

Becoming Wise

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 August 2018

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

- [0 : 0 0] Father, your word calls us to be very countercultural. And Father, we confess before you that we breathe in the air of our culture and we're formed by our culture.
- And it makes us hard to understand your word sometimes. And it makes us, Father, not even want to understand your word or to give advice which goes against what you've said. And so, Father, we confess that before you.
- We ask that you would bring your word home to us in a powerful way, that you would bring Jesus home to us in a powerful way, that you would make us disciples, Father, of Jesus, who are gripped by the gospel and who are learning to live for your glory and the furtherance of your kingdom.
- And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So just a bit of a warning. I'll talk about this more in a second.
- I'm going to take a very big risk in the service today, so hopefully you'll all like me by the end. But I'm going to take a big risk. But before we do that, if you could put up the scripture text for today. Let's just read this and then we'll say something.
- [1 : 1 0] If you could all read this text with me, that would be great. 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 gave my life to Christ and became a Christian when I was in grade 12. And just after I gave my life to Christ, I met an older man and he gave me a little book.
- And in the book, it was sort of like first steps in following Jesus. And some of those first steps were that I was encouraged or basically told or admonished to memorize.
- I think it was 10 different scripture passages. I have to confess I cannot remember what most of those 10 scripture passages were. But I actually do remember three of them. And I can't quite always.
- I sort of when I say them, I get them a bit mixed up. But I remember three of them. One of them, in fact, would sort of almost, if I was to have a life verse, some Christians talk about having life verses.
- [2 : 1 2] And if I was to have a life verse, it would be this. It was the very first passage of scripture I ever memorized. Because I took the older man's advice. I did try to memorize some of these Bible passages. And one of them was this one.
- Romans 12, 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- And I memorized that text. I come to it many times. And in many ways, I definitely don't live that verse perfectly. But if there was to be a verse that was the theme of my life, it would be that one.
- All because this older guy told me that I should try to memorize the Bible. Another text, which I do remember, was part of, I think, that was 10 different texts.

It's actually the scripture text we're going to look at next week at the end of our sermon series on looking at different verses that we could memorize. It's 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

[3 : 09] Many of you have probably memorized this text as well. And it goes like this. Oops. It would be helpful if I had the right page. There we go. It goes like this.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to human beings. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

And I've memorized that text. I say it. I get it all messed up. But I'm old, so I've read this text and sort of memorized it in the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, the NIV, the NASB, and the ESV.

So I often get texts all messed up when I try to say them off by heart. And the third verse, which has been really, really, really, really important and precious to me, is this verse up here.

Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. In fact, I really have only one goal for this sermon. And so if you sort of catch this goal right now, and then you all fall asleep because I put you to sleep, I've at least accomplished what my hope is.

[4 : 16] And my hope is that this verse will become precious to you. That trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight.

That that will be a verse of scripture that you'll want to memorize, that you'll want to pray, that you'll want to live. And that's my whole hope of this sermon, is that you'll recognize how important and precious this verse is.

Now, there's a big, big, big, big problem with this verse, which I'm going to try to bring out a little bit. Because, you see, the problem is when we all Christians get together, it's all simple to say, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

That sounds good. But then we go out. And this verse is profoundly countercultural. It's deeply, deeply, deeply countercultural. For old Christians like me, I've been a Christian a long time now.

Grade 12 was a very, very long time ago for me. And so for old Christians like me, it's comforting to read this and to pray it and to think about it and to try to live it.

[5 : 22] And I really do try to live it. I often fail, but I really do try to live it. And often when I'm getting messed up, it's as if the Holy Spirit says, George, you've got to get back to that verse. You've got to read that verse.

You've got to pray that verse. But it's deeply, deeply countercultural. Just this week, I was in a conversation in a coffee shop. Somebody just suggested to me that to make it sound more holy, it should be called St. Arbuck's rather than Starbucks.

But I was in a coffee shop and a fellow was talking about this. You've probably seen it in the news, this huge new sex abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church in Pennsylvania.

