

The Best Advice

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Proverbs, Proverbs 3.

Proverbs 3, and we're going to read or focus our minds on verses 5 and 6. Proverbs 3 at verse 5. 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.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. What's the best advice you've ever been given? What's the best advice you've ever been given?

The best advice I've been given, it was from my dad. He always said to us as children, if you don't ask, you don't get. If you don't ask, you don't get.

[1 : 06] Now, it's not godly advice, but it's certainly good advice. And it's advice that I've applied to many circumstances and many situations in my life. Especially when it comes to inviting people to church.

If you don't ask, you don't know if they'll come. And of course, we all need advice. Whether it's advice about friendships or advice about family. Whether it's advice about children or cooking. Whether it's advice about relationships or even real estate. Whatever it is, we all need advice. And sometimes the advice we receive, it's good and godly advice.

Other times the advice we receive is flawed and sometimes foolish advice. Sometimes the advice is needed and necessary. Other times the advice, it's not warranted.

And sometimes it's not even wanted. And as you know, there are some people who are good at giving advice. And there are others who are not very good at receiving advice.

[2 : 05] They're good at giving, but rarely receive advice. But as our Bible teaches us, it teaches us that to give advice, you need wisdom. To receive advice, you need humility.

To give advice, you need wisdom. But to receive advice, you need humility. Because how we respond to advice really matters. How we respond to advice really matters.

And in many ways you could say, that's what the book of Proverbs is all about. Because the book of Proverbs is a book of wise sayings by Solomon. Solomon, boys and girls, he was the wisest man that ever lived.

But Solomon's wisdom, it wasn't gleaned from experience or gained from education. Solomon's wisdom, as you know, was given by God. And Solomon's wisdom, it was good wisdom.

It was godly wisdom. It was gracious wisdom, all given by God. And it's recorded and written here for us in the book of Proverbs. Because it's a book of wise sayings, full of sound and full of spiritual advice.

[3 : 13] And from the outset of this book, Solomon says that the key to true wisdom is the fear of the Lord. He says right at the beginning of the book and throughout the book of Proverbs, he says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And you know, I'd encourage you to be in the habit of reading through the book of Proverbs. So read through the book of Proverbs.

The month of July is 31 days in it. So there are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. You've got a few chapters to catch up on. But read through the book of Proverbs. Be in the habit of reading through this book.

Because Solomon in this book, he gives lots of good and lots of godly advice. So just to give you a sample of some of Solomon's sound and spiritual advice, I just want to quote a few verses from it.

He says, Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.

[4 : 21] A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

One for our nation, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. One we often tell the boys in Proverbs 10 verse 1.

A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother. One that I was often told as a child, a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

It's all good, and it's all godly advice. But you know, I think the best advice given in this book of advice, it comes from these two well-known verses.

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.

[5 : 27] And you know, out of all the advice that we could ever receive in life, this has to be the best advice. It has to be the best advice, because Solomon here, he reminds us, and he reassures us, that in life we need to have confidence in the Lord, and to take counsel from the Lord.

In our lives, we need to have confidence in the Lord, and take counsel from the Lord. And there are two headings this morning. Confidence in the Lord, and counsel from the Lord.

So first of all, we see confidence in the Lord. Confidence in the Lord. Verse 5 tells us, Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Now lots of the good and godly advice given in the book of Proverbs is parental advice. We've seen that even in the verses that we read from chapter 3. It's advice that's passed down from a parent to a child.

It's advice from a father to a son. And we see that throughout the book of Proverbs, because Solomon is speaking as a father to his son. He's giving advice by repeatedly addressing him as, My son.

[6 : 44] My son. My son. We see that even at the beginning of the chapter. He begins, verse 1, My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.

For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. But you know, whether it's a literal father to a son, or a father in the faith to a spiritual son, Solomon is giving good and he's giving godly advice when he calls us to have confidence in the Lord.

He says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. Now, Solomon's call to have confidence in the Lord, or to trust in the Lord, that word trust, it's a command.

It's an imperative. And it's an imperative because, of course, it's important. And as you know, trust is important. Trust is important. Trust is important.

Because trust carries with it, you could say, connotations of clarity and confidence. Trust has the idea of support and certainty.

[7 : 59] But as we all know, trust is something that's earned, but easily broken. Trust is something that's earned, but easily broken.

And trust, it doesn't come naturally to us, does it? Trust takes time. In fact, we're taught not to trust strangers.

Something schools often stress to children with the theme, stranger danger. We're not to trust strangers, because trust takes time.

