

Proverbs 3:5-6 - One Weird Trick

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

And that was the best introduction I have ever had. And I think if my mom would have been alive and here to have heard it, she would have believed it.

But, man, it's great to be here. Gosh, two and a half years ago was the last time I was here, probably standing up here. And some of you guys know, you need to know that some of you all still sit in the same place.

It's true. I can look at it. It's hysterical. But it's great to be here. The text this morning is not like a Palm Sunday text.

But it's out of Proverbs. But in preparation for this morning, I was reading through the Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry of Jesus in some of the Gospels.

[1 : 05] And something stood out for me in John chapter 12. And it's the part right after Jesus has come into the city. And John tells of the story of some Greeks, some Gentiles that come to Philip.

And then Philip goes to Andrew because they want to see Jesus. And they go and they tell Jesus. And then Jesus answers them. And he says to tell them that the hour has come. The hour where the Son of Man is to be glorified has come.

And then he goes on to tell them this. He says that, And then Jesus goes on to talk about how whoever loves his life will lose it.

Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. And so the message he's giving as he's come powerfully into the city, he's starting to tell what's going to happen to him.

He is going to die. And then there's going to bear much fruit. Right? But then he talks about us. He says that if we hate our life, in this life, in this world, we'll gain something greater.

[2 : 20] So this idea that he's telling us is that the way up is down. There's a humility that we're going to be called to.

Because as we go into the world, it's a kind of world where things don't go the way that we want them to. The unexpected things happen. Our expectations are here and the reality is here.

There's a difference. And he's preparing these Greeks, these Gentiles for this. And it got me thinking in terms of my life, how I face things, you know, things that happen unexpectedly.

My expectations are here, but then reality is here. What happens? How do I gap? How do I bridge that gap? And usually what I want is a quick fix. I want something to be fixed quickly.

In this world, things happen unexpectedly. And I want a quick fix. And I'm looking for a life hack most of the time. Do you know what a life hack is?

[3 : 19] You've heard of a life hack? It's sort of just kind of a quick fix for things. There's even like whole websites dedicated for a life hack. And one of them that I found, and it's hysterical because it was so disappointing.

I needed some quick fixes, and I went to this whole website for a life hack. And this is how they define a life hack. A life hack is being, it's little ways that make our lives easier.

Okay? So when our expectations are here and reality's here, I need a quick fix. I need my life made easier. So here's a life hack. And here's a few of them, and they're horrible. They're not going to make your life easier.

But listen, this is supposed to make your life easier. You know those binder clips, those black binder clips? They got like certain sizes. If you take those, you stick them on the back behind your desk, you can organize all your cables through the little loop on it.

Easy life. That's a good one. There was another one. There was one that was about what to do with pancake batter, how to make your life easier.

[4 : 23] They say to put it in a squeeze bottle, you know, a ketchup squeeze bottle. Put your pancake batter in that. Let's do the pancake batter math here for a second.

First, first to get a ketchup bottle empty, I got to get rid of the ketchup. First, I got to clean a squeeze bottle of ketchup. Now that's done.

Then I've got to make my batter. Then I got to get the batter into that thing. And my batter will take like ketchup from now on. So one last little one.

This one is about how to organize your keys. If you got a lot of keys, get fingernail polish, different colors, and you're supposed to paint the top of them different colors.

And then you'll know what key is to go to what. But then I think you need one of those little quarterback cheat sheets to tell you, you know, which key goes to what. Okay, so I failed with the life hacks.

[5 : 23] But I still, I want to figure out how to make life easy. And I think this is something that marketers and advertisers are really, they've been leveraging for years.

Because we want a quick fix to stop. And have you seen in the, like on websites, they have little advertisements. And they'll tell you about one weird trick. There's one weird trick out there. And one of them was a weird trick on how to save, how to add \$1,000 to your social security check. And I love the wording of that because that plays into exactly how I feel. Because my expectations are here and reality is here.

And something has happened and I need a quick fix in my life. I need a weird trick. Because what's so cool is it's weird. Like no one knows how it works.

