

Knowing and Doing God's Will for Your Life

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Date: 30 August 2015

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[0 : 00] Father, many of us here this morning are facing really big decisions. Some of us, Father, are maybe making big decisions around stocks.

Others maybe about whether we should do something about our marriage or try to get married.

Some of us are trying to maybe decide how to deal with really problematic relationships.

Father, you know that many of us here this morning are struggling, pondering very big decisions.

We ask, Father, that you would lead us and guide us.

We ask, Father, that you help us to hear your word so that we would hear your wisdom, that your wisdom would speak into our life about how to make these decisions and how to move forward.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us that your word might enter deep into our lives and that our lives will then bear much fruit to bring you glory.

[0 : 58] And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So, does God guide Christians?

Can you know God's will about really important decisions? Can you know God's will about the direction of your life? Does God only give guidance about spiritual things?

Will he give you guidance about practical things, like whether you should buy a particular house or sell stocks, for those of us who actually have any money to buy stocks, or get out of the stock market right now?

Does God guide Christians? Does he guide in important decisions and in small decisions? Today, we're going to look at a series of Proverbs from the book of Proverbs that talk about knowing God's will and doing it.

And as those of you who have been here some of the other weeks, in the reading that came in your bulletin, I just put all of the Proverbs in the order that they come in the Bible.

[2 : 07] But as we look at these questions, and this is sort of the key Proverbs in the book of Proverbs about this, we're going to look at them not in the order that they're written. That's sort of how the book of Proverbs is designed. So, Andrew, if you could put up the very first proverb.

It's Proverbs 21, verse 5. Proverbs 21, 5. And could you folks read this proverb with me? The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Now, this could be in the business pages of the National Post or the Globe and Mail or the Citizen, especially if you sort of understood some of the language here a little bit. It's a very, very good translation.

But actually, the word hasty in the original language has a double sense. It not only means you're making really quick decisions, but it's saying that your decisions are basically influenced by events, that you're just merely responding to events.

In other words, behind this is the image, those of us who are really, really old and remember that there used to be these things called pinball machines. And, you know, you'd bang the ball and it would go up and it would just sort of bounce around in there and you had little flippers that you could do.

[3 : 17] And that's sort of the image of the hasty person. That they're basically just being pushed around by events. And the image of the diligent person has a similar, like the opposite type of an image connected to diligence, that it's not just that you're really, really like having a plan and moving forward, but that you've thought the plan through separate from events so that you're not only, you're not just merely responding to events, but you're in a sense influencing events.

And you're influencing, you're actually picking a path through events. And so the Proverbs, I mean, you know, when you understand it that way, the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance. And, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

I said, that could be in the National Post. And that could be in the Globe and Mail. It could be in the Citizen. It could be on TV. It's very sort of like commonplace, but, you know, wise advice. And let's look at another proverb.

You could put up 1522, Andrew. Let's say it together. Without counsel, plans fail. But with many advisors, they succeed.

Now, see, once again, this has, you know, you can see how there's some wisdom to this. All of us have probably met this type of person where they basically, they don't do any reading.

[4 : 34] They don't do any research. They just sort of sit on their duff and three thoughts come into their head. And as far as they're concerned, those three thoughts that have come into the head, that's sufficient. And now they know something about a topic.

I mean, maybe some of us are sitting beside that person this morning. I don't know. But we all know that type of a person. They don't take any type of research. They don't take any type of outside advice. There's a basic type of pridefulness and ignorance in terms of how they go through life. And this proverb is, once again, this could be in the National Post. It could be in Globe and Mail. It could be on CBC. It's just, you know, that if you want to be wise about making decisions, you should have a basic humility that allows you to seek out, you know, other people who are going to speak into that situation.

You try to get really good advice, and then you try to move forward. Now, at this point in time in the sermon, some of you are saying, gosh, is this ever boring stuff. And let me say something here.

I don't know. If you're a non-Christian, and you've come into this room, at this point in time, the Christians around you, something for many of them, many of us, is going on.

[5 : 40] You see, many Christians suffer with a deep-seated disappointment in God. And we suffer with a deep-seated disappointment in God that leads us to a fundamental cynicism about life.