We need to learn to trust someone. And we need to learn to trust them by getting to know them, and by spending time with them. So trust takes time. And trust is something that's earned.

It's something that's earned, but easily broken. And when trust is broken, it's hard to recover, and it's hard to regain. When trust is broken, it's hard to restore, and it's hard to rebuild.

[8 : 59] Which is why trust is important. Trust is integral. It's integral to every area of life, whether it's our marriage, or our relationships, or our friendships, or even at work. Trust is important, and trust is integral.

But you know, here in these verses, with the best advice, Solomon calls us, and he commands us, with that imperative, to trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord, he says.

And you know, it shouldn't actually take us a long time to trust the Lord. We don't need to learn to trust the Lord. We don't even need to earn his trust, or worry that his trust will ever be broken.

Why? Because the Lord is so unlike us. He's unlike any of us. The Lord is completely trustworthy. He's trustworthy and true. In fact, the Lord is actually worthy of our trust.

The Lord this morning, he is worthy of our trust. And we should have confidence in the Lord, because the Lord has revealed himself to us. He has revealed himself to us as our creator and our covenant God.

[10:08] The Lord has revealed himself to us as our creator and covenant God. Because the title, Lord, trust in the Lord, the title, Lord, is a royal title.

It's a regal title. You could say it's a majestic title. It's a magnificent title. It's the title of a king. It's a title of the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

And so we're to trust in the Lord because he's our creator and he's our covenant king. We're to trust in the Lord because he's our creator and he's our covenant king.

And as our creator and covenant king, as our catechism teaches, as our Bible emphasizes to us, our creator and covenant king, he's three passions.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The same in substance, equal in power and glory. He's not three kings, but he's one king. And he's not three lords, he's one Lord.

[11:05] And he's Lord over all. And that's why we're being called to trust in him. To trust in the Lord who is Lord over all. Because as the creator king, as the Lord of creation, he has created this world, as we know, by the word of his power, where he spoke into the darkness and into the nothingness of this world and said, let there be.

And it was. And he saw there was all very good. But the Lord, our creator king, he not only spoke this creation into being. The wonderful thing about this creation is that the Lord didn't just wind up the clock and let it run.

No, our Lord, he sovereignly sustains his creation that he spoke into being. Where he rules over and he overrules in all things, as Paul teaches us.

He rules over and overrules in all things in heaven above and in the earth beneath. That not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without him knowing.

The Lord, our creator king, he has appointed every purpose. He has appointed every providence in our lives. And the amazing thing about the Lord is that he knows all our sins.

[12:23] He knows our sicknesses. He knows our sufferings. He knows our stresses. He knows our surgeries. He knows our sorrows. And he knows all our separations. The Lord knows it all because he is our creator king.

He is our creator king where heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool. But you know what's beautiful is that this same Lord, he makes promises to us.

He's not only our creator king, he is our covenant king who makes promises to us. And as we've seen and as we've said many times before, whenever we see the title Lord, boys and girls, whenever you see the title Lord there in capital letters as it is in verse 5, it's the title of the king.

That he's our creator and covenant king. He's our creator covenant king. And the title Lord means the one who keeps covenant. The one who keeps covenant.

Which means that this Lord who's our creator king and our covenant king. He's the one who makes promises to us. And he keeps all his promises to us.

[13:33] He is the one who's sure and steadfast in all his promises. He's the one who's loyal and loving in his word. He's the one who's faithful and promises never to forsake you.

He's the one who's trustworthy and true. He is the Lord. That's what he's saying here. Trust in the Lord. Trust in your creator king and your covenant king.

This one who keeps covenant. And you know for that reason you can have complete confidence in the Lord this morning. You can have absolute confidence in the Lord today because he has made himself known to you.

He's not hidden from you. You've opened your Bible and he's speaking to you this morning and he's saying to you trust in the Lord. So he's revealed himself to you. He's revealed his righteousness to you.

He's acted according to his grace towards you. He's dealt with you in mercy. He's displayed his forgiveness to you on the cross. He's demonstrated his love towards you on the cross.

[14:36] Therefore, he is worthy. He is worthy of your trust. He is worthy of your trust. Do you know, my friend, you have no reason this morning to doubt the Lord.

You have no reason to have concerns or even caution about this Lord. You have no reason to ever come to your Bible with suspicion or skepticism.

You have no reason to question or query the Lord. My friend, you have no reason not to have confidence in the Lord because of who he is and what he has done for you and in your life. You have no reason not to trust the Lord, which is why the best advice you could ever be given, the best advice is trust in the Lord.

