

## “In All Your Ways”

### Introduction

Good evening everyone,

Before we begin I'd like to thank Pastor Scott for giving me this opportunity to preach, I want to thank my brothers for their hard work in preparing their sermons before me, and thank you all for your prayers.

This evening, I'll be preaching from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 3, verses 5 and 6. For anyone who is unfamiliar with this book, Proverbs is a collection of wise teachings, written mostly by the former King of Israel, Solomon, son of King David. Proverbs 3:5-6 reads: **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”**

I've chosen to preach on this passage for many reasons. One of them is that these two verses apply to every single one of us here tonight. Wherever you are in life, maybe you have a very close relationship to God, maybe you say you're a Christian, but you feel very distant from Him, maybe you aren't sure what you believe. If you are here tonight, I want you to consider what these verses are saying. This isn't just a nice saying that “church people” should be putting on their coffee mugs and t-shirts, the truths in these verses should be at the very core of our lives.

Every single person here today leans on something to make sense of their lives. Tonight, I want us all to ask: Who—or what—is guiding my life? Can you honestly say that God makes your paths straight? Because that is God's promise here to every believer.

### I. Trust in the Lord with All Your Heart

#### A. Exegesis of “Trust in the Lord”

To begin, I'd like to turn our attention to the first phrase in verse 5, **“Trust in the LORD”**. What does it truly mean to *trust* in the LORD? The answer isn't as simple as it may seem.

The trust that Solomon is writing about here, was actually central to what Jesus taught in His earthly ministry. Turn with me, or look at the screens, to Matthew 6:25, where Christ said, **“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”** In verse 32 Jesus reminds them **“For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”** In this passage, Jesus connects having a true trust in God, with not being anxious at all, even for the things we need. The trust we have in our Heavenly Father is to be so sure, so confident, that we never anxiously worry about even the most pressing issues in our lives.

If that doesn't seem like a radical faith to you, Jesus ups the ante in Mark 11:22-24, where He answers Peter and the Apostles by saying, **“Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you,**

whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” What kind of faith is this? The exact kind of faith we are called to have in our Heavenly Father.

This level of trust in God that Jesus calls us to is exactly the kind of faith that the Old Testament calls us to as well. Thankfully though, Jesus didn't just talk about this kind of faith, He lived it out, He was a perfect example of what this trust looks like. One of the most powerful moments of Jesus' life that is recorded in Scripture is the time he spent in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ was waiting, knowing fully the agony of crucifixion that awaited Him. Read with me Luke 22:41-42, “And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” No human being has ever gone through anything close to the anguish and agony that Christ was about to go through. No human being has ever gone through what Christ was going through even in that garden.

Any other person in history would have sinned in that garden. In that moment, waiting to be tortured to death, bear the sin of the Elect, and bear the full weight of the Father's wrath, Jesus did the one thing we all would fail to do, and that is sinlessly trust His Father even in the face of that unimaginable suffering. He perfectly trusted God.

So, where are you placing your trust today? Is it in your plans, or your ability to control your future? Or are you trusting in the LORD, surrendering all your fears and anxieties, and leaning on Him like our Saviour did? Trusting in the LORD is not a passive mindset people, it is a radical choice to make every hour. The question we must ask ourselves is this: Are we truly trusting in the LORD, or in our own understanding?

#### B. “With All Your Heart”

King Solomon continues in verse 5, “Trust in the LORD with all our heart,”. It's important to note here that King Solomon, being the Ancient Israelite that he was, didn't think of the heart the way we think of the heart now. We, as 21<sup>st</sup> Century North Americans, often equate the heart in our culture with emotions, especially love. In Hebrew thought, the heart (*lev*) is the core of one's being, it encompasses your will, your emotions, and every decision you make. To trust in the LORD with *all* your heart, means we must completely surrender all of our thoughts to God with undivided loyalty. You cannot be partially trusting in God. Trusting God with all your heart means no corner of your being should lack trust in God, every aspect of your will, emotions, and decisions that you make should rest fully in God.