Absolutely shocking, the decades-long systematic abuse of mainly young boys and young men.

Just mind-bogglingly evil. And so one of the guys that I have regular conversations with in this particular coffee shop, he was talking about it. And this fellow, he's an immigrant to this country.

[6 : 28] He's an immigrant from a Muslim-majority country, although he himself is not a Muslim and he himself would now say that he's an atheist. And he was talking about this. He asked me what I thought about it. And he said, listen, this is the problem of religion.

This is the problem of religion wedded to powerful institutions. People kiss their brains goodbye. They kiss their consciences goodbye. And he said, listen, I'm not dumping on the Roman Catholic Church here.

I said, the problem is in Orthodox Jewish circles. The problem is in Islam. The problem is wherever you have religion and you have institutions and people just kiss their brains goodbye.

They harden their hearts. They submit to all of these things. And people need to think for themselves. People need to strengthen their own consciences in the face of institutions like that.

And that's what they need to do. And you know what he said? That's so common in our world, isn't it? Nobody can make you happy but yourself. Don't trust in other people to make you happy.

[7 : 32] Don't let other people's version of happiness tell you what should be happy. You need to discover happiness for yourself. You need to discover what's true for yourself. You need to be true to yourself. You need to be the captain of your own ship.

You need to chart your own path. You need to be unique. Nobody can set any terms for you. You need to think for yourself and be who you are meant to be and struggle with it. And that's the message of the world.

Isn't it? In fact, you know, if you think about it, we still have this text up here. It's very, very interesting. Let's just all say this text together. And then just think about this text. Here, I better get it in the scripture so I can read along with you.

Say it with me. 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.

Imagine if I was to say to my friend, that's how I live my life after he's complained to me about this. Give me that little rant. Like that would fly like a lead balloon. In fact, you know, if you think about it, here's what's happened in the world.

[8 : 33] You know, we know that God doesn't make straight your paths. So why don't we get rid of that? Can you get rid of that, Andrew? There you go. And you know, the fact of the matter is, is that we know that what you should do.

I mean, look at the sex abuse scandal. We shouldn't be trusting the Lord with all our heart. Get rid of that. And you know what? Why on earth should we acknowledge him in all our ways? Isn't that just part of the problem? Could you get rid of that too?

And now that you got rid of all of it, could you get rid of that first three words? That's the motto of the world, isn't it? Lean on your own understanding.

That tattoo will fly. Nobody will think it's odd. That tattoo will fly. Lean on your own understanding. Don't trust authority.

Don't trust religion. Don't trust the Lord. Your own. Your own heart. The captain of your own soul. Lean on your own understanding. It's the motto of the world.

[9 : 31] And it's very, very, very, very, very powerful. Here's where I'm going to take a big risk. If you could start to cue it up, we're going to listen to the theme song from Frozen. And we're going to watch the video in the sing-along version.

I don't want you to sing along. Some of you, it might be hard not to want to sing along. I'm taking a risk with this. You have to give me a bit of mercy. But remember, what is the motto of the world?

Lean on your own understanding. This UK version has 1.6 billion views. The US version has something similar.

That doesn't count just watching the video. That doesn't count buying the downloads. That doesn't count Spotify. That doesn't count owning the album or having the song.

This is billions and billions of views. So let's listen to it. Those who are going to be listening to this online, if you go and Google Frozen, the sing-along version, you can watch that because we can't put it on the tape of the sermon for audio for copyright reasons.

[10 : 42] Now listen, that's billions and billions of views. If you're a guest here, Christians see that the Bible is divided into two parts.

There's the part of the Bible that was written before Jesus came that talks about, sort of sets the stage for Jesus coming. And then there's the part that tells about Jesus coming and explaining what it means.

The part before Jesus is called the Old Testament. And the part with Jesus and after is called the New Testament. And in the Old Testament, there's a very, very wonderful story about the prophet who has to go and meet with God.

And so he goes to meet with God. And in the story, there's this unbelievably powerful wind that actually can move the rocks around and break things.

