

## ***Presence Acknowledged: A God for all my Ways***

Proverbs 3:5-6

All right. I'm guessing that if you allowed me to snoop around your house for 30 minutes or so, I could find one. And if you snooped around our place, I *know* you'd find one. I'm confident that we have at least one in our house, and maybe more! There's good chance you have one too.

Why? Well because 30 million copies are in print, and available in least 35 languages. And beyond that, the author – H. Jackson Brown – has written least 2 dozen other books just like it.

Yeah...I'm talking about a copy of ***Life's Little Instruction Book***.<sup>i</sup> You may have Volume 1, perhaps also Volume 2 or perhaps you have the compiled *Complete Life's Little Instruction Book*.

Brown was a creative director for an advertising agency in Nashville TN who originally published *A Father's Book of Wisdom* and another called *P.S. I love You*. But it was the project he started when about to send his son Adam off to college...which became a going away present.

"I retreated to the family room," Brown recalls, "to jot down a few observations and words of counsel I thought he might find useful...to provide a road map." It was a few days after Adam had settled into college that he called his dad and said, "Hey dad, I've been reading the instruction book. It's one of the best gifts I've ever received. In fact, I'm going to add to it and someday give it to my son."<sup>ii</sup>

The original book contains 511 lines of advice. Here are 10 of them:

- *Overtip breakfast waitresses*
- *Learn three clean jokes*
- *Buy vegetables from truck farmers who advertise with hand-lettered signs*
- *Vote*
- *Learn how to drive a stick shift*
- *Resist the temptation to put a cute "can't answer now" message on your phone*
- *Be enthusiastic about the success of others*
- *Never tell anyone they look tired or depressed*
- *Never give anyone a fruitcake*
- *Make someone's day by paying the toll for the car behind you*

Ever wonder why a book like that sells? The most recent wisdom guru has been Jordan Peterson, the Canadian author of *Twelve Rules for Life: An Antidote for the Chaos* (2018). Peterson believes "people are born with the instinct for ethics and meaning, and should take responsibility to search for meaning above their own interests..."<sup>iii</sup> His rules include (i.e., the chapter titles):

1. *Stand up straight with your shoulders back*
2. *Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping*
3. *Make friends with people who want the best for you*
4. *Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today*
5. *Do not let your children do anything that makes you dislike them*
6. *Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world*
7. *Pursue what is meaningful (not what is expedient)*
8. *Tell the truth – or, at least, don't lie*
9. *Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don't*
10. *Be precise in your speech*
11. *Do not bother children when they are skateboarding*
12. *Pet a cat when you encounter one on the street*

I think Jackson Brown and Jordan Peterson and others are right. We naturally crave wisdom. Albert Einstein said it, “Any fool can know. The point is to understand.”

I once heard a friend say that his goal in living was to finish “without regret.” That is much easier said, than done. How about you? What’s your compass? The booklet in your family bathroom? The latest best seller? Or is there a better place...and a more trustworthy person with whom to consult...for navigating the one life we have *with wisdom?*

May I direct your focus to Proverbs chapter 3 (p.528 ESV)?

3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments,  
<sup>2</sup> for length of days and years of life  
and peace they will add to you.

<sup>3</sup> Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them around your neck;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.

<sup>4</sup> So you will find favor and good success  
in the sight of God and man.

**<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.**

**<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and He will make straight your paths.**

<sup>7</sup> Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

<sup>8</sup> It will be healing to your flesh  
and refreshment to your bones.

<sup>9</sup> Honor the LORD with your wealth  
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;  
<sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with wine.

The wisest Person you can know offers you His compass...absolutely free. Will we use it?

Allow me to focus on verses 5-6 for just a few minutes.

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.

<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and He will make straight your paths.

What's the wisdom found here? Simply this

**Proverbs 3:5-6:** When eagerly trusted in all things,  
God Himself brings a wise "straightness" to every decision,  
each endeavor or any relationship in life.