It's weird. And it's a trick. I don't know how tricks work. They just work. And that's what I want. That's what I want for my life. I want a weird trick. I love you when they say things like, here's a ridiculously easy trick insurance companies don't want you to know about.

[6 : 25] And so here we are. I need a quick fix. I need something that bridges the gap between my expectations and reality. But who can blame us?

I mean, who can blame us? I mean, because life takes all kinds of turns and things happen. And who can blame us that we would want a quick trick, a weird trick to fix it.

Because we live in a broken world. Genesis tells us the story of how that happened. And then the repercussions of the fall of our parents, Adam and Eve.

And the repercussions were that work is going to be hard. What we do is going to be difficult. Right? I mean, the economy turns and we lose our jobs.

It's just difficult. It's hard. And making money and buying things is hard. And then relationships are affected. All of our relationships are hard. When you're married, it's difficult. And you're getting along with your neighbor and the people at work.

[7 : 26] And it's just so hard. And I need a weird trick. I need something to fix this. I need a life hack. But here's the thing. The Bible is not a collection of life hacks.

It's not a collection of weird tricks on how to avoid pain and struggle in life. In fact, it's the opposite. Jesus, when he was saying after his triumphal entry, you know, unless you die, unless you die, unless, see, the way up is down.

And so the Bible is not a collection of weird tricks, you know, life hacks. Although, it's full of resources. I mean, that bring life as we go through this broken world.

Brings perspective. It brings life. Resources. Gospel resources. That's kind of even a strange sort of terminology there. But here's the thing. We're going to look at one thing this morning.

It's in our passage. It's one thing. Just one, I don't know, life hack. It's trust. Because when your expectations are here, reality's here and that gap in between.

[8 : 33] And you, you know, Jesus said as he rode in on the donkey, I am king. That's what he was saying. I'm king. Yet a week later, a year later, Caesar was still king, right?

But we know Jesus is king because when my expectations are here and reality is here, I have to believe he's king even when it doesn't feel like he's king.

And that's where trust comes in. Let's read the passage this morning and then we'll pray. Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. 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, and he will make straight your paths. Let's pray. Father, we need to see Jesus this morning just as the Greeks asked.

Lord, show us Jesus. Take us to the cross. Blaze a trail that so that we end up before the face of Jesus to look into his face. And Father, know that he's king even when it doesn't feel like it.

[9 : 35] Teach us to trust. Show us that truth this morning. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. All right. So, very quickly again, we're on a journey through a broken world.

It's hard. Things are hard now. Very difficult. And we're on that journey through it. And it goes all the way back to our parents. So, we're born with a bent away from God.

We're born in sin. We're sinners. That's how we're born. And we need to be rescued. And so, everything about us wants everything except God. And then, even as we're transformed and given new hearts, that battle still rages in us.

We want things our way. And it's difficult in a broken world. And so, we have to go back and to think on, well, why were we created? What picture do we have in Genesis?

And that picture in Genesis is that God wants to be with us. He wants a relationship with us. And so, we read and see the picture that's painted there. And in fact, we have the imagery of God walking with us in the cool of the day.

[10 : 41] Right? That He wants to be in relationship with us. And so, in places like Deuteronomy, we have this passage in Deuteronomy 10, verse 12. And now, Israel, what does the Lord, your God, require of you but to fear the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul?

Another familiar passage is Micah 6.8. He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk, to walk humbly with your God.

And then Jesus sums up all the commandments. He gives the greatest commandment that we love God with all of our hearts and all of our soul and mind and strength. So the goal in our life is to know God, to walk with Him.

Roy Hessian, in that great book on We Would See Jesus, he even says, to see God means to know and to love and to walk with Him. And so that's what we want to do.

We want to see God. We want to walk with Him. We want to walk with Jesus. In this world where our expectations are here, reality here, we need to see Jesus. We need to walk with Him.

[11 : 54] We need to have a relationship with Him. We need to trust Him. And we're to trust Him with all of our heart. Now, the heart, imagine God is trying to describe how we made us.

And He says that, you know, there's all kinds of parts to us. And one of the ways He describes the heart and then we have emotions. But our heart and emotions are different. Our heart is the place where our greatest commitments and hopes reside.