Solomon's call to trust in the LORD with all your heart in Proverbs 3:5 also seems to be a clear reference to Deuteronomy 6:4-6, which commands Israel to love God with all their heart, soul, and might. Likewise, in 1 Chronicles 28:9, Solomon's father David told Solomon, “you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind”.

And as you may have expected, Jesus repeated this same teaching Himself. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus says “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” So, what

are all these passages teaching us? Simply that trusting God with all your heart means that He is your sole master. He is the only master of your life. He is the master of your thoughts, of your emotions, and of your decisions. It's very tempting to divide our trust with worldly things like money, status, and human wisdom, but if you trust in anything other than God, then you are disobeying His Word, and sinning against Him.

So, the call in these verses is to examine our lives. Do you trust God with your eternal salvation, yet are slow to surrender things like your finances to Him? Do you rely on God in worship, but rely on your wisdom when your marriage gets difficult? Here's a difficult one, when you are deeply desiring something in your life, maybe even a righteous thing, are you willing to trust God in whatever outcome He chooses? Are you willing to say that there is no "best" or "worst-case" scenario, but that wherever God leads you in life, *that* is the best-case scenario. This week, please try and identify an area of your life where your trust wavers. Commit to praying daily for God to help you love and trust Him with all your heart.

### C. Christ as the Fulfillment

There's one more point I'd like to make before moving on to what Scripture says about our own understanding. The point is that Christ Jesus is the perfect image of what it looks like to trust God with all of one's heart. His life, death, and resurrection perfectly fulfills the command to surrender your heart to the Father's wisdom. Our faith wavers when God's path seems daunting, but Jesus trusted unwaveringly.

Christ isn't just a moral example though; through Him, we are able to trust God fully. Romans 8:14-16 is such an encouraging passage in this regard, listen to this gracious gift, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God". Christ has given us His Spirit, and the Spirit reorients our hearts to trust God as our loving Father. The Apostle Paul writes about the Spirit's work in our lives in Galatians 5, he lists the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;" As we abide in Christ, His Spirit works to conform us to His image that we may trust God more and more. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 promises: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." This transformation is what empowers us to trust God in every circumstance.

I love how much the Gospel of Jesus Christ deepens the truth in these verses. The truth of the matter is that we *will* fall far short of the demand in Proverbs 3:5, but Christ's flawless obedience atones for our faltering faith. As 1 Cor 1:30 declares, Christ is our "righteousness and sanctification and redemption". When we trust in Him for salvation, we are united with Him, and His righteousness becomes ours. Because Jesus trusted God fully, we can do what Hebrews 4:16 invites us to do, and that is to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,".

So look to Jesus! His perfect trust in the Father, His righteousness will cover you. Trust in Him for salvation, and His Spirit will empower you to trust God with all your heart.

## II. Do Not Lean on Your Own Understanding

### A. Exegesis of “Do Not Lean”

And with that said, now we get to the difficult part of Proverbs 3:5, “do not lean on your own understanding.” To lean on something implies resting on something for support, like a shepherd would lean on his staff.

What’s the problem with leaning on our own understanding? The book of Proverbs actually cautions against self-reliance quite often. I love Solomon’s bluntness in Proverbs 28:26, “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” Trusting in our own limited, sinful, and insufficient reasoning will always lead to folly. This echoes Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Leaning on our own understanding is really just pride, it’s assuming we know better than God.

And if you’re thinking, “Okay, but I don’t actually think I know better than God”, you’re wrong. Yes, every time you are anxious, afraid, angry at something you don’t like about your life right now, or simply trusting in your own plans, you are declaring that you know better than God. Jesus pointed to people who thought this way in His day, He rebuked them in Luke 18:9-14, “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.” For the sake of time here, I won’t read the whole parable, but in the parable there is a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisee relies on his own understanding, and he has so much pride, that he is blinded to his need for God’s mercy. Meanwhile, the tax collector has humility, and it leads to his justification. Jesus exposed the danger of trusting in our own understanding and wisdom, it *will lead* to your spiritual ruin.

