

Proverbs 3

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Date: 02 January 2020

[0 : 00] Amen. Go ahead and take your Bible. Turn with me to the book of Proverbs. I'm very thankful for Ben leading the music. I'm thankful that Kristen and Catherine sang a special.

I've been in a service before where I led the music and did not do a special. But then preached and did the announcements. It's a lot easier when you have some other people helping out.

I was going to give Catherine a choice and tell her she could either be the only missionary update or sing a special. But they were willing, so I didn't even have to threaten. I do want to say that I'm thankful for our church.

I love this church. I didn't have a choice about the first church that I went to. I was born into it. And I love my dad's church. Don't get me wrong. But I love that.

The next church that I went to was because of college. And the next church I went to was because they were paying me. And this is really the first church where, as a family, we chose to come to this church and bring my family here.

[1 : 04] And I have loved being here. I love the music of our church. It just blesses me and prepares me to hear preaching, or in this case, to preach.

I love that we have a church full of Bible teachers. You know, on any given day, you can see people teaching other people the Bible. But that does make things a little difficult.

It is not the easiest church to decide what to preach. I don't know if you know this, but you can't preach anything topical here. I'm just kidding. You probably could. I was going to be the antithesis of Pastor Gardner, let you shake hands for ten minutes, and then preach a very topical and political message, and just see if I could drive him to an early grave or something.

Honestly, I'm not going to preach anything that you've never heard before. I'm not going to enlighten you today. As I thought about what to preach, honestly, I know that I want to preach the Bible.

But this is a passage of Scripture that's one of my favorite passages of Scripture. I say that all the time about several passages of Scripture. Whatever I'm reading at the moment or teaching at the moment, that's my favorite. This is one that's been my life verse at times in my life.

[2 : 22] And many of you probably may have said the same thing. But if you look at Proverbs chapter 3, I don't know if I even told you where to go yet. Proverbs chapter 3, these are very, very familiar verses.

But sometimes we take the familiar and we don't really study them. We don't really learn them. Often in Christianity, we say things that we don't even really mean or even really understand or know.

So I remember as a kid, I grew up in Dalton. So we were very close to Tennessee and Chattanooga. And one of my heroes as a young guy was Dr. Lee Robertson.

I ended up going to the high school there. And he has this famous message. He has a kind of crooked finger. He had this famous message, have faith in God, have faith in God. And he would just say that like 100 times in the message, have faith in God.

And I said, man, that's so good. That's awesome. And then like the next day, you're like, what does that mean? I mean, how do I do that? Have you ever thought that before? People say things like have faith in God. And then the next day, you're like, well, how do I even do that?

[3 : 27] And sometimes we get that way. We can kind of have these Christian cliches or even Bible statements that are good and true. And sometimes they're hollow. And we need to put meat on the bones.

This is a passage of Scripture that's not hollow. If you take the first statement and you just say, trust in the Lord, you can make it that way. But God fills in the blanks for us so well.

And that's what we're going to do. We're going to look at this passage of Scripture. Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 5. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not into thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths.

Let's pray together. God, I love you. I thank you so much for your word. I pray, God, that you'll use me tonight as I preach. I pray, Lord, that you'll use your word to speak to your people. I know there's nothing that I can say that can change lives, but your word is powerful.

It is quick. It is able to know exactly what each person in this room needs. I pray that you'll use your word to meet the needs of these people. I ask this in your name. Amen. Trust in the Lord.

[4 : 26] Trust in the Lord. Trust is a firm belief in the truth of anything. It's a confidence in, a faith in. It's to depend upon, to confide in, depend on, expect, hope, rely.

I think we know what trust is. The reality is that by definition, trust can be in anything. You can trust in yourself. You can trust in money. You can trust in just about anything.

What really gives the value to your trust is what you're trusting in. The Bible says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not into your own understanding. It is very easy to trust in other things.

It's very easy to trust in yourself. But it's important that we learn to trust in the Lord. In this verse, there's one really big command.

Trust in the Lord. That command is very specific. We are told exactly what to trust in. We're to trust in the Lord. The good thing is that there's no better thing to trust in.

[5 : 27] If you have your Bible, turn with me. Flip over to 2 Samuel chapter 22. 2 Samuel chapter 22, verse 31 says, Ask for God.