And we might cover that disappointment with God and that cynicism about life by saying that we're prophetic or really hip Christians or emergent Christians or really reformed or really, you know, whatever.

Well, we have some type of cover. But the fact of the matter is, is that we were really hoping for something more about knowing God's will than something that could be in the National Post or the Globe and Mail.

We were hoping that the Bible was going to give us actually a lot more concrete, like real advice. And so we start to hear these proverbs and we start to settle back and say, oh yeah, okay, once again, we're not always conscious of this, right?

Once again, I'm going to be disappointed. I'm not going to get any help at all this morning about these decisions. And that's the way the Bible always is. And that's the way God is.

[6 : 51] But then in a couple of minutes, we'll get up and sing and we'll say how great thou art and how wonderful and we just bow down and all that. But actually we're doing it with a fundamentally cynical spirit.

For you non-Christians who are present, you might not realize that. Probably about many of the people that you know who are Christians. In fact, we don't even struggle with cynicism. We embrace it. We don't struggle with disappointment with God.

We have learned how to live with it. So maybe I'll just end right now. I'll just end right now. We'll all go home depressed.

So, well, let's look at this. We're still talking about guidance and we're still talking about knowing God's will.

But now let's at least acknowledge that so far we're a bit disappointed. But let's look at another proverb. Andrew, could you put up Proverbs 12.5?

[7 : 51] Could you folks say this with me? The thoughts of the righteous are just. The counsels of the wicked are deceitful. Now, you see, if you just look at all of these Proverbs, it sounds like they could be just like truisms and power of positive thinking.

You might just think that the Bible is like a power of positive thinking book, only just not as effective and not as helpful. But actually, all of a sudden now you realize that, because you have to look at all these Proverbs together to actually start to get their wisdom.

And you realize that the book of Proverbs is actually very, very wise without being cynical about what human beings are like. Here's the problem. You know that earlier proverb that we said that if you seek lots of counselors, you're more likely to succeed?

The problem in life is that there are lots of counselors in life who are downright deceitful and evil. And they are not shy about sharing their advice.

In fact, just think about this for a moment. Imagine that you put a little thing in Kijiji this afternoon. I have just come in to \$100,000 inheritance. I am seeking some financial advisors to help me know how to advise me.

[8 : 58] Could you please email me? How many people think that the first 100 people to respond would all be trying to help you? If you do, I have some swampland to sell you after the service.

I mean, the fact of the matter is, we all know that maybe there's going to be like a really good, self-effacing, wise person who will respond to that Kijiji ad, but for every one of them, there will be a whole pile of crooks, charlatans, deluded, evil individuals who will quickly respond.

And some of them have professional certification. So all of a sudden, okay, well, one, okay, that's, okay, I mean, that's sort of a good, that's a good of a bit of a bit warning, George.

And it's good to see that the Bible, as you'll see on and on, this isn't a cynical thing, by the way, but, okay, that's sort of good to know, but I'd still like some more concrete help.

Well, let's look at Proverbs 19.21. Proverbs 19.21. Can you say this with me? Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

[10 : 07] Now, why is this significant? So here's the problem. So I'm trying to make a decision about something, you know, or a group is trying to make a decision about something, and we want God to make it clear to us what his will is, but the fact of the matter is is that we don't want to acknowledge that we are, in many cases, a pinball machine inside.

That it is not just that there's external things that keep batting us around, but we, in fact, are often blind to the fact that, you know, in the same day, in the same day, a Christian young man might sort of have images of him being like another, a second coming of Billy Graham, and then later on, he'll think about how he's God's gift to women, and then later on, he'll think about how great a scholar he's going to be, and then later on, he'll think about how great an athlete he's going to be, and then later on, he'll think about how spectacular rich he's going to be, and then later on, he'll think about how he's going to be like Mother Teresa and give his life to the poor, and that's just in three hours. Now, if that's what we're like, how can God guide us? We don't even know who we are. We're not even often honest about the fact that those thoughts, those desires, those self-images, those motivations, and we haven't even got to motivations.