Trust in the Lord. But notice how you are to trust in the Lord. Solomon says that you're to trust in the Lord, boys and girls, trust in the Lord with all your heart.

[15:48] Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Not some of your heart, not part of your heart, not most of your heart, not even the majority of your heart, but all of your heart.

All of your heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And you know, for a Jew, it was obviously written by a Jew, Solomon was a Jew.

For a Jew, your heart wasn't just your physical organ or a feeling of emotion. Your heart is your whole being. Your heart is, you could say, the seat of your soul.

Your heart is the real you. Not the false you. Not the fake you. Not the Facebook you. Not the facade of you that other people might see.

No, your heart is who you are before God. Because your life is an open book before Him.

Therefore, trusting in the Lord with all your heart, it's a wholehearted trust.

[16:49] trust. It's a wholehearted trust. It's a confident trust. It's a committed trust. And Solomon says, this is the best advice you're ever going to hear.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And you know, when you read that verse there in verse 5, you see that Solomon's call here, Solomon's command to trust in the Lord, it's the call and the command of the gospel.

It's the call and the command of Christianity. Because in order to become a Christian, in order to follow Jesus, you're to trust in the Lord with all your heart.

You're to trust in the Lord with all your heart. You're to believe, as Paul says, you're to believe in all your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And you will be saved. So it's the call and the command of Christianity. What Solomon says here, trust in the one who is trustworthy.

[17:55] Trust in the Lord with all your heart. But you know, when we forget, which we always do, and when we fail to trust in the Lord with all our heart, which we often do, what do we do then?

What do we do then? Well, Solomon tells us what we do. We lean upon our own understanding. We put all our trust and we place all our trust upon our own understanding.

And of course, as you know, our understanding, it's going to fail. Because our understanding is finite, not like the Lord's. It's flawed, not like the Lord's.

It's faulty, not like the Lord's. Our understanding, it's imperfect, it's inadequate, it's incapable of knowing what the Lord knows. Which is why we cannot rest in or rely upon self or even our own strength.

we can't rest in and rely upon our feelings or our finances. We can't rest in and rely upon other people or our possessions. We can't rest in or rely upon our health or even our happiness, our education, or even our emotions.

[19:12] And no matter how much we love them and look up to them and lean upon them, we can't rest in and rely upon our family or our friends. Because even they will let us down.

You know, that's why the center, boys and girls, that's why the center verse of your Bible presents to us what must be the central theme in our lives. We were singing earlier in our opening item of praise from Psalm 118.

The amazing thing about Psalm 118, there are 594 chapters in the Bible before Psalm 118. And there are 594 chapters after Psalm 119.

And if you add 594 and 594, you get 1188, which gives you the center verse in the Bible. Psalm 118, verse 8.

What does it say? It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man.

[20:21] My friend, the center verse of your Bible presents to you what must be the central theme of your life. It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man.

And you know, this morning we're being given the best advice. The best advice, have confidence in the Lord. But Solomon, as you can see, he doesn't stop there because he goes on to talk about taking counsel from the Lord, which is what we see secondly.

So there's confidence in the Lord and counsel from the Lord. Counsel from the Lord. He says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. You know, Solomon's advice really is the best advice because we're not only called and commanded to have confidence in the Lord, to trust in him as our creator, king, and our covenant king who makes promises and keeps all his promises and that we're not to lean upon our finite and flawed understanding but we're also called here and commanded here to take counsel. To take counsel from the Lord. And as we said, well, we're not very good at taking counsel, are we? We're certainly good at giving counsel and many people who are good at giving counsel often give counsel but sometimes you find that those people who give counsel are not very good at taking it because to give advice you need wisdom.

[22 : 01] To receive advice you need humility. That's what Solomon stresses not only here but throughout the whole book of Proverbs. It's one thing having confidence in the Lord.

It's another thing entirely taking counsel from the Lord because when we take counsel from the Lord we need to stop and admit and even acknowledge that we don't know it all and that we don't have it all together.

Whatever front or facade we put on we don't have it all together. We need to admit that we're not in control we're not in charge we're not the commander in chief over our lives because the Lord is. And that's why Solomon wisely says to us when you lean on your own understanding it will only lead you astray. When you lean on your own understanding it will only lead you astray. Therefore we have to admit and we have to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways. That's what he says verse 6 you have to admit and acknowledge the Lord in all our ways because well he knows the way that you take.

[23 : 16] He knows what you're going through. He knows your worries. He knows what weighs you down. He knows your anxieties. He knows your apprehensions. He knows your cares.