His way is perfect. The word of the Lord is tried. He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him. Do you know why I can trust in the Lord?

Because His way is perfect. I love that. Ask for God. His way is perfect. That's why I can trust in Him. I don't know if you've ever been on any kind of a trip with any kind of kid at any point for any length.

At some point, they're going to say, Where are we going? When are we going to get there? Are we there yet? I mean, they have about 50 questions about that. I think often, Abby is the worst. I mean, she's just, she, we get in the car and she'll just start just, especially if it's just me and her.

Where are we going? Where are we going? Where are we going? It doesn't matter. You have no control over this. You have no need to know. There's no value to your opinion if you were to give it.

[6 : 35] So, there is no need. But the reality is, she has no decision in where that vehicle is going. I'm the driver. And she doesn't have to trust in a direction.

She doesn't have to trust in a destination. All she has to do is trust in Dad. All she has to do is know that I know where we're going. Now, that's not always the case.

I am also terrible with directions. So, if you really want to know where we're going, you need to ask Mom. So, I mean, I am, I am, I am, I'm at least very open and honest about this.

If I have no idea where I'm going, I don't mind to ask for directions. Stephanie knows. If we're going somewhere, I need her to tell me exactly what the next turn is going to be. I mean, she's, well, you've been there a hundred times.

It doesn't matter. It really doesn't. I don't know where, anyways, I just ruined my illustration. You need to trust in, our trust is in the Lord. Our trust is in God.

[7 : 36] Man, that's so easy to say. But is it easy to do? It is specified. Trust in the Lord. It is qualified with all your heart.

You know, the Bible tells us something else to do with the Lord, with all of our heart. Y'all remember in the New Testament, it says that we are to love the Lord your God with all your heart. I would like to say that's an easy thing, but it's not.

This world is so bright and shiny and colorful and loud, and it just screams for our attention and our affection.

This world is out here just saying, love me. But God says, now love me with all your heart. There are all kinds of influences in this world that want part of your heart, but God says, love me.

And we have to choose to love a God that we've never seen over a world that is just screaming for our attention. I think it's difficult to love the Lord with all your heart, but we're commanded to do so.

[8 : 40] In this, we're commanded to trust Him with all our heart. And we say, well, that's easy enough, right? Oh, no. No, it's not. For one, we're told to trust with our heart.

Our heart is where our emotions are. Our heart is where our thought processes are. It's the soul of a man. It's where we think and where we evaluate.

It's what we feel. It's not what we see. He doesn't say, trust me with your eyes. That would be a lot easier, wouldn't it? You see, the reality is it's so easy to trust in God when I know exactly what God is doing.

And I can see exactly where I'm supposed to be going. And everything is working out really nice. And there's really good answers and really good reasons. And everything makes sense to me. My heart agrees with what God wants.

That's when it's easy, right? I remember a man talking about his son. And he said, my son came to me one time and said, Dad, I agree with you like 95%.

[9 : 40] I mean, like, we agree 95% of the time. Why do we have to fight over this other amount? And you're just mad at me because I disagree with you. That's how I feel with God sometimes.

Like, we obey and we trust like 95% of the time. That's because we agree 95% of the time. It's the 5% where we don't agree where it's hard to trust.

It's so easy to trust when there's money in the bank. And there's, you know, like, you write out the bills and there's a black number at the bottom.

That's when it's easy to trust. It's easy to trust when the kids are well. It's easy to trust when the doctor says what you want to hear. But boy, when things go bad, when you get that diagnosis that you weren't expecting, we still are supposed to trust in the Lord with all our heart.

Even when your heart says, this isn't fair, or this isn't right, or I don't like this, we still trust in the Lord with all our heart. I can tell you why it's difficult, because your heart is a liar.

[10 : 47] Y'all know the verse, such a great description, Jeremiah 17, your heart is deceitful above all things, it's desperately wicked. Your heart will lie to you. Your heart will tell you that you want something and you need something.

Because your heart's a liar. I worked at Domino's for a while, sorry, Tim. But, you know, when you work at a pizza delivery place, I was a delivery driver.

Or, when you work at a place like that, you work with just really quality employees. I mean, just men of understanding and wisdom, great advice all the time, good decision making.