That's the place where all of our commitments and hopes reside. And so what the passage in Proverbs says is we're to love God with all of our hearts. With every ounce of our being, we're to love God. We're to place all of our hope and trust in Him because our emotions come out of that. So God is to be the very center of all of our commitment and hope. That's what we're called to do. Derek Kidner in one of the commentaries painted a picture of what that word trust in Hebrew and there's a lot of facets to the word trust and we'll talk about a different facet later.

But he gave this idea of trust as lying face downward, helpless, helplessly face downward. And I gotta tell you and I've brought up an illustration using our oldest son many times because Billy, as a lot of you know, is autistic.

[13 : 17] He's an adult now. I think I'll get his age right. He'll be 23 this year. And many of you know when he was 17 he turned violent.

And oh boy, I know many of you here know that day well. And we had to place him outside the home. And he's in a group home for a while and he's still in a group home.

But in that first group home and organization, one of the ways they were helping him deal with his violence and his lashing out was they had this thing called a blue mat.

And a blue mat was, just imagine you're in elementary school and you're at gym and the blue mat would be the mats you put on the ground. It's that sort of foam mat. And it had a little handle on it and it could fold in two and they would carry that around with them because when Billy would begin to act out they would have to put the blue mat on the ground and I watched them do this a number of times.

They would gently put him down on the blue mat face down and then two workers would get on either side of him and hold him down, helplessly hold him down until he stopped wanting his way.

[14 : 26] And thanks to my wife Sherry, she brought that illustration up and said that that is how we are to trust because typically what we want is our way. We want our way.

We want things our way. Our expectations are here and the reality is usually down here and we want our way and God teaches us to trust to stop wanting our way and wanting his way. So that's what we're called to do. To trust in the Lord with all your hearts, not wanting your way, but we're to lean on and we're to put all of our weight, not on our understanding, but on the understanding of God.

In Proverbs, any understanding, any wisdom is not true understanding apart from God. And so our challenge is we always want to lean on our little thimble full of understanding when we stand before a vast ocean of God's understanding because our expectations are here and what God wants is usually right here and there's a huge difference.

and if I lean on my understanding, I can get bitter. If I lean on my understanding, I can get angry. I can start to find other ways out, looking for a quick fix, a weird trick, a life hack to get out of whatever mess I'm in.

[15 : 43] But I have to lean on how God sees it and his understanding. Here's a great quote. If God were small enough to be understood, he wouldn't be big enough to be worshipped. Amen on that.

If he was small enough to be understood, he wouldn't be big enough to be worshipped. So we need to fall on our face on a blue mat before the vast ocean of God's understanding. Let me ask you this then.

What's next? What do we do then after that? How do we get up off the blue mat? Well, it says in the passage we're to acknowledge him. That simply means to know him, to have a deep relationship with God, to know him.

It's a personal knowledge. We're aware of the other person. And it's just like your relationships, just like our relationships. Oh man, I wish I could go back in time now because I was able to do as a pastor a lot of marriage counseling.

And those poor people that I counseled early on, I just want to go back and like, can they do a do-over? Because I would think I could help a little better now with marriage issues.

[16 : 50] And here's what I would say about that. Here's what I would do differently. And I'll put it this way. If you're maybe going to go into marriage counseling, maybe with one of the pastors here or with a therapist, here's what you need to do.

Promise me you'll do. If you walk into this initial meeting and the first thing out of that counselor or pastor's mouth is, and they say, who wants to begin? Just get up and leave.

Because what they're saying is, who wants to start complaining first? That's not what you want to hear. Here's what I would recommend that you would try to listen for. And here's what I will do as well if you come to me.

Is I will ask you, before we find out what's concerning you, I'll ask you to start talking about what was it like when you first met.

Tell me what it was like when you first saw her. How did you feel? And then that person could say, well, wow. First time I saw her, oh, I just thought, it's beautiful.

[17 : 54] Then we started to talk. She was so smart, funny, and her laugh was cute. And then the wife could say, oh, I remember when I first saw him.

And yes, handsome and rugged. And Sherry says, you know, I was wearing these little tight red shorts. And she reminds me.

