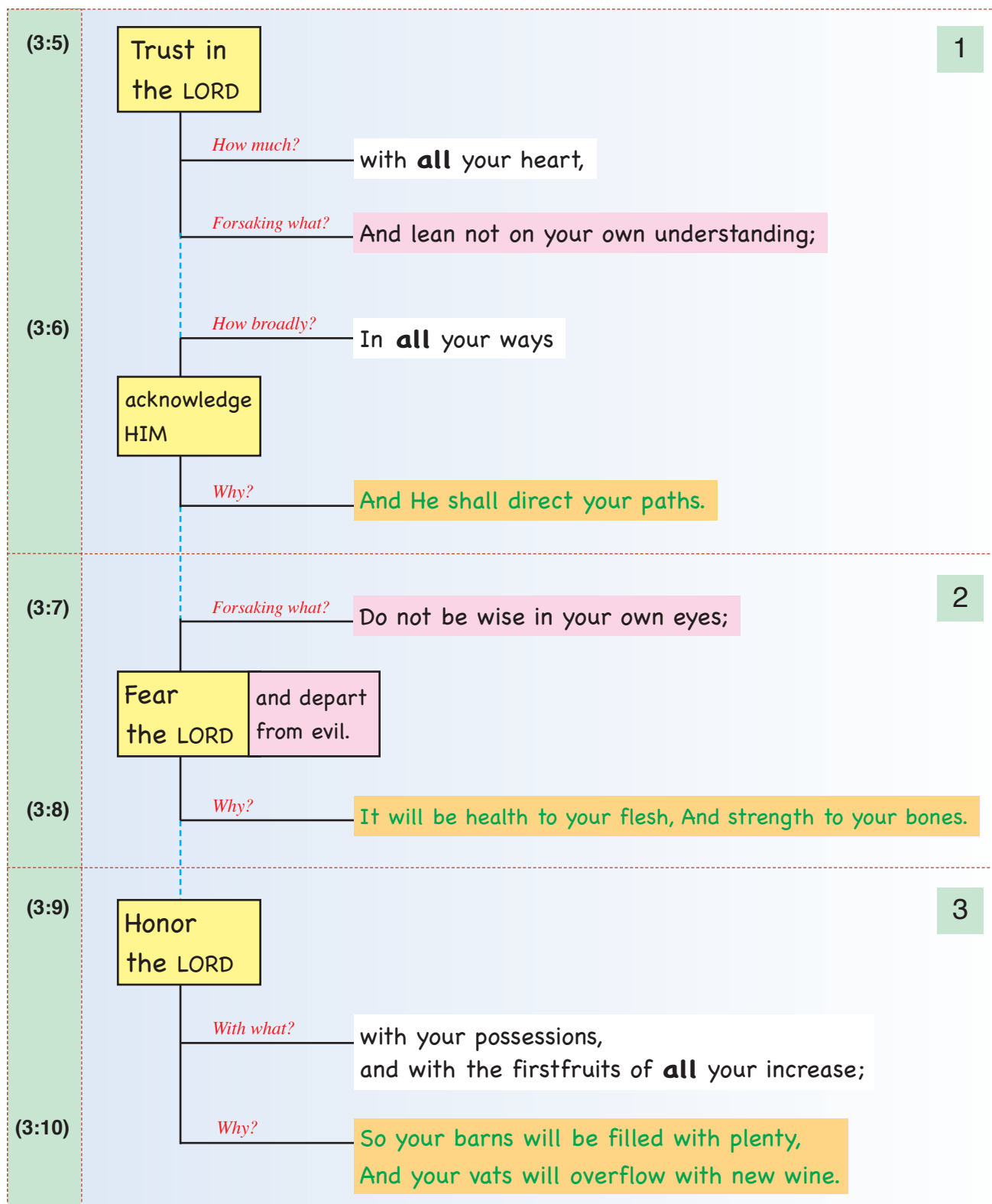


*Opening comments overheard in a class on Bible Teaching Methods at imaginary Quest Bible College*

Dr. Ed (opening statements and passage diagram)

The first step in the S.E.E.D. method is to determine the size (S) of the passage to be studied, and one of the best ways to do so is to diagram several verses to see how they fit together. This is my diagram of Prov. 3:5-10. Look it over carefully, and we will discuss it after a short break. Think about how many verses you think we should study. Two? Four? Six? Eight?