I mean, it's just quality. I was first working there, and I was the closing driver, so it's me and a manager, and that's it. And this manager is going to just drop some wisdom on me. And he's telling me about this other driver that he knows that is just insane.

He gives like 10% of his income to his church. And he was telling me about how this guy is so crazy. Like, can you believe that? He gives like 10% of his income to his church. He has this beat-up car. It's ridiculous.

[11 : 56] I'm helping him fix it all the time, I feel like. If he would just keep that money, he could probably have a nicer car, and I wouldn't be working on it all the time. And I was thinking to myself, you know, that's incredible wisdom.

Thank you. It's so funny. I'm sitting there, and I know exactly what he's talking about. It's like, hey, I'm not going to tell you that I do that because I don't want you to think I'm an idiot. But how many times has our heart said, if I didn't do that, I could have a nicer car.

I could have the nicer house. I could have the nicer things. You know, we begin to evaluate and to think and to, you know, our spreadsheet doesn't work out the way that things should work out.

And our heart says, I don't think so. But we still have to trust the Lord. The reality is that giving is probably the greatest, I say greatest, it's not the greatest.

It is a great demonstration of trust. It's one of those easy ways to prove you trust. That's not easy.

[12 : 59] There's nothing easy about it. But we believe in giving a tithe. And right off the top, get your paycheck.

We write the check. It goes to the church. And then we have this crazy idea called faith promise. Like sometimes it doesn't even really fit in a budget or make complete sense.

You know, we have other things that we could invest in. And God does something in our heart and says, hey, trust me.

I'll meet your needs, but this is what I want you to do. And then the basket comes. And we get to prove whether we trust in the Lord with all our heart.

Or whether our heart is going to say, I don't think so. It's qualified. And then it is contrasted. The Bible says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding.

[13 : 59] It's so great. I love the Proverbs. I mean, they're wise. It's so great how it really clarifies it for us. Really, the opposite of trusting the Lord with all your heart is leaning unto your own understanding.

A lot of times one of the easiest ways to define something is to say what it's not. Have you ever had that situation? Well, I can tell you what. Trusting in the Lord is not. It's leaning into your own understanding. But boy, do we have a hard time with this.

I won't even include you. Boy, do I have a hard time with this. Because I think that I understand pretty well. I think that I have a pretty good head on my shoulders. I think that I have a pretty good plan. I got plans.

I got dreams. I got ambitions. I got goals. I've got it all worked out. And, you know, God, I prefer if you don't mess with that, please.

I have my own understanding about how my life ought to go. One of my favorite books, if you're ever trying to help a young person with the will of God, one of my favorite books is by Kerry Schmidt. It's Discover Your Destiny.

[15:03] And he tells a story. And I'm going to butcher it because I haven't read it in a while. But he tells a story about how he would take his kids to this, like, playground area. It's kind of like something, kind of like a Chuck E. Cheese, I guess.

Or you take them there very regularly. So they get in the car. And they know, oh, we're going to Chuck E. Cheese. I'm going to say Chuck E. Cheese. It wasn't that. It's in California. So I don't know. But, oh, we're going to Chuck E. Cheese. And they're so excited. And then one day they're getting in the car. They're like, oh, we're going to Chuck E. Cheese. Because it's Chuck E. Cheese Day.

We're going to Chuck E. Cheese. And he's like, we're not going to Chuck E. Cheese. What? We're not going to Chuck E. Cheese. And they're so angry. But he had a plan. They were going to Disneyland. And they were so mad that they weren't going to Chuck E. Cheese.

Because that was their plan. That was their dream. They didn't even realize that there's something bigger out there than Chuck E. Cheese. There's Disneyland. And that's my own understanding.

My own understanding is like, God, I got plans, man. I got dreams and goals. And I got this all figured out. I have my own understanding. And I got this worked out.

[16:03] And he's like, no, I got a better idea for you. We're like, no, Chuck E. Cheese. He's like, no, Disneyland. I know that's silly. I didn't say it.

Carrie Schmidt did. Boy, is that good, though. Lean not into your own understanding. You know, Proverbs has a way of describing our own understanding.

It says, there is a way that seemeth right unto a man. But then there is the ways of death. It says it twice, actually, in the Proverbs. Exactly. Word for word. Sometimes your own understanding, your own way, your own plan, can be destructive.