Like, often when we're seeking God's guidance and will about a thing, well, what's actually influencing our choice? Are we trying to make a particular choice because we're still angry at our parents? Are we trying to make a particular choice because we want to show that coach that we had when we were kids that he was completely and utterly wrong about us?

Are we trying to make a decision because we want to be hip? Are we trying to make a decision because we want to make sure that nobody thinks we're trying to be hip in such a way that we're really, really, really hip? Are we trying to make a decision because the last thing we've ever been in our life is hip and we want to have it stay that way?

[12 : 08] Are we trying to make a decision because we really, really, really, really, really just have made an idol or something? And how many of us think that we know that other people's motives are mixed but our motives are pure?

How can God give you advice? How can he give me advice when I'm not even aware of all of the motives and plans that are going around in my head?

Part of the thing that makes us so confused about God if you look at this proverb is that it's so easy for us.

We're not even conscious of the fact that we live in complete and utter confused denial about what's going on inside of us and that God is not like that.

We project and transfer our cacophony, our voices inside and we project that onto God and we don't understand that God is not like that.

[13 : 09] He doesn't have an environment. He's not pushed around by events. He's consistent. He's always himself and his plans stand. That's what God's like.

The true and living God. So some of us say, okay, okay, George. Yeah, okay. Okay, I mean, just okay.

Maybe some of that was right. I mean, I've actually never thought I'd be like another Billy Graham, but you know, you've missed a couple, maybe some rude and evil ones that you didn't want to say

in church. But you know, maybe, maybe God could just give an experience or a Bible verse that would really help me focus.

Well, let's look at another proverb. Let's put up Proverbs 16.2. Proverbs 16.2. And let's say this together. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.

Now, here's another problem, folks. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, George. Yeah, yeah. I know yet, you know, I was, you know, in any given day, I might be thinking I'm God's gift to women and I, you know, how faithful I am and then I, you know, and then how rich I am and then how generous I am and how powerful I am and how self-serving I am and not realize how, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[14:28] But it's not only that, but the fact of the matter is that we regularly think that we're pure. We're pure. I mean, just as I said a couple of minutes ago, how many of us, when we're in trying to make a decision or listening to advisors, we think that everybody else has lots of different motives, but we know our motive and our motive is pure.

I'm a good person. See, the problem is, the problem is that we already have focus. Problem is, the focus is that we think we're pure.

How can God give me guidance when that's what's going on in my heart and I don't even recognize it? Like, how can God speak to me and guide me when I am unaware that that's what's going on? Proverbs, I think it's Psalm 36 too. It's in part of the going deeper and just in case you're curious, every week in the bulletin, I put something called growing in grace and going deeper and a lot of, like some people wonder why I don't keep going off to lots of other Bible verses throughout the Bible, but what I always do is I give you those other Bible verses in a thing called going deeper and you can look at it later on.

You look at Psalm 36 too, it's very, very important, we should memorize it, that we flatter ourselves. I flatter myself too much to detect or hate my own sin.

[15:48] That's very profound psychology. So some of you might say, okay, George, I actually don't think I'm pure.

I actually think I'm really, really, really, really dumb and bad and stupid and that's actually not quite how I think of myself.

Well, I'm going to help you. Let's look at Proverbs 3, 7 and 8, although you're not going to think it's very helpful. Let's read it together. Be not wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. You see, here's part of the great dilemma is that even those of us who think that we don't have a problem with thinking that we're pure in our own eyes.

Our problem is we think that we're really bad, we think we're really stupid, that we think everybody else is good, that everybody else is wise and God's just made me stupid and he's made me bad and he's made me a failure.

[17:00] The fact of the matter is is that when we're saying that about ourselves, we think we're wise in terms of understanding ourselves. And, you know, once again, if you're asking God to give you guidance and if you actually think you're wise, in fact, if the fundamental Canadian problem is that we basically think we're wiser than God and whenever we even read the Bible, many of us are waiting to see if the wisdom of the Bible will match up with our wisdom.

So how can God give us guidance? How would we recognize it if that's who we are? And some of you say, George, okay, okay, that's all true.

