

God Makes Our Path Straight When We Are Confused

Proverbs 3:5-6

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When we go for a vacation or a business trip, we don't just hop into the car and head in any direction that fancies us, having no idea how to get there. Most of us don't like to feel like we are lost. Clear directions from our phone or from a map are worth their weight in gold.

We make all necessary preparations, reservations, and accommodations just to travel from one point on the map to another for a vacation. Shouldn't we take even more care when considering how to travel from earth to heaven? Shouldn't we earnestly appeal to the God who is all-wise to guide our steps every day? Shouldn't we fervently study the road map (the Scriptures) given to us by the Lord?

We have the promise of God's direction given to us in Proverbs 3:6: "And he shall direct thy paths." But the three conditions given to us by the Lord must be heeded if we would see this promise realized in our lives: (1) Trust in the LORD with All Thine Heart; (2) Lean Not unto Thine Own Understanding; (3) In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him; and then (4) He Shall Direct Thy Paths.

I. Trust in the LORD with All Thine Heart.

A. The Hebrew word for "trust" means to cast one's self upon.

1. No doubt you have had the experience of having worked so hard that you come to the side of your bed exhausted and just collapse upon your bed. That is the idea behind the word "trust." When was the last time you stood next to your bed and debated with yourself for an hour as to whether your bed would support you or not? That's foolish you say. I agree. And yet how much more foolish we are when we do not cast ourselves upon our loving, almighty heavenly Father, who not only upholds and supports us moment by moment, but upholds and supports the whole world and universe by His sovereign power.

2. Before we can cast ourselves upon God (as we do at nights upon our bed), we must know who He is and that He is infinitely more worthy of our confidence than is a mere bed.

B. Who is it that we are to trust? The object of our trust is "the LORD" ("Trust in the LORD"). "The LORD" is sometimes translated "Jehovah". Jesus means Jehovah saves—He is Jehovah who saves.

1. "Jehovah" is derived from the Hebrew verb for "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). It conveys the idea that God is entirely self-sufficient in Himself. He is the Creator of all things and is not dependent upon any creature. He has absolutely no needs. All things exist by Him and for Him.

2. "Jehovah" also conveys that He is eternally self-existent. He is not bound by the past, present, or future. He always is "I AM." Only He can say I WAS, I AM, and I SHALL BE (all at the same time). Just as the space (which Jehovah created and which we call this vast universe) cannot contain Him (1 Kings 8:27)—He is infinite and has no boundaries. Likewise time (which we know in terms of past, present, and future) cannot contain Him—He is infinite and cannot be confined or limited to just the past, present, or future. He transcends all space and all time.

3. Although not bound by time, He has graciously condescended to reveal Himself to us in time. He is not some God who simply created us with great power and then left us to ourselves. He has come to save His people from their sins and from the curse of death through faith in Jesus Christ—not because He had to, but because He set His love upon us—not because we deserved His deliverance, but because He freely chose to manifest His mercy to us through Jesus Christ. Jehovah hears your cries, and sees your tears, and knows your anguish of heart. Even when He does not deliver you immediately, His "delay" is for your good (in

order that you might know His power in your weakness and draw near to Him). Our trust is never misplaced when we cast ourselves upon Him from all that worries and exhausts us in this life.

a. A young David cast himself upon Jehovah and a giant over 9 feet tall was brought to the ground by a mere stone in a sling.

b. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego rested in the Lord even when a fiery furnace was heated 7 times hotter than normal because they would not bow before an image. The Son of God kept even the smell of smoke from sticking to their garments.

c. Stephen reposed in the Lord when he was stoned by the Jews for his faithful testimony. Though not delivered from that cruel death, his faith was not misplaced, for He saw the Lord standing in heaven to receive him.

d. Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh”, to prevent him from boasting. He prayed three times that it would be taken away, and he rested in God’s word (2 Corinthians 12:9).

C. Note how we are to trust the LORD: “with all thine heart.” Such a God deserves not just a part of our heart. He is entitled to all of our heart. This does not speak of the size of our faith, but rather the sincerity of our faith. How do we know whether our faith is sincere?

1. If the Lord Jesus is the object of your faith, your faith is sincere. Where is your faith directed? Is it directed to your righteousness or Christ’s righteousness? Does your faith look to your ability, or does it look to God’s almighty power? Does your faith rest in your faithfulness, or does it rest in Christ’s faithfulness? Does your faith eye and embrace the promise of God or the promise of man?

2. Even the faith the size of a mustard seed may be sincere and remove mountains (whether those mountains be financial difficulties, health problems, besetting sins, stubborn habits, loneliness, unemployment, or attacks upon you because you follow Christ). It is the object of your faith that moves mountains (Jesus Christ).