He knows your concerns. He knows your heartache and he knows your heartbreak. He knows all your needs because he knows you. He's your creator king. He's your covenant king.

He knows all your needs because he knows you. And you know when you stop and think about it what Solomon is actually saying here is something we often teach our children to sing about.

Where we teach our children to sing about the Lord the covenant king and the creator king what do we say to them? He's got the whole world in his hands.

That's what Solomon is saying to us here. He's got the whole world in his hands so trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not upon your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path.

[24 : 17] And you know I love that phrase acknowledge him. Acknowledge him. In all your ways acknowledge him. In all that you're going through acknowledge him. The phrase acknowledge him literally means let him know.

Let him know. In all your ways let him know. My friend what Solomon is showing us is that the key to any and every relationship in life is communication.

The key to trust is communication. Trust is built and bound up in communication. Therefore Solomon says in all your ways in all that you go through acknowledge him.

Acknowledge him. And of course Solomon is speaking about prayer and the priority of prayer in your life that you're to speak about everything to the Lord. No matter how big or how small you're to share it with the Lord.

You're to communicate your cautions to the Lord. You're to confess your concerns to the Lord.

You're to express your worries to the Lord. You're to explain all your wobbles with the Lord.

[25 : 31] You're to admit all your anxieties to the Lord. You're to acknowledge your apprehensions to the Lord and say Lord help me because you know that you need his help and you know that you need his healing.

You know that you need his grace and his guidance. You know that you need his love and his leading. You know that you need his calming and his care. You know that you need his presence and His peace.

You need to acknowledge Him in all your ways. All that you go through. All that you're facing. My friend, this is the best advice. That's beautiful advice.

To trust in the Lord with all your heart is to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. To trust in the Lord with all your heart is to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. To trust in the Lord with all your heart is to speak to the Lord about everything you go through in life. Whether personally and privately or in your home, in your family, in your workplace.

[26 : 34] To trust in the Lord with all your heart is to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. And of course, that's not easy. But no one said it would be easy.

No one ever said the Christian life would be easy. And you know, I was thinking, this is the best advice. But I was also reminded of the best poem.

Well, for me, I think it's the best poem. We have the poem, The Divine Weaver. It hangs at our front door. So if you ever come to our front door, you'll see the Divine Weaver hanging there.

And every time I see it at our front door, do I often think that the Divine Weaver comes to every door in every community. The Divine Weaver comes to every door in every community.

And my friend, as the best poem reminds us and reassures us, when the Divine Weaver comes to your door, when the Divine Weaver comes to your door, sometimes he weaves sorrow.

[27 : 42] And as the poem says, and I in foolish pride forget that he sees the upper and I the underside. And not till the loom is silent or the shuttle cease to fly, shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned. You know, my friend, the Divine Weaver comes to your door.

He comes to every door. And he's there because he knows what he's doing. He knows what he's doing and he's calling you and commanding you to trust him. To trust that he knows what he's doing.

To trust in the Lord with all your heart and to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and acknowledge the Lord in all your ways.

But as we conclude this morning, I want to highlight a mistake. I want to highlight a mistake here because the ESV conveys and concludes this advice and the way it does is, I would say, quite messy and also misleading.

[28 : 56] Because it says there, verse 5, Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. He will make straight your paths.

I would say that's quite messy, quite misleading because the Lord never promises that when you trust him, he'll make all your paths straight. The Lord never promises that when you trust him, he will make all your paths smooth or that they'll be soft and that they'll be silky.

No, that would be holding out false hope to you. The Bible never promises that trusting in the Lord will make for an easy and even an enjoyable life.

The Bible never promises that trusting in the Lord will straighten out all the twists and turns of life. No, the Bible never promises that trusting in the Lord will smooth out all your problems and make all the paths in life real straight.

But my friend, the Bible does promise that when you trust in the Lord, and when you acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, the Lord will direct your path.

[30 : 08] He will direct your path. He will not make it straight. You look at many of the missionaries throughout history. He didn't make their path straight, but he directed their path.

And the Lord will direct your path like he does all of his people. He directs them with his word.

Because as our catechism reminds us so beautifully, the word of God is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

He is the one who will direct your path with his word. He doesn't promise. Sky is always blue, but he promises that when you trust in him and acknowledge him, he will direct your path.

And you know, my friend, this morning Solomon is giving us the best advice. The best advice because we're being called and commanded to trust in the Lord with all your heart and acknowledge the Lord in all your ways.