I would just like to know how things are going to shape out. Like, are there some proverbs like that will help us to know how things are going to work out or shape up? Well, there's a proverb about that.

If you would join with me in saying Proverbs 27.1. Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring.

I mean, this is going to sound like I'm being anti-left-wing and I don't intend to make a political type of comment on this. It just is that, like in our day and age, people who think they know how history is progressing, if I was doing a sermon in the 1930s, it would be that I'd give left and right-wing examples, but today there's virtually nobody on the right who sort of believes that they understand where history is going.

[18:41] But, I mean, anytime somebody says they have progressive values, they think they know the future. Nobody knows the future. The Fed does not know what's going to happen in the economy over the next couple of years.

Neither does the International Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, neither does any bank, neither does any financial investor, and now to completely and utterly offend many of you, nobody knows what the climate is going to be in 20 years.

Nobody knows that. Nobody. Nobody knows the future. Nobody knows the future.

George, are you just saying that we should just despair? That we should just be passive? Are you saying that Christians are just couch potatoes? That we shouldn't make plans?

I thought you said that the hasty person is a person just banged around by events, and the diligent person is the one who has a plan and moves things. Are you now saying that, is this proverb saying the opposite of that?

[19 : 50] Well, I'm going to answer that, but I just want to say, nobody knows the future. Absolutely nobody. Absolutely nobody. None.

And so to base an ethical system, a political system, on a sure knowledge of the future is really foolish. foolish. I don't mean to offend you, but it just is.

Let's look at another proverb now that I'm really depressing you and offending you. Let's look at Proverbs 20, 24, and then we're going to sort of gather up some of these thoughts. Could you say this with me?

A man's steps are from the Lord. How then can man understand his way? So here's the first thing before I just comment specifically on this. Why is it that we find it depressing to be told that we're human?

Like when I say that no human being knows the future, many of us take that as a depressing thought. Why is it depressing to be told that we're human? I mean, the Bible would say that the reason is is that at the very center of every person's heart is a desire to be God.

[21 : 01] And if at the very center of our heart is a desire to be God, to be told that we are human is depressing. But do you think a fish is depressed to be told it's a fish? When Rocky, my German shepherd puppy, comes up to me, I say, oh, Rocky, you're a dog.

You think Rocky goes, oh, no, I'm a dog. I mean, maybe, maybe because dogs sort of think they're humans. So that might be not a good example. And cats think they're God. So, apart from dogs and cats, which sort of confuse things, right?

But, you know, why is it we, why do we find it depressing to be told that we're human and to be reminded that just every human being is finite and does not know the future? And here, this other type of thing, you know, Proverbs 20, 24, a man steps it from the Lord.

How then can a man understand his way? I will say it. Men, we're all Jason Bourne. And for many of us, we think, wow, that's really cool.

I can be on the ferry and how is it that I know that the gun is going to be in that vehicle and then that guy can do that? Wouldn't we all, guys, a lot of us wish we could be Jason Bourne. No, I don't mean it that way. If you've seen the movie, Jason Bourne, the movie sort of begins with him floating in the water and he wakes up, he doesn't know his past.

[22 : 19] And an amnesiac can't know who he really is because he doesn't know his past. If you're a, she can't know who she is because she knows, doesn't know her past. And this proverb is telling us that every human being is an amnesiac.

That we don't remember all of the things about our past. We don't know everything about ourselves. That, in fact, even at a very, very fundamental way, remember I said, why is it that, why is it that we find it depressing to be reminded that we are a human being?

Well, that's maybe an indication that we actually really do think that we should be God. But the fact of the matter is, is that for Christians, in the Bible's understanding, which is a very, very wise understanding, human beings are not just like a machine.

We're not just a collection of atoms that are randomly thrown together. We are not just a piece of consciousness that separated itself from God and their ultimate destiny is to lose any sense of self and to be merged into the one.

No, every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. And that means that we do not understand or know ourselves unless we know the one that we are made in the image of.

[23 : 33] And so, a man steps her from the Lord, how then can a man understand his way? This is a proverb talking about the fact that the Lord, it's not just that the Lord has, it's not as if the Lord has made us a marionette that's controlled this throughout our life, but that the Lord is ultimately sovereign over everything.