This is the day when gym shorts were tight, like that. And because then after that happens, then the counselor can go, okay, now tell me, what concern has brought you here today?

You see what's going on? I mean, there's part of it on a practical level. You can't stay mad at somebody when you're remembering things about them. But we're to remember. The way, your relationship will grow with each other as you remember how you met, what you've been through, all those things you've got to remember.

That's how you develop a relationship just among people. And one other little thing, too, I would tell couples you need rituals. You need things you do on a regular basis. It could be like a Tuesday night pastry and coffee.

[19 : 06] Something that you do on a regular basis. That's how we know God, too. If you look at a lot of the Psalms, they begin with the psalmist remembering things about God, remembering how and what he brought you through.

Remember what he's done. And so as we have a relationship with God, we open his word and we remember what he's done from start to finish, you know, from Genesis to Revelation, what he's

done for us, how he came after, how much he loved us, how much his heart is after us, what he's done to come after us.

That's how we develop a relationship with God. We remember what he's done and we think on it and we delight in it, in his word. And then you have rituals where, you know, regular time with God, doing that remembering, regular time with God and his word and with his people.

Right? Spending time with him, spending time with others, with people. That's how he grows us. That's how we get into relationship with him. So trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Lean not on your understanding, but in all your ways, know him. Know him. All right, so there you go. What's the next thing we're supposed to do?

[20 : 27] Well, if we are to trust him, not ourselves, we do it by knowing him. The next thing that we're called to do in this passage is relax. I don't know if you saw it in there, but it's relax.

Because the next part of this is it says, he will make straight your paths. There's a lot of work that leads up to the relaxing. You know, you spend time in the Word, spend time with others, you think about him, you remember, you remember all these things, but he causes us to relax.

Why? Because he's got it. There's an old Portuguese proverb that says that God writes straight with a crooked line. You know what that crooked line is? It's the hardship, it's the world, the broken world we live in.

We're called to walk that crooked path that God has written for us. We're to believe and to trust him in that time, whatever he's called us to. Your expectations are here, reality's down here.

Trust him. Relax. It's hard to do, but it's what he calls us to do. Relax. Okay. Why is trust a life hack or a weird trick?

[21 : 35] Why is trust? Why do we need it? Very often, the broken creation, especially with fallen people like us, we get to that place where we wonder where God is.

Listen, y'all, since leaving here, the past two and a half years has been hard. It's been one of the hardest things that Sherry and I have ever walked through. I never thought I would not, I'm going to do a double negative.

I always thought I'd be in ministry from always from on, from the time I went off the seminary until I wasn't, until I went on to glory. I always thought I'd be in ministry. And boom, all of a sudden I wasn't.

And I can tell you I needed a quick fix. I needed a life hack. I needed a weird trick. I needed some button I could push to fix it. But what God gave me was Him.

Every day, trusting Him. Every day, believing that He is writing straight lines, even though it looks crooked from my vantage point. I'm telling you, there's life there. And if any of you are going through whatever it is, you just wonder, is God king?

[22 : 46] Is Jesus king? Doesn't feel like He is, but He is. Trust is a call on our lives to believe Him, to be face down and not won our way on the blue map.

There's life there, I can tell you. There's life there. That's what we need. And so our response is always to be to trust Him. Jesus is king.

May not feel like He's king. He's king. He's bringing, making all things new. And we can believe that. We can trust it. And so we're to work on our relationship with God.

That's what we're called to do. That's what this passage says. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Everything about you. Work on it. Really know Him. And then we're called to relax, to trust the Lord. But here's the problem, and I'm going to close with this.

There's a problem here. And the problem is this. We can't trust Him like that. Now the type A's in the room, you can go a lot longer than I can. If I were just to tell you, now go trust Jesus.

[23 : 46] Now we're going to give you a rah-rah speech, and we run out of here. The type A's are going to be able to trust Him way longer than the type F's like me or whatever the worst type there is. Because the challenge really is there was only one who did trust, like Proverbs calls it to.

There was only one who trusted like this. Because here's the challenge. Even in a church where you can feel like we're all shiny, happy people, everything's good, everything's going great.