But God is not in the wind. And then the next thing is there's this earthquake that goes all around and things crumble and God is not in the earthquake. And then there's this spectacular display of fire.

[11 : 42] But God is not in the fire. And then there's a still, small voice like a whisper. And it's God speaking in the still, small voice like a whisper.

And in a world where Disney, with its genius and its creativity and its song, How on earth, here, friends, is the great dilemma for us as Christians.

In a world where we have billions of views of frozen, how on earth can we ever both live and even share?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him. And he will make your paths straight.

That is a still, small whisper. In a world of loud, rushing wind and earthquakes and fire.

[13 : 05] That is the discipleship and evangelism challenge right there. In a very, very powerful way. Now, you know, here's the thing. I began by saying that the motto of the world, which is lean on your own understanding.

Lean on your own understanding. Nobody else's. It's a very, very powerful thing in the face of so much abuse that's gone on and so much breakdown that's gone on.

And if you think about it, can't you just see, especially a song like that, you know, if you're a woman and your husband's just been really, really, really abusive to you, if you've had to deal with just terrible bosses, if you're a teenager and you're just in a really unbelievably dysfunctional family, and maybe it's a very, very religious family, a homeschooling family, maybe it's a family where you've had three dads over the last few years because your mom's divorced and has many boyfriends, but just whatever it is, the family's really, really broken up and you can see the power that this lean on your own understanding.

Let it go. No rules. Be yourself. Be the self that you were meant to be. Just embrace the cold. It didn't bother you anyway. Just embrace it. You can see how that's so powerful.

You can see how in some ways, in some contexts, there's some real wisdom in it. And you can see how it's so powerfully portrayed in our culture.

[14 : 40] But here's the problem with lean on your own understanding. Here's the problem with that. Is that it doesn't work and it doesn't deliver what it promises. And that's a really hard thing to say.

And it's something that I could say and most people don't believe me. But just think for a second of this. Give you a thought experiment. Imagine I have a couple and they're in great marital trouble and they're thinking of separating and getting divorced.

And so they ask me to come and help them and give them some counsel. And imagine I say to myself, well, I know exactly the type of counsel I'm going to give, but I'm going to need my wife to help me. And I say to this, I'm going to need my wife to help me.

And so basically we come in the house and in one part of the house, I play the video of Let It Go over and over and over with the guy and say what you need to do is you need to take this to heart.

You need to take the lyrics of this. I know it's Ilsa. I know it's a woman. But you need to take it to heart. You need to let it go. And we spend an hour with him singing along with it. So he's memorized the words. He's got the full feeling of it.

[15 : 45] And meanwhile, his wife downstairs is with my wife doing the exact same thing. How do you think their marriage is going to work after two of them have taken that song in so perfectly? Do you think it'll fix their marriage?

They'll be divorced within a month. I mean, unless in an odd way they discover that they both like the song or something like that. The lyrics suck, but I like watching the movie.

I don't know. I mean, in an odd way maybe that will work. But can't you just see that if you take that advice and you think about it how so much trouble in our world is precisely because of the motto, lean on your own understanding.

You see, on one hand, what do we want in the world? We want to lean on our own understanding. But at the same time, what do we want? We want relationship. We want, you know, I've talked to so many young secular people in coffee shops.

And when you get talking and you get maybe past some of the cynicism and the despair that some of them might have, deep down so many of them say, someday I would like to marry. And when I marry, I'm hoping that it will be for life.

[16 : 47] And we want relationship. We want friends. We want to belong. Yet, how on earth is it going to work if everybody in the marriage is singing, let it go?

How is it going to work if you come in and your boss, that's their motto. She completely and utterly believes it. You see, the problem with this is that this song, and lean on your own understanding it, the problem is as that becomes deeper and deeper into our consciousness, what happens, and we see it in our culture right now, isn't one of the problems in our culture is that people fracture themselves into little echo chambers.

And it's because for this week, this minute, this month, this echo chamber is exactly in tune with my understanding, but then it starts to change, and then we have to go to another one, and we send angry tweets and get on social media, and you can't lean on your own understanding.