The book of the PROVERBS in the Sacred Scriptures is more than merely 31 chapters of  
smile-prompting advice. Derek Kidner explains:

*[Proverbs] is not a portrait album or a book of manners: **it offers a key to life.** The samples of behavior which it holds up to view are all assessed by one criterion, which could be summed up in the question, "Is this wisdom or folly?" This is a unifying approach to life, because it suits the most commonplace realms as fully as the most exalted. Wisdom leaves its signature on anything well-made or well-judged.*

*There is calculation in Proverbs, for there is every encouragement to count the cost or reward of one's actions, and to study the ways of getting things done. But wisdom as taught here is God-centered<sup>v</sup>...the fall of man was a choosing of what bid fair 'to make one wise' (Genesis 3:6), but flouted the first principle of wisdom, the fear of the Lord<sup>v</sup> (cf. Prov. 1:7).*

Bruce Waltke adds,

*An English proverb refers to a short, pithy saying that has popular currency, but [a Biblical] "masal" (pronounced "maw-shawl) refers to a concise saying<sup>vi</sup> that has currency among those who fear the Lord. [The Lord's wisdom] is not popular with the masses. Wisdom restricts the acceptance of her words "to the upright," "to those who find knowledge" (cf. 8:9). Were they popular with the masses, Wisdom would not have to stand at the gate of the city pleading a hearing<sup>vii</sup> for her sayings (cf. Proverbs 1:20-21, 8:1-4).<sup>viii</sup>*

## A KEY TO LIFE IN PROVERBS 3:5-6

So what God-centered "key to life" do we find in Proverbs 3:5-6? Let's take a good, close look.

You'll immediately notice that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> address (3:1) from Solomon to "My Son." In the first, chapter two, Solomon first makes the case for pursuing God's wisdom. Now, in chapter three, Solomon even more urgently describes for his son what eager commitment<sup>ix</sup> to God's wisdom looks like and the accompanying motivation. In the time we have, let's zero in on verses 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.

<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and He will make straight your paths.

These two verses contain three wise steps which, if obeyed, will result in a motivating outcome, which lead to “life.”

### Wise Step #1 ***Trust in the Lord with all your heart***

The word “trust” (*betah*) means to “actively rely on,” to depend upon for one’s sense of security because, quite truly, there are many dangers which threaten. Perhaps better, “Entrust yourself” to the Lord.

It’s a dominating attitude which says, “The life I live is not my own; the life I have is not mine to direct on my own. If my personal code is *I can do this myself; I am self-reliant. I don’t need anyone else – and certainly not the Lord God – to protect and direct my life...* I am a fool. Quite to the contrary, I entrust me to the Lord and I trust the Lord with me. My everyday confidence is “neither in an impersonal created order subject to my rational control nor in an impersonal code of ethics inherited from my forefathers” but rather the Lord God who always keeps His promises to His own. I know that as I pursue the Lord, he will “uphold in His own time and in His own way”<sup>x</sup> all that is best and all that concerns me.

Hebrew scholars will argue that the word “trust” had originally the idea of *lying helplessly face downwards* (cf. Jeremiah 12:5b RSV, Psalm 22:9b).<sup>xi</sup>

### Wise Step #2 ***And do not lean on your own understanding***

One commentator noted *do not “support yourself,” rely* (RSV).<sup>xii</sup> Another,

“do not rely, or lean, as on a broken crutch. *On your own understanding* stands in marked antithesis to [the first line’s] *in the Lord*. One is a fool to rely on his thimble of knowledge before [God’s] vast ocean, or on his own understanding, which is often governed by irrational urges that he cannot control” (cf. Prov 26:5,12,16, 28:26a, esp. 30:1-6, Job 38:4-5).<sup>xiii</sup>

Step #1 – entrust yourself completely to the Lord. Step #2 – do not lean on the broken crutch, on the thimble-full amount of your own understanding.