II. Lean Not unto Thine Own Understanding.

A. Here we may further understand the true meaning of “trust in the LORD”, for it is contrasted with what we are not to do (“and lean not unto thine own understanding”). Whereas we are to lean upon Jehovah with a sincere confidence that He cannot fail us, we are not to lean upon our own understanding with that same kind of confidence; for our understanding of all the complexities and issues of life (whether they be spiritual, moral, familial, governmental, and ecclesiastical) is both limited because we are creatures (His understanding is infinite, ours is finite) and has been corrupted due to sin (though it is being renewed in Christ).

B. We may lean unto our own understanding by following our fears. Our fears may become so big and overwhelming that our God shrinks in size by comparison. Our own fearful understanding may distort what is reality, and make a person, affliction, or circumstance mightier than the God of creation. We are not trusting in the LORD while we act and think as if God cannot save us and deliver us from the clutches of that overwhelming fear (as Peter did when he sank into the water).

1. The Lord graciously delivers us from our fears not by having us run from those fears, but by facing them, armed with His promises/presence (Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:5-6).

2. All the promises of God are yours in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20; Philippians 4:13). Biblical courage is not the absence of all fear. It is trusting Jesus and doing what is right in spite of your fears.

C. A second way we may lean unto our own understanding is by an overconfidence in ourselves—we may proudly think we are sufficient in ourselves to meet our needs. Then we will neglect and forget to cast ourselves upon the Lord Jesus (warning—Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 28:26).

1. This is the way to be a mighty man/woman/child of valor. Moses was the meekest man

on earth (Numbers 12:3), and yet he was bold. Jesus was the epitome of meekness (Matthew 11:29), and yet He calmed the raging storm and cast out demons from the possessed.

2. When everything seems to be under our control, our need of our Lord may seem to drift into the background. He wants us to use our minds, bodies, gifts, and resources to serve Him and others, but He does not want us to trust in ourselves, as if we are sufficient to meet our needs or to direct our life without Him (John 15:5).

III. In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him.

A. When you look at the English word “acknowledge”, you should see in the middle of that word “know.” In fact, the Hebrew word used here for “acknowledge” is *yadah*, means “to know.”

1. Here the Lord commands you to know Him in all your ways (not only to profess Him with your mouth, but to know Him in a familiar way in all the decisions that confront you in life). How we become so preoccupied with our work that we forget to know the Lord in all our ways. To know the Lord in all our ways means that we should live in communion with the Lord throughout the day in a nearrelationship not in distant one. We should not leave Him behind in anything that we do, but take Him with us in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

2. Is Jesus simply a part of your life or is He your life (Philippians 1:21)? Have you relegated the LORD to a neat, comfortable corner in your thoughts, desires, words, and deeds so that He doesn't make life too uncomfortable for you, or do you want to know the LORD in familiar fellowship in all your ways (in both blessing and in suffering)? Do you want Him not only to comfort and encourage you when you are down, but do you also want Him to rebuke and correct you when you stray into sin? Do you want His will in your life more than your own will (more than anything else)? Not my will, but thine be done.

B. Many will say they want to know the will of God for their lives, but then when they know it, they suppress it or ignore it because it is not what they wanted to hear. Your desire to know the will of God for your life or to receive His direction in your life will be manifested in your desires to obey Him in that which you already know to be His revealed will for you (John 7:17). We are practicing hypocrisy if we want to know God's will where it is unclear, and yet are not willing to do His will in the areas in which it is clearly revealed it to us.

IV. He Shall Direct Thy Paths.

A. Literally, the promise here reads, “and He shall make straight thy paths.” That is, instead of having confusion as to which course or path you should pursue, He will make clear the path you should take.

B. Here is the promise of God upon which you can stand when you are struggling, confused, afraid, worried, or discouraged.

1. The all-knowing and all-wise God knows the end from the beginning (**Isaiah 46:9-10**). He has ordained all your steps. He is not lost even if you feel as if you cannot find your way. He is not out of control, even if you feel as if you are spinning out of control on an icy road.

2. He doesn't promise that there will be no problems, pains, sorrows, persecution, or afflictions. But He does promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). He does promise that He will not give you more than you can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). He does promise to supply all that you need in this life to glorify Him (Philippians 4:19). He promises the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life (1 John 1:9). He promises to make your paths clear in this life (by the proper use of Scripture and providence). And if He does not open doors to you, then He wants you where you are to shine and live for Him.

C. Will you trust Him and walk in those good/holy paths when they are revealed? It may mean working where you don't want to work. It may mean waiting longer for a healing than you want to wait. It will

definitely mean not watching that which immoral or not listening to that which perverts God's commandments. It will also mean suffering for your faith in Christ and His truth at times. God's paths are not necessarily easy paths, but they are the right paths that lead to peace and contentment. Trust The LORD in sincerity. Lean not unto your own understanding. Know and commune with the Lord in all your ways. And the promise to you is that He shall direct your paths.

Here, dear child of God, is the bed of the righteous in which you can rest in peace.

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