

Proverbs 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Analysis

Wisdom is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her, and happy are those who retain her. Tree of life imagery recalls Eden's paradise and anticipates Revelation's restoration. Wisdom provides abundant, flourishing life - not mere survival but thriving. The verbs 'lay hold' and 'retain' emphasize active, sustained grasp - wisdom requires ongoing pursuit and practice, not one-time acquisition. Such pursuit produces lasting happiness (blessedness).

Historical Context

Tree of life appears at Scripture's beginning (Gen 2:9) and end (Rev 22:2), making it central to God's purposes. Proverbs identifies wisdom as means of recovering what Adam lost through folly.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How are you actively 'laying hold' of wisdom through spiritual disciplines and practices?
2. In what ways has wisdom brought life and happiness that material pleasures couldn't provide?

Interlinear Text

עץ	חַיִּים	הָ יָא	לַמַּחֲזִיקִים	בָּהּ
She is a tree	of life	H1931	to them that lay hold	H0
H6086	H2416		H2388	
וְתִמְכּוּ	מְאֻשָּׁר:			
is every one that retaineth	upon her and happy			
H8551	H833			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:30 (Parallel theme): The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Proverbs 13:12 (Parallel theme): Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Proverbs 15:4 (Parallel theme): A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Revelation 2:7 (Parallel theme): He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 22:2 (Parallel theme): In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Genesis 3:22 (Parallel theme): And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Genesis 2:9 (Parallel theme): And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

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