### Wise Step #3 ***In all your ways acknowledge Him***

The word “acknowledge” is the Hebrew *ya-da*, meaning “personal knowledge, intimate experience with everything about a person.” Adam *knew* his wife, and she conceived, and gave birth to a son.<sup>xiv</sup>

Not merely *make Him aware* of your ways, but rather *invite the Lord into up-close-and-personal*

*involvement* in all your ways. Schultz adds

This also suggests that God does not dictate His thoughts and plans to us. He allows us to take the initiative in planning the route. We are invited to consult Him so that we will be kept from engaging upon paths that would lead to a dead end. **“In all your ways acknowledge him”** covers the whole of human life and not just the moments of crisis in which the great and important decisions are made. Involving God in the details, the nitty gritty of our daily existence will make through ourselves upon Him in moments of great importance a natural reflex.<sup>xv</sup>

For the person – young, older, or in-between – who truly wants to experience all in life that God’s presence can bring, there isn’t anything you don’t invite the Lord into.

In all your ways **know** Him...and here’s the outcome = **He will make your path** (literally)

**straight and smooth.** Kidner notes “the promise that closes the verse offers more than guidance, though it includes it.”<sup>xvi</sup> In short, the Lord Himself will *point the way* and *plow the way*.

I have never been on more difficult, uneven, water gutted, slippery, treacherous, throw-you-around-the-back-of-the-van-in-a-moment’s-notice-then-throw-you-in-the-complete-opposite-direction-roads than when I was with a team of water-well drillers heading into the backcountry of Bolivia. 6 hours on those roads was more than enough. Any shrewd chiropractor would locate his/her clinic there...or near roads some of you have traveled in the Congo, or in rural Tajikistan, or some other undeveloped part of the world.

What a difference to merging on to a newly finished interstate highway where the pavement is smooth and straight, and you glide ahead to your purposed destination.

Corrie Ten Boom – who as a disciple of the Jesus Christ survived her Nazi prison-camp experience going on to serve Him for decades with incredible fruitfulness, simply said, **“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”**

I don’t know how you would summarize the teaching of this life-offering proverb. Mine is

### **Proverbs 3:5-6**

When eagerly trusted in all things,  
God Himself brings a wise “straightness” to every decision,  
each endeavor or any relationship in life.

### **MEANING for US TODAY**

First, **the DOORWAY** into living with the wisdom and blessing of God is **Jesus Christ**. Listen to

Paul, Jesus’ apostle to the 1<sup>st</sup> century world – who put his life on the line so others could know Jesus:

**Colossians 2** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the

riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is **Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

He wrote to those living in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:23-25 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called (to believe and salvation), both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Jesus himself dared to say, "I came that men might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b).

He dared to insist, "I am the truth, the way, and the life" (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit would start with you, perhaps, right here. Have you made the decision to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior/Lord?

Second, if you have, **Disciples** of Jesus Christ **are purposefully eager to live wisely.**

Ephesians 5:15-18 Look carefully then how you walk (be watching carefully how you walk DLNT), not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

"Life," Fred Rogers once said, "is deep and simple...and what our society gives us is shallow and complicated."<sup>xvii</sup> Wise disciples bring "all of their heart" to the Lord every day.

Third, taking Proverbs 3:5-6 seriously is **one of the very best ways** – every day – **to experience God's presence.** Its steps (trusting, not leaning upon yourself, inviting His intimacy into every way) lead you ***into a life with God*** that is about as good as it gets. A life that is grounded in trusting Him with all your heart. This offers an interesting picture:<sup>xviii</sup>

<https://youtu.be/X8d3KrW1kIQ>

(27 seconds)

Are we ever vulnerable? Of course. Jesus himself said (John 16:33),

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Even Proverbs 3:5-6 Christians encounter some of the most difficult stretches. The promise for Jesus' disciples today is not that life will never have tough turns or bumpy stretches. The promise is that God can be trusted specifically in your life, to provide wisdom and to straighten the way.

James writes (1:2-5)

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

Trust  
is not being afraid even when vulnerable  
because of the God you know  
and Who knows you.