God says, trust in me with all your heart. And lean not into your own understanding. That's the big command. Trust in the Lord.

But then there's some basic instruction. And this is what I love. It's so easy to just say, trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord. But the Bible doesn't just leave us with just something to put on your bumper sticker.

[17:06] Look what the Bible says in verse 6. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. In all thy ways acknowledge Him. I really feel like this is the to-do list of how to trust in the Lord.

This is like how to put feet behind the statement. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. You want to know how to do that? In all your ways acknowledge Him. What does that mean?

What are your ways? That's the direction you're going. That's the path you're taking. That's the decisions that you're making. Your destination is determined by your direction.

Your direction is determined by your decisions. Your way, all your ways are the decisions you make. And God says, hey, just acknowledge me. When you go to make a decision, acknowledge me.

We have several married guys in this room. Do you remember when you were single? You didn't have to acknowledge anybody. It's like 10 o'clock at night, and you want Taco Bell? Go to Taco Bell.

[18 : 12] There are no consequences. There are. It's Taco Bell at 10 o'clock at night. There are consequences. But there's no one to acknowledge there. You want to go to a ball game?

It's going to be six hours. Maybe two-hour drive. Four-and-a-half-hour game. Whatever it is. Two-and-a-half hours back. That's like a whole day. You want to go to a ball game? You're single. You want to go to a ball game?

Hop in the car. Let's go. I remember it was like it started snowing. I was in Dalton. I was a teenager. We were at the service. Kevin Hall was there, so you know there's going to be trouble. And it starts snowing, and we've never seen that before.

And we're like, snow. We have an idea. Let's go skiing. So it's like Mark Coffey and Kevin Hall and ten of us other guys. We pile into two vehicles, and we just start driving north to North Carolina. We're going to ski.

I have no idea how to ski. This is going to be a great idea, though. We pile into one hotel room because we get up there. I mean, we're about to die trying to drive. I mean, we can't drive without snow on the road.

[19 : 06] But we just have this idea. We're single guys. Ten of us pile in a hotel room. Next day, we get up, and we're going to ski. Some of them had an idea what they were doing. I did not. It was miserable. But I wanted to go skiing, so I just left and went skiing.

I am married now, and I have four children. And every decision I make, I acknowledge that fact. I cannot just decide I would like to go to a ball game and leave my wife with four children for eight hours, and there be no consequences.

It doesn't work that way. I acknowledge her. That's not that I have to. It's not that I want to. I love her, and I want to respect her, and I want to acknowledge her in the decisions that I make.

I'm not perfect about that stuff if you're watching. I apologize. But if we do that for a wife that we love or a husband that you love or parents or whatever it is, that's what it is to do that with God.

Acknowledge Him. When you go to make that decision, this is not just your decision. It's not just based on your own understanding. You acknowledge God.

[20 : 18] I want you to notice there are no exceptions to this. In all thy ways, acknowledge Him. There's no decision too small or too big where God doesn't get a say.

In all thy ways, acknowledge Him. There's no independence. The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone.

Not just without a body, but you have the Lord Jesus Christ in your life now. You don't get to live a life completely independent of that. So many people, this is critical, so many people, they become a Christian, and then they just live their own life.

It's not the way it's intended. We are to acknowledge Him. Every decision, no matter how great, no matter how small, every decision, we acknowledge God. God, what would you want me to do in this situation?

We consider all kinds of things when we make decisions. We consider the financial implications. We consider the emotional implications, the social, you know, what are people going to think about me if I do this?

[21 : 24] But do we ever even consider what does God think when we make those decisions? The boss comes along and offers you this big raise, but you've got to move. And you start to consider things. What does my wife think?

What are my kids going to do? Where are we going to put them in school? What kind of house are we going to have available? Is there a McDonald's? I mean, there's all kinds of really important... Do they even have a Target? Are we stuck with just Walmart? I mean, you start to consider really, really important things.

But do you ever stop and consider, what does God think? What does God have to say about this decision in my life? Acknowledge Him. Stop.

Put the computer away, the spreadsheet away, whatever else you have in front of you to make your decision. Put that away for a minute. And kneel and talk to God.