You can't have let it go as your anthem and have a good relationship with your teenagers or with your husband or your wife or with your employees or your bowling club, because that only works if there's only one person in the room who's like that and everybody else has to put up with it, but we're all singing it.

And so there's endless conflict and the breaking down of community. So I just want to suggest to you that it might be, if you could put up the scripture text again, could you say this with me?

[18 : 22] It's a still small voice, but if you could say it with me. 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.

Now, some of you say, well, what's up, George? This doesn't work. Okay, so you showed some problems with lean on your own understanding. I can sort of get that. You showed some problems with it, but come on, George.

Look at the room here. I'm going to put you all down. Do you think this room of Christians are living this text? They don't look that successful to me.

They don't look like they're always straight up about what God's will is for their lives. Like, what's going on with this text? Like, how on earth can you, I possibly believe that this is something that I could live that points me in a different way?

Like, George, what's up with that? Well, here, if you could put up the first point, Andrew. Here's the first thing for us to understand about this text. This proverb is not a recipe.

[19 : 31] It's not a rule. It's not a law. It's not a technique. It is the Lord's call to embark on a quest. This proverb, and by the way, this is what basically all proverbs are.

That's what the literary form is. They're not recipes. They're not rules. They're not laws. They're not techniques. Like, what a technique is, is like if you go to a bank machine, it's a perfect example.

You know that there's a series of steps that you follow, and by the end of the step, you've got your cash balance or you've got your money or you've moved your money around. It's going to a computer programmer who gives you all of the different steps so that the app will work or the function will work.

And it's not a rule. It's not a law. It's something different. And it's something different because God wants to do something with human beings. He wants to make us more human.

And to be human, in terms of what God's intention is, it's going to have to be something more than just following rules or just learning techniques or learning recipes.

[20 : 44] In fact, if you think about it for a second, if you look at this text, if you could go back up to the text, Andrew, that would be wonderful. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

This text, which was written before Jesus comes, it actually launches things, if you think about it. It doesn't say trust in the patriarchy. It doesn't say trust the tribe.

It doesn't say trust the institution. It doesn't say trust the powerful people. It doesn't say trust fate. It doesn't say trust the cycle of life. It doesn't say trust abstract moral rules.

It doesn't say trust the techniques. It says trust in the Lord. And trust is a personal word. It's a relational word. It says trust in the Lord.

Trust in a person. Trust in the one who's created all things and sustains all things and will bring all things to their proper end. And so it doesn't work.

[21 : 45] There's a real promise in there that the Lord will make your paths straight. But it says something more and it's a quest because, you see, here's what a quest is. The best example from us moderns or post-moderns about what a quest is is if you read Lord of the Rings.

He's not on an adventure. On an adventure, you go through an adventure and then at the end of things, like basically, you know, maybe there's some justice or whatever, some experiences, but then life is sort of back to normal.

But in a quest, not only does the person change, but the world changes. And that's what God calls us to. It's a quest, not an adventure, not to be a tourist, not to be a magician or a technician, not to be a lawgiver or a rule giver, but fundamentally, he calls us to be on a quest.

And in a quest, at the end of the quest, the world will be changed and you will be changed. And so when God says, because I believe the Bible is written by God, ultimately, trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall make your path straight.

What we're seeing here is God admonishing us and encouraging us to go on a quest. Now, just as I, remember, I was sharing about the, one of the things, you know, when my friend at the coffee shop, he talked about this great crisis in the, another sexual abuse crisis in the Roman Catholic Church and I actually said something to him.

[23 : 22] Like, I, I said to him, I said several things to him. One of the things I said is, you know, the Bible is the great critiquer of religion and institutions. And I said, the, the wonderful thing about the Christian faith, I said to him, is that the, the Christian faith doesn't call you to put such confidence in institutions.

That what the Bible does is the Bible stands, I said, as an outside judgment on human endeavor and an outside source of wisdom on human endeavor. And that any person who'd been involved in that, if they merely read the Bible, that you shall not, I mean, the Bible is very clear that you're not supposed to have sex with young boys.