*Comments from various perspectives overheard in a class on Bible Teaching Methods at imaginary Quest Bible College*

### Frank (on six verses being too many)

The diagram of Prov. 3:5-10 shows that there are three sections of two verses each. All six verses fit together pretty well, but frankly six verses is a lot to study at one time in Proverbs. So I think we should go with 3:5-8 and put off 3:9-10 until another day.

### Theo (on why studying all six verses is better)

I want to do all six verses, because trusting the Lord in 3:5 enables honoring the Lord in 3:9. Only those who trust God in everything will be willing to give the firstfruits of all that they receive. Besides, it is good to think about the parallel lines in 3:6, 3:8, and 3:10.

### Dr. Ed (on steps one and two)

To me, Prov. 3:5-10 is like several similar but different gems in one box. So let's study all six verses. This will help us see the earthly thinking (E) being confronted in chapter three. What sin problems are mentioned or implied in 3:5-10?

### Evan (on why trust is mentioned first)

The most basic sin problem is always unbelief. So I think that is why trusting the Lord is mentioned first (3:5). Trusting God involves giving up prideful, unbiblical ideas. Cleaning up one's life in various ways through the fear of the Lord is important but secondary (3:7).

## S size & structure

How many verses should be studied? What's the structure?

### SIX VERSES

Logical connections between verses are fairly easy to see in Prov. 3:5-10, even though it is possible to split the verses up into three sections (3:5-6, 3:7-8, and 3:9-10). It is also possible to add a fourth section (3:11-12), since accepting chastening from the Lord is another aspect of trusting him.

### MANY COMMANDS

As shown in the diagram, the structure of 3:5-10 is built around positive commands and negative prohibitions. The positive reasons for obeying the commands and prohibitions are stated three times. — There are more prohibitions in chapter three than in any other chapter. (Also see chapters four and 23.)

### notes

## E earthly (sinful) things

What human weakness or sinfulness is seen in the text?

### SELF-RELIANCE CAN BE SINFUL.

Working diligently to avoid poverty and dependence on others is praised in Proverbs (20:4, 22:7, 31:20-21), and personally responsible is mentioned or assumed in nearly every verse. Yet, Prov. 3:5-10 shows that self-reliance in defiance of God is evil, prideful, and the way to ruin.

Reliance on personal understanding in particular is suspect, but this does **not** mean that the individual should not think. Rather it means that the Scriptures are always to be consulted and interpreted properly, rather than helter-skelter in line with personal bias.

Those who are wise in their own eyes do not fear the Lord but are evildoers (3:7). Their sin may not involve violence or sexual immorality, however. They may simply not honor the Lord in their worship and giving (3:9-10).

### notes

*Comments from various perspectives overheard in a class on Bible Teaching Methods at imaginary Quest Bible College*

**Dr. Ed** (wondering why 3:5-10 isn't in chapter one)

It is obvious that the Lord is mentioned often in Prov. 3:5-10, but it is not clear why. I wonder why the compiler of Proverbs didn't put this God-centered material in chapter one.

**Evan** (on the need for an introduction)

It must be because he was a good preacher. He knew that people need to be prepared in order to properly respond. So there is an introduction in the first two chapters. It is not wise to put your punch line in the first line.

**Dr. Ed** (on Solomon's punch line coming last in Ecclesiastes)

Ok, but in Ecclesiastes, Solomon, as a great preacher, saved his punch line about fearing the Lord until the very end (Ecc. 12:9-14). That's not done in Proverbs. So again, I wonder why.