Our culture, as the world always does, has grown to hate this teaching from Scripture. How many times in the last month have you heard something like “Follow your heart” or “just trust your instincts.” That’s wrong! Never do either of those things, it’ll never work out for you.

Lean on God’s Word, rest not on the staff of your own understanding, rest in His Spirit. When we rely on our own plans to make career choices, or decisions in our relationships or marriage, you are leaning on the wrong staff. So, when have you trusted in your own wisdom, your own good works, instead of God’s wisdom and promises? I want us all to reflect on that this week, because we need to repent of those sins, and we must trust in His perfect guidance to lead us rightly.

### B. The Danger of Self-Reliance

Now, don’t get the wrong impression here. Human reason is a gift from God. We should be very thankful for it. But it is very limited, and because of sin, very flawed now. Isaiah 55:8-9 declare, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Do we ever realize just how finite our perspective really is? Do you realize how clouded by sin we are, how incomplete our knowledge is? Yet how often do we lean on ourselves, assuming that we are reasonable enough to navigate life alone? I hope we all remember what Jesus taught about worldly wisdom in Matthew 7, teaching that those who build their lives on their own understanding, are like those who try to build a house on sand, and when the first storm comes, their lives are destroyed. Only God's wisdom, our solid rock, can guard our hearts and minds.

Scripture illustrates this vividly. I won't read the whole passage here, but in Luke 22:54-62, we see the Apostle Peter begin to lean on his own understanding after Jesus' arrest. Peter had vowed to be loyal to Jesus, that he wouldn't fall away, but when Jesus was arrested, he denied Jesus three times. Why did Peter fail? Because he wasn't trusting God with all his heart. The storm had come, the disciples had fled, his rabbi was in a trial, and all seemed to be crumbling around him. In that moment, Peter decided to trust in his own understanding of what was going on in his life, and he made a very wrong choice.

Peter's story warns us that leaning on our own understanding leads to failure, we should always turn to Christ. We all face the temptation to rely on ourselves though; we can all put ourselves in Peter's shoes and understand why he did what he did. In our career decisions, we may trust the plans we make in haste, chasing ambition without prayer. In a marriage, is it easy to lean on your understanding, your logic, the cultural norms around us, instead of leaning on Scripture? The issue is that self-reliance distances us from God's will. So again, please meditate on areas where you lean on your own understanding. Pray about this issue this week, and ask God for His wisdom as James 1:5 encourages.

### III. In All Your Ways Acknowledge Him (1200 words)

King Solomon follows verse 5 with this verse, **"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."** There's two words here that I want to emphasize, the words are "ways" and "acknowledge". The word "ways" here is *derek* in the Hebrew. *Derek* has many meanings in Hebrew, but it's clear that Solomon is using it here to mean our conduct, our actions, our ways of living. This echoes verse 5's call to trust in the Lord with "all our hearts," meaning every part of our lives should be submitted to God's will, joyfully trusting His plans for us. If Pastor Scott were preaching this sermon, he'd probably have already asked us, "What does all mean?" Well, all means all! All means no exceptions. No corner of our heart should withhold trust from God, and no action, no way of ours, should go without acknowledging God.

But what does it mean to "acknowledge" Him?

The word that has been translated as "acknowledge" in Proverbs 3:6 is the Hebrew word *yada*, and it's actually a really deep word. I mean no disrespect to the ESV translators, but "acknowledge" doesn't quite reflect the fullness of what *yada* is. *Yada* isn't a polite nod in God's direction, as if we're merely acknowledging His presence in passing. No, *yada* is to *know* God intimately, relationally, and personally. It is the same word used in God's Word to describe the deep, covenantal knowing between a husband and wife, and even deeper, the way God knows His people and desires to be known by them. This is not just head knowledge; this is relational knowing, a walking with, a trusting in, a giving on oneself. In all your ways, *yada* Him, know

Him deeply, walk with Him closely, involve Him in every step you take. That's what this verse is saying! Don't just tip your hat to God, live in a constant, intimate relationship with Him!