We're being called and commanded to have confidence in the Lord and to take counsel from the Lord. Confidence in the Lord and counsel from the Lord.

[31 : 20] Time has gone. But I just want to share a story with you. A story about a woman called Louisa Stead. Louisa Stead, she was a missionary in South Africa during the late 19th century.

But you know, it was when Louisa's life changed, that's when her call to the mission field was confirmed. So when Louisa's life changed, her call to the mission field was confirmed. And it happened one day when Louisa and her husband and their daughter, they were on a beach and they heard a young boy struggling in the sea. And Louisa's husband, who was there at the beach, he ran straight into the water to help the little boy. But as is often, what often happens is that the husband, he was also pulled under by the strong current. And sadly, a day at the beach turned out to be a disaster as both a young boy and then Louisa's husband.

They both drowned that day at the beach. But you know, as it is with many hymns, they're born out of anguish and they're born out of adversity.

[32 : 31] But they're also a beautiful reminder to all of us that when our life is turned upside down and in a moment, who else can we turn to? Who else can we trust in?

But this one who keeps covenant, the Lord. Which is why, you know, Louisa said in her sorrow and in her sadness, this is what she wrote.

"Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take him at his word, just to rest upon his promise, just to know, thus saith the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him, how I proved him over and over, Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, oh for grace to trust him more.

Oh for grace to trust him more.' And my friend, that's what we need this morning. We need to take the best advice to heart, what Solomon is teaching us, and we need grace to trust him more.

[33 : 37] We need grace to have confidence in the Lord, and grace to take counsel from the Lord. We need grace to do as we've been reminded to trust in the Lord with all our heart.

And do not lean upon our own understanding, but in all our ways to acknowledge him, and he shall direct our path. Oh for grace to trust him more.

Lord. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we give thanks for thy word, and how we come to these verses that we might have read many times before.

And yet, Lord, we pray that thy word would be ever new to us today, reminding us and reassuring us that we are called and commanded to trust in the Lord with all our heart.

Oh Lord, teach us to trust thee, to trust thee in the darkness as well as in the light, to trust thee, Lord, when the way is hard, and to trust thee when it is easy, to know that the Lord is with us every step of the way.

[34 : 50] He is the one who shall direct our path. Lord, bless us together, we pray. Teach us day by day in thy word to keep coming back to the Lord, to keep acknowledging him, acknowledging him in all our ways, knowing that when we do, he will direct us.

Oh Lord, guard our feet, guard our steps, protect us, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

We're going to sing in Psalm 56. Psalm 56 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 56, page 287.

All of our Psalms this morning, they focused them on the theme of trusting. Saw that in Psalm 118, better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man. Psalm 18, how we were reminded that the Lord's way is perfect and he's a shield to all who trust in him.

And then Psalm 56, we have a wonderful prayer. And I want the young people to learn this prayer. Here's a job for you for the summer. I learned this when I was young. Not as young as you, but I was young.

[36 : 12] Verse 3, when it says there, when I'm afraid, I'll trust in thee. In God, I'll praise his word. I will not fear what flesh can do.

My trust is in the Lord. So be a good verse to learn, or verses to learn. And if you can't manage to learn it over the summer, well, we hope your Sunday school teachers will pick it up after the holidays.

Psalm 56, but before we sing, we're going to do the questions so I don't forget. So have you got your answers? All got your answers, yeah? Good, good, good. Question one, who was the wisest man that ever lived?

Solomon. Well done. What title for God means the one who keeps? Covenant. Lord. What is the center verse of the Bible?

Psalm 118, verse 8, yeah. Question four, the best advice tells you to trust in the Lord with how much of your heart? All your heart.

[37 : 16] Okay, well, you remember that one? All your heart. Not part of it, not some of it, all of it. So Psalm 56, singing from the beginning.

Show mercy, Lord, to me for man would swallow me outright. He me oppreseth while he doth against me daily fight. And then verse 3, when I'm afraid, I'll trust in thee.

In God, I'll praise his word. I will not fear what flesh can do. My trust is in the Lord. So we'll sing from the beginning down to the end of the verse marked 4.

We'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise. Amen. Show mercy, Lord, to me, for man would swallow me outright.

He me, O present one, he doth against me daily fight.

[38 : 33] they daily would misspallow up, and take me spitefully.

for they many that do fight against me, almost high.

when I'm afraid, I'll trust in thee.

In God, I'll praise his word. I will not fear what flesh can do.

My trust is in the Lord. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

[40 : 03] Amen.