It's just not the truth. And you can hear from somebody to say, well, remember what Bill said, just trust the Lord, and it can sound trite. Unless, unless, we also say, but remember that Jesus is the one who trusted, who truly trusted.

You're called to trust. You and I are called to trust. No doubt. But we have to remember Jesus is the one who trusted like we were supposed to have. There is a one facet of the word trust in Hebrew.

The root word has all these derivatives that are the opposite of trust. It means that you're sort of, the root, some of the words that are derived from it have this idea that the person that you're trusting is deceitful.

[25 : 05] And I love that imagery because there's only one place we should put all of our trust. Our heart should only have, be putting our trust in one place, not anywhere else. Not in our jobs, not in ministry positions, not in anything else.

But it's only in Jesus. And that's what we, we're like the Greeks. Let us see Jesus. Show us Jesus. Let's do that. Because the question we want to ask when our expectations are here and reality's here and we're scared and we don't know what's going to happen next.

We don't know if we're going to, if marriage is going to make it. We don't know if, man, my job's going to last any longer. We're scared. We're afraid. Because life is hard and our relationships are affected and we don't know how we're going to fix those.

And the weird tricks are all been worked through. Right? What do we do? Can we believe that God's there? Can we believe Him? Yes.

Because we see Jesus trusting. Later on this week, right? On Thursday night, I got my nights right. He's in the garden. He's praying. We see Jesus trusting there because here's the deal. Jesus lived the perfect life of trust that you and I could never live given a million opportunities.

[26 : 18] He lived that perfect life. He died the death that you and I deserved. And as He, on the night before, He was betrayed and knowing what was before Him.

It says this. And Jesus knew He was going to drink the cup of His Father's wrath. The wrath that was deserved, you and me. Jesus knew He was going to drink this.

And He knew that it meant that He was going to be sent from the Father's presence and experience pain, the depths of pain, you and I can only barely imagine. And this is what it says in Matthew 26. And going a little further, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, there it is.

I don't know. Is this heretical? But I picture Jesus on the blue mat saying, I don't want my way. I can trust you, Father. I will walk this horrible path because of the joy set before me.

[27 : 21] I'll do it. And here's the deal. He had your life and my life in mind. And He still did it. That's crazy. He did that for me and He knew what a mess I would make of my life.

He still did it. He's trusting the Father. He's trusting the Father to raise Him. He's trusting the Father that this will be enough. It'll be finished. There is the trust.

And He did it for you and me. He can be trusted. The life that God is scribbling for you, it looks like crooked lines. And He asks you to walk it.

And it's painful and it hurts and you wonder, are you king or not? And He asks you to walk it. We just need to remember and look at Jesus how He trusted and know it's worth it.

It's going to be okay. He's got it. We can trust because Jesus knew the Father. He knew the Father. With a love so great as this that Jesus had for the Father and the Father had for Jesus, we see it.

[28 : 27] We see what Jesus did for us. We remember. We lean on that. We trust in that. We don't want our way. We want Jesus' way.

We want the Father's way. With love so great as this, that Jesus would lay down His life for us. With such great love between the Father and the Son, that trust flowed so deep from the heart of Jesus. How can we not trust the Father to make your crooked path straight? the pain that you're walking through, the hardship that you're in, the difficulty.

He can make it straight and He's making it straight. He can be trusted. And so we can get up off the blue mat and start walking with Him on that crooked path with hope. Absolute hope.

He will direct your paths. Relax. He will make them straight and smooth. So trust, remember, relax.

[29 : 27] Trust, it's not a weird trick. It's not a life hack. Trust is a person. It's the gospel. It's Jesus.

Amen? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, my expectations in reality, they hardly ever match up.

And so, Father, thank You for that. I thank You for the past two and a half years. Lord, thank You.

The straight path that You're working out.

It looks crooked to me, but Father, I look to Jesus and I see the glory. I see Your glory in His face.

Father, take me no further than the cross and no higher than His feet ever.

Continue to teach me, teach us, to trust You, to place our hope only in You, the author and finisher of our faith. Lord, we thank You for this message. Lord, we thank You for the message of the gospel of grace.

[30 : 39] In Christ's name, Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.