He's not a God who's distant and now has completely and utterly forgotten us. He's always present with us. He knows what goes on in our life. The God that, the living God, the God that really does exist, he knows me and you from the moment of our conception.

He knows even what is for me future and you future. He knows the moment of our death. He knows every instant along that line of us. He knows us right down to our depths.

He knows the dreams that we have at night that we do not remember when we wake up. He knows how there are things in our lives that have been mountains that influence. He knows how we think that there are things in our past that are mountains that influence that actually don't, that there are hidden mountains in our past that are influencing how we move.

He knows everything about us and we are fundamentally an amnesiac about much of our life and therefore how can we understand ourselves and how can we even understand why it is that sometimes God will tell us to do certain things even if we maybe recognize that it comes from God.

[25 : 00] Andrew, could you put up my first point just to try to bring this all together? I deceive myself and want binoculars, techniques, control, guarantees, and a two-button life for my life.

that is why we are disappointed with God. We are disappointed with God to the extent that we deceive ourselves and think that what we want are binoculars.

I want to know the future. By the way, there's all sorts of Christians who rush in and... Sorry, I don't want to offend anybody. But who mistakenly believe they can turn the Bible into binoculars and nobody can turn the Bible into binoculars to know the future.

I have the power to know the future. I have the power to know how stock markets are going to go up, how the wars are going to happen and what you should be doing. That's what we want.

We want binoculars. We want... You are hope... People come... We're disappointed with God because we hope that I will give you a proverb that will be binoculars to see into the future. And we want...

[26 : 22] We want techniques. We want the Bible to tell us that if we do these particular steps... You do this step, this step, this step, this step, and then this will happen.

And we go, whoa, that's what I want in the Bible. I want... I want God to tell me those steps that I do. Okay, I have a financial decision. Okay, you flip through the Bible. Okay, I do this step, this step, this step, and then I'm going to have success.

What is it I want? I want God to give me the steps I can use for my plans so I'm successful.

And God doesn't give it and I am disappointed with God. And I don't even recognize why I'm disappointed with God. And not only do I want God to give me binoculars and techniques, I want Him to give me control.

I can do these steps that come from God. And if they come from God, I want Him to guarantee success. And on top of it all, I want a two-button life.

[27 : 24] It's an adaptation from an image from the movie, the Will Smith movie, iRobot. Right? All the cars are self-driving, but Will Smith, he likes to drive the car himself sometimes.

And so what this is, imagine that Google cars are successful in 10 or 15 years' time. We all have self-driving cars. And what do we want in our life? We want to be able to have this self-driving car, but every once in a while we want to do something ourselves.

We'd like to have a button in that car that we can press so that all of a sudden I have control of the car. I can cut that person off. I don't like that person. I want to drive really slow to really bother everybody behind me because that's a way to get some control in my life to go 40 in a 60 zone and frustrate the heck out of all the people behind me.

And then, you know, when we're tired of that, we like to push a button and let it go back to the car being control. How does that work with God? We get into trouble in our life and we wish that we could push a button in the Bible and then all of a sudden God wakes up, gets into marionette roll, He attaches little strings to every person in our situation and He can start to control things and He can make this person give me \$5,000 and this person is going to remove all of my debt and these three people are going to forgive me and these two people are going to actually invite me home.

Oh, and this woman is going to date me and this school is going to accept me and then we have all the marionettes going and finally our financial problems, our relational problems, our career problems are fixed and then we hope we can press a button so God cuts all the strings and we can get on with running our life and if you don't think that goes on in your life you are really self-deceived.

[29 : 10] If I don't think that goes on in my life I am really self-deceived. That's what we want. In fact, you know, in an odd way one of the things that terrifies non-Christians about the Christian faith because everybody would like God to show up and do a marionette act to fix things periodically, one of the things that terrifies non-Christians is they worry that if they press the marionette strings that they'll never, that God will never allow them to press the button to get control again and they'll spend the rest of their life as a marionette and before you know it they're a suicide bomber or they're decapitating people on Greyhound buses and that's the fear of a lot of people about becoming a Christian.