It's a rule. You just have to follow a rule. You don't have to be wise. You just have to follow the rule. And so it's not that the Bible doesn't have any rules, but that the Bible calls us to something more than just following rules.

Just, you know, you don't have to say to this text, if I'm thinking about robbing a bank or beating somebody up just because I feel like it, I don't have to say, oh Lord, should I be beating this person up? No, there's rules about that. You don't, don't engage in an act of violence.

You don't cheat on your wife. Like you don't steal. You don't rob banks. There's a few rules. But life is far more than rules, isn't it? Life is far more than rules. It's, it's, it requires wisdom to figure out how to handle a boss or how to deal with a fight that's going on in the family or how to deal with a fight that's going on in an institution.

[24 : 54] It's not that there's no black and white in the world. There is black and white in the world, but there's also red and green and yellow and orange and purple and blue and chartreuse and all these other colors.

And, and the Bible's, the Bible says that God's going to launch us on a quest of wisdom to live in a world of many colors where there is black and white, but of many colors. And so that's the power of this text.

And, and the reason that we know that it's a, it's a, and, and, and to try to fully understand this quest, we need to know something about the whole flow of the Bible. You see, the Bible is an overarching story and it begins in a very, very, very powerful way.

It begins with God, a personal God who does exist, who has a character and a nature and a, and purpose and who loves and is creative and he makes everything that exists out of nothing.

And he makes this world, this universe, he makes it to be the home for human beings. And, there's this very, very powerful story in the first couple of chapters of the Bible that describes how God makes human beings, he makes them to be at home in this world, he calls them to be in a relationship of, of marriage and just of, of family and all the other things that flow from that.

[26 : 18] He calls them to tend the garden and to, in a sense, to tend the earth, to, to be creative and to tend the earth and to develop things in the earth and, in a sense, to develop castles and bridges and, and poetry and music and, and song and story and, and dance and, and business and, and he calls on human beings to, to be creative and to care and tend for the entire world and, and his whole hope is that every day at the end of the day in the cool of the day that we human beings, we were made to walk in the cool of the day with other people and with God naked and unashamed.

That's how God created human beings to be, to tend the earth, to live well with each other, to live naked and unashamed with God and others in his creation and walk with him in the end of the day.

And the Bible has this overarching story that brokenness and evil and sin and shame and rebellion and abuse, that was created when human beings wanted to become like God and rejected their creator.

We rejected our creator and that is this fundamental breaking or bending in what it means to be human that happened way back in the very, very start of us human beings actually being human beings.

And the Bible tells this wonderful overarching story both of how we were created and what God created us to be of this tragic break and even in that tragic break God instantly shared a severe mercy how the day would come when he would send a deliverer because we human beings could not deliver ourselves.

[28 : 05] And what we call the Old Testament from Genesis 4 right on to the end of the Old Testament is God promising and God preparing for the time when he would send the one who would start to put all things right.

And we Christians believe that Jesus is the answer of God. He is God keeping his promise that God, the Son of God takes on human nature and he lives the life that we were not able to live and he pays the price that we were not able to pay and that he is God's provision for human beings to be made right with him and he does everything that has to be done for us to be made right with him because we were bent, we were twisted, we cannot do it ourselves and we receive it by trusting in him and as an act of grace and mercy God who has done all that has to be done to make us right with himself through his Son, he gives that to us when we hold out our hands, our arms in faith saying simply, you know, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to you I want to cling and God reaches across that infinite distance between him and us and actually makes us right with him and takes us as his child and begins to change us and the rest of the New Testament is the promise that God who begins this rescue operation with his Son that the day will come when Jesus will return a second time and then all things will be brought to their proper end and all will be judged and there will be the new heaven and the new earth it's also the beginning but what's it going to look like when the new beginning is there?