Acknowledge Him and say, God, I trust You with my life. You're the one who gets to decide. If you want me to go, I'll go because I trust You.

[22 : 21] If you want me to stay, then I'll stay because I trust You. And even if it doesn't make sense in my own mind, in my own understanding, I trust You. You acknowledge Him.

It says, In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. This is the best promise. He shall direct thy paths. When I was dealing with teenagers, I would ask them all the time, Who do you think can do a better job with your life?

You are 15 years old. I know you have everything figured out. But you're 15 years old. You have 15 solid years of experience. Five of which you probably don't remember at all.

I know that you're a very well-educated, level-headed, thoughtful individual. Who do you think will do a better job with your life? Planning your life. You or God?

When we step back and think of it that way. We look at our life and we think, Man, I got such big plans. I got big dreams. And I have ideas.

[23 : 45] And I know me. I have a really good way of messing stuff up. God is perfect. That's why I trust Him. This is the God who made you.

And He knows you. And He loves you. And He wants the best for you. Let me just blow your mind. He has a big and awesome plan for you. I'm not some, you know, name it and claim it, social gospel, you know, everything's going to be perfect for you kind of guy.

I'm not saying that. But I am saying that He has a big plan for your life. And He has great things for you. I'm saying you can trust Him. I love Psalm 23.

I've talked about it here before. Psalm 23, you know, it says that He's going to lead us beside the still waters and in the green pastures and in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

And we're like, man, that stuff is great. That's awesome. I want those things. That's so good. It also says He's going to lead us, you know, when I go through the valley of the shadow of death.

[24 : 57] It doesn't even imply that I got there by making a bad decision or doing that on my own. It might just be that He led me there as well. But we have all these things in there that we want, but you know how you get those?

It says, The Lord is my shepherd. He leadeth me. You trust Him. You trust Him.

And you follow Him. And He leads you to those places. He leads you to the still waters. He leads you to the green pastures. He leads you to the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

All those things that you want, He leads you. I love what Ben read. I love that. I want to know your way. You want to know why I know your way? Because that's where you are. And I want to know you. You know the best part about Psalm 23 is not the water and the grass and the paths of righteousness.

It's the shepherd. It's the fact that it is God leading me. Have you ever thought about that? That it's God who's leading you? I mean, the great thing about being a sheep, I mean, it doesn't seem like such a great thing except for the fact that the Lord is my shepherd.

[26 : 10] And it's easy to trust Him at the still waters and the green pastures and the paths of righteousness, but there will come those dark days.

That valley of the shadow of death will come. But if you've trusted Him, if you've followed Him, if He's led you, and just like David, you can say, in the middle of that valley, thou art with me.

The greatest thing about being led by the Lord is that it's the Lord who's leading. He's there with you. So I would encourage you, trust in the Lord.

Trust Him. It's easier said than done, but trust Him. Acknowledge Him in all your ways. Lean not into your own understanding. Give Him first say in every decision.

And trust the Lord. I can promise you, He knows what's best for you. I can promise you that He is a good God. I can promise you these things. I've been...

[27 : 19] I know you thought it would be easy for me to preach tonight because I've been preaching at university and I would just preach, you know, but I can't do that because I steal all pastor stuff.

So I'm in the middle of Job. And it's been helpful because, you know, there are people that are hurting. Anywhere you go, there are people that are hurting.

But I'm preaching and I know what people are going through. I know the hurt that they're dealing with. I mean, real pain.

probably nothing like what Job went through, but the worst pain is the pain you feel. I mean, the worst problem is the problem you're facing.

But in the midst of all that, you know, everybody was trying to figure out why in the book of Job. But all I said to them when I was preaching, the thing you have to remember are...

[28 : 21] There's a lot of things you don't know. But there are a few things that you do know. And those are the things you hold on to. I know that God is in control. I know that God is good.

He makes no mistakes. He was not surprised when this diagnosis came. He was not surprised when you had to go to the hospital. He was not surprised when the helicopter couldn't land and the liver flew away.

He was not surprised by any of that. God is good. God is all-powerful. He's all-knowing. And God loves you.

These are the truths that we know. These are the things that we hold on to in those dark times. And these are the things that allow us to just trust in Him.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not into your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. God bless you.

[29 : 26] So excited for that.