Proverbs 3:6 is about living with a constant awareness of God's presence, His sovereignty, and to constantly seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness.

Think about what this means. To yada God is to know him and concern yourself with His desires and will in your work, your family, all your thoughts, all your struggles. It's to say, "Lord, You are with me all my days, I want to always be knowing you in all that I say and do." It's believing His promises, understanding His character, and walking in friendship with our Lord and Saviour.

We're Calvinists, we understand God's sovereign rule over every detail of our lives. Well, to yada means trusting our sovereign God in all your ways, even when life feels uncertain. It's not just knowing about God, or acknowledging His existence—it's knowing Him like a friend who walks beside you.

Let me ask you: Where in your life are you not knowing God intimately? Is your job, or your worries keeping you from remembering who God is? Every way, every action, every moment of our lives belong to Him, and we should always be knowing that.

Think again of all our "ways"—derek in Hebrew. It's about the paths you walk, the actions you take, the way you live your life. Solomon's saying there's no part of your life that's too small for God. Your morning routine, your conversations at the dinner table, the choices we make at work, your response to trials—all these are your derek. And God says, "Know Me, Remember Me, and Consider My will in all of them." I think of what Paul writes in Philippians 4:6, "**do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**" I think Paul had these same principles in mind when he wrote these verses. In everything be in prayer before God, and as Paul says in verse 7, God's peace will guard our hearts and minds.

Jesus taught this same truth. He said, "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind**" (Matthew 22:37). No part of you is left out. No derek is excluded. If you're holding back—maybe keeping your finances, your relationships, or your fears to yourself—you're not knowing God fully.

Let me repeat myself: All your ways. All your ways. Does God have every one of them?

And just as I said about the last verse, here is where the gospel shines. We don't yada God perfectly. Sometimes we leave Him out of our ways, trusting our own plans. But Jesus never did. He acknowledged the Father in every moment, fulfilling Proverbs 3:6 for us. Through His perfect life, death, and resurrection, He made a way for us to know God intimately. When you trust in Christ, the Spirit enables you to yada God, to walk in friendship with Him.

Colossians 1:16-17 tells us everything was created through Christ and for Him. He's Lord over all our ways. When you acknowledge Him, you're not just following rules—you're walking with your Saviour and friend. When you fail, repent and turn to Jesus, and Christ's righteousness makes peace with God, so you can know Him more each day.

So, what does this look like? Acknowledge God by praying before you make decisions, big and small. Thank Him when you wake up, when you work, when you face trials. Believe His promises. Concern yourself with His glory in every choice you make. Live like Jesus is with you—because He is with you. Ask yourself: Is there a way in my life where I'm not knowing God? Maybe it's how you handle stress or plan your future. Bring it to Him!

#### IV. He Will Make Straight Your Paths

##### A. Exegesis of "Make Straight Your Paths"

With that said, the final phrase which I will be covering this evening is at the end of verse 6, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths." What does this promise really mean for the believer? I'll begin by making one thing clear, this verse is not guaranteeing you a life free of pain.

To understand first what Solomon means here by God making our paths straight, we must first understand in what way they're crooked. In Proverbs chapter 2, just before these verses, Solomon describes what God's wisdom and understanding does in the heart of the believer, read with me verses 12 and following "delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, to rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways".

Without the Spirit, we are all, by nature, walking in the way of evil, we all forsake the paths of uprightness, and walk in ways of darkness. By nature, we rejoice in evil. It is in that sense that our paths are crooked.

So, trusting and knowing God results in a deliverance from this crooked path. This is not a promise that God will eliminate suffering from your life, this is the promise of Psalm 23 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake."

The promise is that if we trust and know God, He will be our shepherd who won't lead us down the crooked path of wickedness, but the straight path of righteousness.