When the new beginning that's there we will be human and we will live in a created order that is our home and we will care and tend for the garden and we will make music and song and poetry and buildings and dance and we will once again be naked and unashamed with other human beings and walk with God in the cool of the day where he will put his hand on your shoulder and mine and say I am your God you are my child it is so good to walk together in the cool of the day and so to make the type of person that God is making us into it means that we need wisdom it means that we need to be launched on a quest where we learn to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding and all our ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight see that's why it's not just a matter of keeping rules but some of you might say

I have to sort of start wrapping this up okay George well okay look at that text you know trust in the Lord with all your heart it's just talking about emotions and stuff like that just about spiritual stuff you know and I'm a guy I don't know like do I even have emotions my wife says I have emotions but I don't know if I have emotions you know maybe I have emotions when in my case I haven't had to show my emotions in a long time because the Oakland Raiders have been a lousy football team for a long time but I show my emotions when they win or something but this is just about emotions can you put up the next point Andrew this quest will involve all of your life all of what makes you you and all of what you will become when we learn to pray and to think through 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 this is a call not just to your emotions not just to the spiritual part of who you are it's your mind it's your creativity it's your affections it's your will it's your family it's your sexuality it's your money it's your aging it's your memory it's your desires it's everything that's meant to be you this quest will involve all of your life all of what makes you you and all of what you'll become and it's in this powerful word heart you see in that part of the Bible that we now call the Old Testament before the coming of Jesus every time you see the word heart what the Bible understood what God teaches us is that there's one sort of central command center of who we are and out of that central command center of who we are that's where our mind emerges that's where our creativity emerges that's where our humor emerges that's where our desires emerge that's where our will emerges that's where our ability to love emerges that's where our power to do things emerges that every single thing that makes you human emerges out of your heart and so when the Bible says trust in the Lord with all your heart trust him with your memory your sexuality your money your career your ambition your past your future your dance your singing your entrepreneurial ability your submission your initiative all of it emerges out of the heart and it says trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him the ways of your mind the ways of your desires the ways of your creativity the ways that you tell joke in all your ways it's the Bible launches you and says you are to learn how it means to trust me as Lord in everything that makes you you and all that you will become that's the quest it's not just a simple rule or a recipe it's a quest to learn how to live that but some of you say

I don't know George it still sounds a little bit I know anti-intellectual like it says do not lean on your own understanding George doesn't that make it sort of anti-intellectual if you could put up the next point Andrew that would be wonderful actually sorry I'm not quite ready for the next well you can leave it up there anyway but I had something else I had to say first you know it's actually take that go back to the scripture text sorry Andrew this is why you have to always be nice to the sound guy at the beginning of the service and all the way through look at the text again actually could you say it with me 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 now if all the Bible said was lean do not lean on your own understanding it would be very anti-intellectual in fact large parts of eastern thought is do not lean on your own understanding

[34 : 40] Christopher Hitchens in the 80s was doing documentaries on different eastern gurus that were coming to the states to the west and one of the things that it was interesting that he reported that others didn't report is that when you were going to meet the Swami the guru there would be a sign over the door he recounts one in particular and it says leave your shoes and your mind at the door as you go in do not lean on your own understanding that's what they're saying but the Bible doesn't just say that it says if you just lean on your own understanding you're going to get in trouble and lean on means to rely on it's like what we do with a ladder going up a ladder we're leaning on our own understanding the Bible says the problem isn't just leaning isn't your understanding it's leaning on your own understanding you need to trust in the Lord and acknowledge means to know him it is involved in mind it involves listening to his word it involves looking at how he communicates to the order and wonder of creation it's a matter of using your mind and of thinking through what it means that God exists and what it is that he says in his word and how this applies to this problem and this desire and this longing and this yearning and this fear and this wound and this need and it's profoundly an invitation to use the mind that's why the heart refers to not only where other like our emotions come from but also our mind but some of you might say well George okay the problem is this whole straight thing