They press that marionette button and they lose all control and then they end up preaching on street corners or something weird. If you do that I'm not saying you're weird. I'm just saying what people are afraid of, okay?

You'll end up being at the front of a church as a pastor preaching and not really terrifying. I don't know, whatever it is, you know? And so that's what's going on. That's one of the reasons why we're disappointed with God.

That's one of the reasons why we have a hard time recognizing God's guidance is because I deceive myself and want binoculars, techniques, control, guarantees and a two-button life for my life and I want versions of Christianity that pretend to show me that and I've just told you it doesn't happen and that's why there's only about a hundred of you here and a lot of times if I pretend that there's ways to do all of that those churches might have 15,000.

Go figure. By the way, empty churches can try to do it as well. I'm not dissing big churches. There's good big churches. So what do we do?

[30 : 55] In some ways, the whole sermon is just trying to help us desire to memorize and pray one proverb from the book of Proverbs and if you put it up right now, I've just changed the wording slightly to make the third line more literal.

We're going to end up reading this several times because if all you get away from this is an awareness that part of your problem and my problem is our self-deception and what we desire for God to do and realize that this is the heart of guidance and you just memorize this thing that if that's all I've accomplished then I've accomplished a really good thing.

Could you read with me Proverbs, say with me Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Know Him in all your ways and He will make your paths straight.

Can you say it with me again? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Know Him in all your ways and He will make your paths straight.

Here's the thing about this proverb. It's well worth meditating upon. It's well worth memorizing. It's well worth turning into a prayer. Trust in the Lord.

[32 : 17] In Hebrew, unlike in English, there are many words for God and in all of the words that they have for God in the Hebrew language, they have what we often think of like the general view of God in our culture, which is that, I mean, one view is that sort of everything's God, but another view is that God is something or someone or some principle which is very distant and far away.

But the Lord is always used, the Hebrew word translated as Lord is here the intimate, personal God who enters into a covenant with ordinary human beings like you and me.

that's the word which is here. Like a marriage, marriage is no longer viewed as a covenant. It's viewed as a type of contract governed by the state.

But historically, the idea of marriage is that it's a covenant, that you're entering into a type of, a special type of relationship with another person. And so every time you see the word Lord in the Old Testament, it's in a well-translated Bible, it's using that understanding of God.

So when it says, trust in the Lord with all your heart, it's not saying trust in the distant God, trust in the force, trust in an impersonal God, trust in a God who only set things up and then is off doing something far more interesting.

[33 : 43] It's not saying trust in what is everything. It's saying trust in the God who is a person who enters into a covenant with ordinary human beings like you and me.

And who enters into a covenant with ordinary human beings like you and me, and He knows, He knows that our hearts are full with different plans. He knows that we don't recognize ourselves and understand ourselves.

He knows that we desire to be like God and not have Him be God. He knows all those things about us and still He, knowing you and me perfectly, desires to enter in to a covenant of love and protection for all eternity with ordinary, rebellious, fallen human beings like you and me.

And so for many people, the idea that we are to, say Proverbs with me again, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

Know Him in all your ways and He will make your path straight. The whole idea of knowing God for many people is very frightening. It's either like knowing a force or it's like knowing some big, huge, angry judge.

[34 : 56] But not only is the word Lord a covenant word, for us, on the other side of the cross, we understand that the fundamental way that we know the Lord is through Jesus.

If you just, if you have Bibles and if you don't have Bibles, that's fine, I'm going to read it. If you turn to the Gospel of John, there's this very, very, very profound way that the Gospel of John opens.

And it's in John 1, verses 14 to 18. Many of us who come to church on Christmas stop reading it at John 1, 14. But if you keep going to finish the rest of the introduction, it goes like this.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. It's a very, very beautiful text. We've seen the glory.

We've seen His glory. John, verse 15, John the Baptist bore witness about Him and cried out, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me because He was before me.