To keep drilling the point home, Scripture abounds with examples of believers whose paths were "straight" in God's purposes, but had very hard lives:

Genesis 22: God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his promised son. What an agonizing trial, yet God's straight path led to the provision of the ram and a reaffirmed covenant.

How about the story of Joseph? Betrayed by your brothers, sold into slavery, imprisoned unjustly, and then forgotten in that prison. Despite this painful, sad life, God was always guiding Joseph, his path was straight, and God was leading to his rise as Egypt's ruler and the salvation of Israel.

Job? Job suffered catastrophic loss – his wealth, children, and health – yet he trusted God. His path, though excruciating, was “straight”, and God restored him.

And what better example is there than Jesus, whose life was filled with suffering: betrayal, rejection, crucifixion. Yet, it was the “straight path” ordained by God for the salvation of mankind. His obedience through suffering made the way straight for all who follow Him, leading to eternal life.

The promise that God will make straight your paths should be so exciting and joyful for us hear. The promise of Proverbs 3:6 is that God will be our shepherd, who will guide us in all circumstances, including our suffering. We aren’t called to be seeking a pain-free life, we are called to submit to God’s will. We should be praying through suffering like Paul says in Philippians 4:6, seeking God’s wisdom, and trusting that God is our shepherd, and He’s in perfect control.

## B. God’s Faithful Guidance

The promise of God’s guidance in our lives is the cornerstone of our hope. He is our Good Shepherd, He directs our paths with His wisdom and love. I want to turn our minds to what is written in Isaiah 30:21, “**And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.**”

Isaiah 30 is part of a section (chapter 28-33) of Isaiah that addresses Judah’s rebellion during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, as they faced threats from Assyria. Instead of trusting in their Good Shepherd, Judah sought to make an alliance with Egypt, which was a decision that Isaiah condemned. God warned Judah that their reliance on their *own understanding* would lead to shame, yet He promised them in verse 15, “**In returning and rest you shall be saved**”. God promises those who repent of their sin, and seek rest in Him, that He will save and restore them.

In verse 18, Isaiah says “**Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you.**” In the following verses, Isaiah portrays God as a Good Shepherd who speaks clearly to His people, and is calling them back to His path. In verse 21 that I read earlier, that “word behind you”, that’s the voice of our Shepherd guiding His straying sheep. I love this chapter in Isaiah because it shows us, in such a beautiful way, that God wants to lead His people, He wants to guide those who trust Him, who are His sheep, His children. He wants to lead His sheep down His righteous paths, and have a good relationship with each of them.

## Conclusion

In closing, I’d like to recap the four points of this sermon.

First, we are called to trust in the LORD with all our hearts. There’s no such thing as a half-hearted faith. We must trust and love YHWH with all our hearts, just as David urged Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28, as Jesus modelled for us in Gethsemane, and as Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:6-7. Have you trusted God fully, or do you cling to something else?

Second, we must refuse to lean on our own understanding. We must instead do as James says in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” Where do you lean? On your own frail insight, or in the wisdom of the One who sees all?

Third, we must know God in all our ways, submitting every aspect of our lives to Him. Every moment, every choice, must bow to God’s lordship. Jesus lived this, doing only what pleased the Father (John 8:29). Is God your master, yield everything to Him.

Fourth, we are promised that He will make straight our paths. Abraham, Joseph, Job, these all had lives filled with pain. But all of them have one thing in common, they all had the same Shepherd. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, He will lead us down the straight path of righteousness.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.

Let’s pray

*Heavenly Father,*

*Your Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and because of You, we are standing here today, seeking to live in Your truth.*

*Grant us hearts that trust you fully, minds that lean on Your wisdom, help us to know you deeply in all our ways*

*Give us faith to follow you down our straight paths without doubting You and Your goodness*

*By your Spirit, please draw us closer to Christ, our Redeemer, Good Shepherd, and Friend*

*May we live out Proverbs 3:5-6, for Your glory.*

*In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen*