all things.

Proverbs 3:10 says [10] *then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.* You can't out give God. He takes care of His children when we trust in Him. Sometimes to have a lot is bad for us so He gives us just enough so that we'll always trust Him, look to Him and trust in His goodness for us.

Proverbs 3:11–12 says [11] *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof.* [12] *for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.* The unbeliever doesn't get to enjoy God's discipline. They only get God's wrath. We should not fear the Lord's discipline because it's always done in love and it's always done for our good, but we'll only believe this if we trust Him and not our ways.

Another favorite verse of mine is Romans 8:28 which says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* If you are reading this today and you don't know God as your heavenly Father and have never accepted the free gift of eternal life that's offered to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as their Savior, then please don't reject God's gift to you. Our church is here to help you receive the gift and we want you to receive it today so please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and let us talk and pray with you about this gift of salvation.

Lastly as we resolve to live for Christ in 2020, please consider getting involved in a small group, a men's group, a women's group or a Bible study. I encourage you to do this in the coming year. Grace and peace to you in the coming year. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your steadfast love, justice and righteousness. Thank You that You are a God who love His people. You could have been a God who was all powerful, all sovereign and all cruel but You're not for You love Your people. God please help us to resolve to treasure Your commandments in our hearts, to resolve to love Your Word and to daily feed on it. Help us to know by keeping Your commands we are showing You that we trust You and love you. Lord, let us see the folly in leaning on our own understanding or being wise in our own eyes. Lord might we fear You as our loving Father and please cause us to turn away from evil. Bring us Your peace and cause us to be Your witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank You for our love and humbly make our prayer, in Jesus' Name, Amen.