[35 : 57] And in this wonderful text, and from His fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God, the only God, who was at the Father's side. God, but Jesus has made Him known. What this text is saying in the original language is that Jesus is the exegesis of God. He is the one who makes God known. And so when we as Christians, if we pray and we think about and we meditate upon trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, know Him in all your ways and He will make your paths straight, it's telling us that in all of our ways, in all of our paths, in all of our days, even when we find ourselves in failure, even when we find ourselves in disappointment, in the day of great success, in the day of triumph, in the midst of our strengths, in the midst of our weaknesses, in the midst of our giftedness, and all of that, in every single way that we find ourselves in, whether it's a good time or it's bad, it's asking us to know Him, to see Him in all our ways.

And we don't just see Him, we see Jesus and we see Him crucified because it's in the crucifixion of Jesus that the full glory of God is revealed and made known.

If you turn back towards the end of John's Gospel, John 17, and those of you who know how the Gospel of John works, this John 17 is just before Jesus is going to be captured, He's going to be crucified, He knows He's going to be crucified.

[37 : 41] The disciples hear Jesus praying His heart out and if you look at just these first few verses, it goes like this. When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You since You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all to whom You have given Him.

And this is eternal life. that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do.

And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed. What's He talking about? The cross. You know, our fallen flesh, we want to see the glory of God.

We want it to be like in that movie Independence Day when the really mean, bad, world-conquering, nasty aliens come and they have this overwhelming spaceship that just seems to completely overshadow even the biggest city.

[38 : 49] And that's what we want the glory of God to be like because secretly, that's what I want to do and be. And Jesus is saying the full glory of God is revealed when Jesus, in love for you and me, dies upon the cross.

So you, He can take upon Him the doom that you and I deserve and you, by faith and trust in Him, can receive the destiny that He deserves. So how is it that I am to hear Proverbs 3, 5, and 6, trust in the Lord with all your heart?

Say it with me. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Know Him in all your ways and He will make your paths straight.

How is it that I am to know Him? I know Him by coming to Him in repentance and faith and having Him be my Savior and my Lord. And I am not just to know some cosmic power and ask to see Jesus and to be sensitive of Jesus as I go through my day, but I am to be sensitive of Jesus dying upon the cross.

Actually, Andrew, if you could put up the second point, I mean, really, the main point is knowing Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. We're going to say it again a couple of times, but here's, I think, what the book of Proverbs is trying to tell us.

[40 : 10] The living God lovingly offers to provide a mirror, the cross, and the new covenant to fallen rebels like you and me. The living God lovingly offers to provide a mirror, the cross, and the new covenant to fallen rebels like you and me.

What's the mirror? The book of Proverbs. The Bible. It's, George, do you realize that you have 56 different plans and 123 different motivations going on when you're trying to figure out what you're trying to do?

George, this is you. Don't read this because you think it's a microscope to examine all the people around you. Yeah, it's true about them as well. This is you. Many times, the Bible's a mirror.

We want binoculars. We want a microscope to analyze other people in a binocular to know the future, and what God offers me is a mirror to start to actually know myself, to know my heart, and He offers me to do that within the context of the cross.

His death upon me. His death upon the cross for me so that I can, by faith in Him, enter into a new covenant with the living God, the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the end of all things, the one who is always present, and that I can talk to Him not as a rebel to the one that I'm hoping He'll occasionally throw some goodies my way, but fundamentally, I'm in rebellion, and not as one who is distant, but as my heavenly Father who loves me, and I can do my day with my heavenly Father who loves me, thinking about Jesus and His death upon the cross because there is a God who does exist who loves me, who wants to do my day with me and my life with me, and I can pour out my heart to Him as I start to learn who I really am and who I really am at the level of my heart.

[42 : 19] I'm going to wrap things up very quickly. Proverbs 16.3. Could we say that together, Andrew, if we can get that up? Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established.

You know what's so wonderful about this? This behind the image of commit, it's an image of something which is really, really, really, really too heavy to lift.

So when it says commit your work to the Lord, the image of your work is way too heavy for you to possibly lift. And all you can do is try to roll it to the Lord.

What's this saying? One of the reasons that we can get so depressed and be so heavy-hearted is that we think we have to carry the burden of our life.