**Red** (on how to read Ecclesiastes and Proverbs)

If you save your punch line until the end, you will likely be misunderstood until you get to it. I think that happens a lot in Ecclesiastes. So commentators often jump to the ending long before they actually reach it. — That's why the compiler's key points about the Lord come fairly early in Proverbs, in chapter three. My favorite commentary on Proverbs often points back to 3:5-8, so that God is not forgotten. I think this helps modern readers like us a lot.

## E the Eternal One

How is the text connected with the Giver of life?

### THE LORD IN CHAPTER THREE

God is seen more in chapter three than in any other. Chapters one and two and 3:1-4 are introductory, showing why wisdom is needed. In 3:5-12, however, the key aspects of God-centered, wise living are called for with a chain of linked commands and prohibitions.

### HOW WISE LIVING BEGINS

Though the essence of wise living is fearing God and departing from evil (1:7, 29, 3:7), it begins with faith and trust in the Lord (3:5). The order in 3:5-10 is significant.

### GOD'S BLESSING

The blessing of God is mentioned three times in 3:5-10, but the verse order shows that the Lord can not truly bless the selfish person even if he or she is religious.

notes

## D doing

What should we do and / or not do?

### TRUST THE LORD, NOT YOURSELF

Trusting the Lord rather than yourself (3:5) and acknowledging him as central to all things (3:6) is how to begin the life that can be blessed by God.

### BE GOD-CENTERED, RATHER THAN SELF-CENTERED.

This is the main point in all of Prov. 3:5-12. All of the many commands and prohibitions in these verses either directly call for this or for an aspect of it.

personal applications

**Dr. Ed** (on the bottom-line DOING)

We have now come to the final step in our S.E.E.D. study of Prov. 3:5-10, the step which brings meaning to the other three. What should we do? There are many commands, positive and negative, in these verses. So it should be easy in a way to answer the Do question. Yet, because there are so many possible applications, there may be some disagreement.

**Evan** (on Prov. 3:5-10 in evangelism)

I've never heard an evangelistic message based on Proverbs. Probably that's because the focus is on wisdom instead of on Christ. Much of the book seems to be for believers, including 3:5-10. Yet the command to trust the Lord instead of self in 3:5 is wonderfully evangelistic. The call to fear the Lord and depart from evil in 3:7 may be as well. So I'm going to try to put together an evangelistic message for youth based on this passage.

**Theo** (on the prosperity gospel problem)

Aren't you afraid your message will sound like 'the prosperity gospel' since there is so much in our passage about blessings? I've decided to work on a set of theological points to use against the disgusting way claim-the-blessing preachers misuse Proverbs.

**Evan** (on skipping Prov. 3:9-10)

Hmmm... I probably should not use 3:9-10 in the message, since I'm not interested in barns and wine. I'll leave those two verses for you, Theo. They sound a lot like Mal. 3:8-10 to me.

**Dr. Ed** (on the promises of earthy blessings)

Skipping 3:9-10 will not help much, because blessings are mentioned three times (3:6, 3:8, and 3:10). Obviously something needs to be said about such in **any** message on today's passage, since God has not promised that all believers will be millionaires.

**Theo** (on God's guidance and healthy living)

Maybe Evan and I should work together on a message. The promised blessing in 3:6 has to do with God's guidance, and the Lord still guides us today. The promise of good health in 3:8 is in line with the obvious fact that biblical living is healthier than sinful living. So verses six and eight should not be a problem. I think verse ten is more difficult.

**Dr. Ed** (on God not accepting bribes)

Is it really? The problem is more with the heart and motives than the actual giving. The Bible never promotes giving selfishly in order to be blessed. God honors those who sincerely honor him, but he does not take bribes! Those who think they can bribe God do not know God. That's what I would say about Prov. 3:9-10. Doing so should fit wonderfully in an evangelistic message, since religious people often try to bribe God with church attendance, ritual, giving, etc. Tell them that only the price Jesus paid is acceptable to God the Father.

**Evan** (on secular and religious selfishness)

Wow, the message is coming together fast! I never realized there is so much in Prov. 3:5-10. Godless, secular self-reliance is clearly condemned in 3:5 and 3:7, but this is also a great passage on false religion and people who want the blessings of God but not the Lord Jesus.