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<sup>i</sup> The original volume was published by Rutledge Hill Press, 1991, and later or similar editions by Thomas Nelson from 1994 on)

<sup>ii</sup> From [https://www.scnov.com/opinion/article\\_54245b1d-b447-5a23-9fe4-abc421f2815e.html](https://www.scnov.com/opinion/article_54245b1d-b447-5a23-9fe4-abc421f2815e.html)

<sup>iii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12\\_Rules\\_for\\_Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_Rules_for_Life). In January 2019, Peterson claimed the book has sold 3 million copies.

<sup>iv</sup> Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 13.

<sup>v</sup> Kidner, 15.

<sup>vi</sup> Waltke uses here the word *apothegm*, cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans), Kindle Edition.

<sup>vii</sup> 1:20-21 Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks; and 8:1-4 Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.

<sup>viii</sup> Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*.

<sup>ix</sup> Kidner entitles 3:1-36 "The whole-hearted disciple" and 3:1-10 "glad commitment." *Proverbs*, p.63.

<sup>x</sup> Quotes in this paragraph are from Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*.

<sup>xi</sup> Kidner, 63.

<sup>xii</sup> Kidner.

<sup>xiii</sup> Waltke.

<sup>xiv</sup> From John Schultz, *Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* © 2006 [www.Bible-Commentaries.com](http://www.Bible-Commentaries.com) The tension that runs through the whole Old Testament is the conflict between the law of God and the condition of the human heart. The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary observes: Forgetfulness of God's law is the fault of the heart. When the heart keeps God's precepts as a precious treasure, the memory does not easily forget them." And The Pulpit Commentary observes: "Forgetting here is not so much oblivion arising from defective memory, as a willful disregard and neglect of the admonitions of the teacher." The Hebrew word, rendered "your heart" is libekha, which, according to the The Pulpit Commentary, occurs 25 times in The Book of Proverbs. The Hebrew word for "trust" in vs. 5 is batach, which has the meaning of a sense of security or "to hide for refuge." The English phrase "entrust yourself to" conveys the meaning better. Our faith in God is based on the assumption that He is absolutely reliable. The Israelites struggled with this when they left Egypt and entered the desert. They believed [or came to believe] that God had taken them to the desert to die (Exodus 14:11,12, 16:3, Numbers 14:16, 20:4, 21:5). Trust in God means that we do not allow ourselves to think that God would, at any time or in any way, be governed by ulterior motives in His dealings with us. It means understanding that, in spite of what our circumstances may look like, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Vs.6 – "in all your ways acknowledge him," reads literally "know Him in all your ways." The Hebrew word yada has a wide variety of meanings. It refers, among others, to intimate knowledge as in the verse "Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain." The KJV reads: "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain." The idea is that we keep no secrets from God but we tell Him everything because of our love relationship with Him.

This also suggests that God does not dictate His thoughts and plans to us. He allows us to take the initiative in planning the route. We are invited to consult Him so that we will be kept from engaging upon paths that would lead to a dead end. "In all your ways acknowledge him" covers the whole of human life and not just the moments of crisis in which the great and important decisions are made. Involving God in the details, the nitty gritty of our daily existence will make through ourselves upon Him in moments of great importance a natural reflex.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xvi</sup> Kidner, 64.

<sup>xvii</sup> Quoted in *Christianity Today*, March 6, 2000, p.45.

<sup>xviii</sup> Ad by The St Paul: Property and Liability Insurance One of the most effective TV ads I ever saw was offered by an insurance company. It featured a young girl standing alone in a picturesque meadow. The Cameron then pans to another part of the field, there standing a gigantic African rhinoceros. The ominous beast begins a lethal charge towards the girl, whose serene and happy face remains unmoved.

As the rhinoceros gets closer, the words appear on the screen. "Trust is not being afraid."

Then, a mere split second before the rhino tramples the helpless child, it stops. And the girl, her smile never wavering, reaches up and pets the animal on its massive horn. The final words then appear. "Even when you are vulnerable."