And the burden of your life will crush you. We think we have to carry the burden of our marriage. We think we have to carry the burden of our family. We think we have to carry the burden of our church. We think we have to carry the burden of our company.

[43 : 21] And all of those things will crush us. And this is an invitation to realize that there is one who can carry that weight as he carries you and as he carries me.

And it's the man who died upon the cross with his arms spread wide out of love for you. And I can say, and you can say to God, Father, forgive me for thinking that I carry the weight of this decision or the weight of this church, that it's all on me.

I cannot carry it. It is crushing me. I roll it over to you. I thank you that you can carry it as you carry me. Could you put Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 up again, Andrew?

Could we say it together? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Know him in all your ways and he will make your paths straight.

Let's put up Proverbs 29, 18. Say it with me. Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

[44 : 26] So here what it's saying is know the word, know the word, know the word, know the word. And sometimes God gives you specific words. And as the mirror of God starts to work in our lives and as we start to be gripped by the gospel and prepared to realize that sometimes if we want to know God's will, a trust word, by the way, is you've got to do something.

Get moving. If you're just sitting on a couch, you're not trusting the Lord, you're just sitting on a couch watching TV. Like do something. Make a mistake.

Make five mistakes. Because God can direct you when you're moving. It's a trust word. And you roll your burdens. Study the word. And you study the word and you pour out your heart to the covenant God who does your day with you.

And you make mistakes and you realize that you repent and Jesus still loves you. He died upon the cross for you. And you keep on pressing on and you try to move. And sometimes in the midst of all those things, God gives you a very specific word and you can pray that you can recognize it.

Put up Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 again. Let's say it together. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Know him in all your ways and he will make your paths straight.

[45 : 44] What will this look like as we enter into the book of Proverbs? As we enter into realizing that God does not, he offers us a mirror and he offers us the cross and he offers us a new covenant?

You know, one of the things which is so cool about the book of Proverbs, the way it's written as a literary thing is it's written in Proverbs 10, 1. It's a father giving instruction to his son, but the dad's checked it out with the mom.

And so all the way, the language is always addressed as a father to a son, father to a son, father to a son. And then at the end of the book, at the end of the book, the very last little bit in the book is an acrostic.

In other words, every couplet begins with the letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. And it's to really try to bring it home to you is that this last 22-verse section is encapsulating the entire, all of the words of the book are being encapsulated in these last 22 verses.

And you'd think, this is just how God likes to play with you, you'd think that it's going to be the noble warrior. It's going to be the mighty king. It's going to be, it's a story about a woman who's married to a man.

[46 : 54] And the person who encapsulates all of the teaching, the wisdom, the book is the wife, the story of the wife at the end of the book. And look at verse, chapter 31, that's part of the final thing.

Look at verse 31, 25. Can you read it with me? Strength and dignity are her clothing. And she laughs at the time to come. I want to be that person.

I want to be so immersed in the word and so willing to be taught by Jesus and so willing to confront my self-deception and my disappointment with God and my cynicism and so pour out my heart to God and so see Jesus who died on the cross for me in all of the things that I have to face that I will laugh at the time to come.

Who knows what the future is going to bring? Whoa! Who knows what the future is going to bring? I'm going to face it. I'm going to face it with Jesus in the context of the new covenant.

That's what the Bible wants us to so soak up the word that that describes your day-to-day life.

Please stand. Just bow our heads in prayer.

[48 : 25] Father, help us to pour out our hearts to you about the decisions we have to make.

Father, please guide us to counselors who can love us and speak wise words into our lives and help us to recognize father lies that people tell us and help us to recognize self-deception and most of all, father, help us to keep our eyes fixed on your son.

Help us to keep moving forward and doing something as you lead us in Gaius. Help us to pour out our hearts to you and know the word and father, thank you so much that you've given us Jesus.

Thank you so much, father, that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, I cannot know everything that will happen tomorrow or the day after but I can know your final word about me.

Well done, my child, enter into the kingdom prepared for you for all eternity. Thank you, father, that in Jesus I can know the final word that you will say over my life and I can know it now and act in light of it.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Help us to be people who pour out our hearts to you and follow Jesus. All this we ask in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior.

[49 : 33] Amen.