I mean not just I mean in a sexual sense about being straight I mean the fact of the matter is that Christians don't have successful and easy lives and we don't if you could put up the next point Andrew here's the thing on this quest the Lord does make the path does not make the path easy he makes them straight the straight path isn't the easy path if you could put up the next point Andrew on this quest the Lord will do more than guide he will make the paths straight you see in the book of Proverbs and in the Old Testament and in the Bible the opposite of the straight path isn't the hard path it's the crooked path the opposite of the straight path isn't the easy path but the path away from God the straight path is the path that involves being in God's presence under his rule being in God's presence under his rule that's why this verse does not at all contradict when Jesus says take up your cross and follow me that we can understand this verse in a far more powerful way sometimes the straight path will mean doing very very very very difficult and hard things and sometimes the straight path will mean doing things which are completely nuts

Hudson Taylor said God's work done in God's way will always receive God's supply and that's a brilliant summary of biblical teaching and you know some of you might know we're looking into whether God is calling us to start two new congregations so you look around the room that's the dumbest thing to even consider in the world from an economic and sociological point of view and Daniel was sharing with me he was listening to a podcast this week about what it was like and it scared him because it's so much work but you know if all we were doing was being motivated purely by economics and sociological processes you don't do things like that but the question isn't always economics and sociological processes is what's the Lord calling us to do and you see the thing about making your path straight isn't just that God gives direction but he makes the path straight

God's will done in God's way will receive God's supply every congregation every Christian is often being called to take risks of stepping out in faith because God is calling them to do something that makes no sense now this isn't an invitation for you just to kiss your brains goodbye you know trusting the Lord with all your mind will start to mean that you do put sense into it but sometimes you just gotta follow the Lord's leading you really do and that's what this text encourages us to do just want to wrap this up because I'm up to 42 minutes some people worry I've just said that this text is gonna make us religious and weird it won't make us religious and weird but it will make us counter cultural if you could put up the next point Andrew on this quest the Lord will make you more human as you become more humble and wise on this quest the Lord will make you more human as you become more humble and wise and finally the final point

Andrew the Lord is trustworthy so this quest will end with you being where you truly belong see that's the wonderful thing that the gospel this when this text was written Jesus still hadn't come but now when we read this text and we read it through the lens of the gospel we have this powerful wonderful promise we know that God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son to the end that all that believe in him will not perish but have eternal life we know that Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world but he also teaches John to teach us to say in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made that the same Lord who's created all things and is sovereign over all things the same Lord saw who you were completely and perfectly and still loved you so much that he would send the son and in the person of the son both the father the son and the holy spirit all of God in a sense takes into himself our rebellion that God the son of God does what is needed to be done so that we can be made right for God and he does this completely and utterly out of love and he rises from the dead after doing that and that can be known and so we know that the Lord is deeply trustworthy

[41 : 26] I think it's in Romans 8 that he says if he who did not spare his own son how will he not give you all things we can trust the Lord please stand friends the Lord calls us to be deeply countercultural we breathe the cultural air of lean on your own understanding we breathe the cultural air of let it go and in the midst of such earthquake wind and fire the Lord speaks to us with such apparent weakness and quietness through his word and whispers to us and says trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him he will make your path straight let's pray father we can get overawed by the thunder of the world the crashing of the world the apparent power of the world and father it can it can really be overwhelming and sometimes it can make us afraid and just want to hide and and sometimes we just feel like we should surrender to the world because we don't want to be counter-cultural but father we we thank you for your word we thank you for Jesus we ask father that you would help us to to lit and to learn this passage of scripture that you would help us to pray this passage of scripture that you help us to live this passage of scripture we thank you father that you are so trustworthy that you are still sovereign that you are still present that you are still active and powerful in the world that you are still the God who so loved human beings that you sent your son to die and that the gospel still works and it still has power and so father we ask that your holy spirit would draw us to your word and help us to live and to pray and to walk in this wonderful quest that we do not do alone but do with you who makes our path straight that we would grow in trusting you with everything that we are that we would not just lean on our own unaided understanding but that we would acknowledge you in every aspect of who we are and we thank you father that you will walk with us and never abandon us and that you will always care for us and love us and you will make our paths straight all these things we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen