SEA CHANGE CHURCH

THE CURRENT

Proverbs: Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World · S4E5

# Straight Paths

A 7-Day Study

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*"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."*

Proverbs 3:5–6 ESV

Pastor Adam Stadtmiller · November 22, 2026

## THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

*"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."*

Proverbs 3:5–6

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, The Current walks through a piece of Sunday's passage: a short verse study, encouragement, journal questions, and a daily prayer.

Take one day at a time. There's no need to rush.

DAY 1

# Leaning Our Full Weight

> PROVERBS 3:5 ESV
>
> *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."*

## VERSE STUDY

Proverbs 3:5-6 may be one of the most familiar promises in the Bible, familiar enough that it is easy to read straight past it. The message opened with an old story of an abbot summoned to Rome, who ordered a new robe from a godly tailor. Each time a servant came to collect it, the tailor said it would be ready, Lord willing, on another day. At last the abbot sent back a question: if we don't inquire of the Lord, how long will it take? The story lands because it describes us. We like to do things in our own time, at our own pace, in our own way.

The main idea of the passage is worth reading slowly: biblical faith is not simply the conviction that God is trustworthy; it encompasses a life lived in reliance upon his trustworthiness. There is a subtle movement in that sentence. It is possible to believe that God is all-loving and still not believe that he loves us, to believe that he is trustworthy and still not trust him. Trust becomes real only when we actually place our lives in his hands.

The Hebrew word for trust, batach, was described as placing the weight of our security upon someone or something other than ourselves, like leaning on a staff. Everyone leans on something. The question is what, and how hard. Anyone who has watched a parent move reluctantly from no support, to a cane, to a walker knows that leaning more is rarely welcome, and many of us resist leaning on God the same way. An old story tells of a believer who was told that God was just a crutch, and who answered that he was far more than a crutch: closer to a stretcher.

Most of us lean on the Lord just enough to get through. When a real crisis comes, we start leaning hard. Here, as the message put it, is the secret of Christian spirituality: to lean on the Lord when everything is going well with as much dependency as when everything has gone awry. It is in that steady, everyday leaning that we grow.

## TAKE HEART

God is not insulted when we lean on him with our full weight. He invites it. The One who holds the heavens is strong enough to bear everything we bring, and there is no point at which he grows tired of being leaned upon.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. When life is going well, how much are we actually leaning on God, and how would we know?
2. What would it look like to place more of our weight on the Lord in one specific area this week?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us."*

Psalm 62:5–8

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Each morning this week, before picking up a phone or starting work, take one quiet minute to name the thing we are most tempted to carry alone, and hand it to God.

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## NOTES

DAY 2

# What We Lean On

> PSALM 118:8–9 ESV
>
> *"It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes."*

## VERSE STUDY

When our security is threatened, whether emotionally, financially or relationally, we naturally gravitate toward whatever we believe has the power to sustain, protect or deliver us. Scripture names four of the most common candidates, and each one is a support that can give way.

First, ourselves: "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). Self-reliance comes easily when we are young and confident, and for many of us the years teach how little it can hold. Second, our leaders. When Israel demanded a king, God warned them through Samuel what a king would take: their sons and daughters, the best of their fields, a tenth of their grain and flocks (1 Samuel 8:11-18). The temptation is the same today, to pin our hopes on getting the right person into the right office, at work, in the city or in the nation, while leaders fall one after another.

Third, even our churches. Through Jeremiah, God warned his people, "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD'" (Jeremiah 7:4). They assumed the temple guaranteed their safety whatever they did, and God pointed them to Shiloh, where his name had once dwelt, warning that what he did there he would do to the house in which they trusted (Jeremiah 7:12-14). He cared less about a building than about hearts that worshiped him. The church is a gift, and we are meant to love it and one another, but it is full of people, and people will let us down. Our trust belongs to Jesus, who is sovereign over the church.

Fourth, our riches: "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf" (Proverbs 11:28). In the ancient world wealth was often counted in grain and stored food, and the instinct has not changed. When the news turns frightening, the impulse is to stock up. Preparing wisely is not wrong, but peace will not come from a full pantry. It comes from trusting the Lord.

## TAKE HEART

Every support on this list can give way. The Lord cannot. Where those who trust in riches fall, Proverbs pictures the righteous flourishing like a green leaf, alive and growing even in an uncertain season.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. When our security feels threatened, where do we instinctively turn first, and what does that reveal about our trust?

2. Which of these four (ourselves, our leaders, our church, our resources) is most likely to quietly take God's place for us?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"O God, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."*

Book of Common Prayer, Collect for Proper 12

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Notice the moment anxiety rises this week, whether over the news, money or a decision. Before reaching for a fix, pause and pray the psalm's words: "It is better to take refuge in the LORD."

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## NOTES

DAY 3

# With All Our Heart

> PROVERBS 4:23 ESV
> *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."*

## VERSE STUDY

Proverbs 3:5 does not ask for trust with all our strength or all our cleverness, but with all our heart. The Hebrew word is lev, with a related form levav, and it means far more than the English word usually does. Where modern Western speech treats the heart mainly as the seat of feeling, the Hebrew heart is the governing center of the whole inner person: intellect, will, affection, motivation and moral judgment all live there.

That is why Proverbs says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Everything we do flows out of what governs us inside. Trusting God with all our heart, then, is not merely a feeling of confidence. It means letting him rule the very place our decisions, desires and convictions come from.

Living after the Enlightenment, many of us live almost entirely in our heads. Careful thinking matters, and defending the faith with reason has real value. But Scripture locates saving faith in the heart: "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified" (Romans 10:9-10). We are not saved because we understood the message well enough. We are saved because we believed it with our whole inner person.

The message offered a practical invitation for prayer. Worry often shows up in the body, as a tightening in the chest. Rather than racing to think our way out of it, we can sit quietly before the Lord, say simply, "God, we submit," and let our trust settle from the head into the heart. The hope is that the peace we could not reason our way into arrives more readily that way.

## TAKE HEART

God is not asking us to stop thinking. He is asking for all of us, the center and not only the edges. And the heart he asks us to trust him with is the same heart his peace promises to guard (Philippians 4:7).

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Proverbs 4:23 says life flows from the heart. What is flowing from our hearts into the way we live right now?
2. Where do we tend to trust God with our minds but not yet with our hearts?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Book of Common Prayer, The Collect for Purity (Holy Eucharist, Rite Two)

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Set aside five quiet minutes on three days this week. Sit still, notice where worry is being held, and pray slowly from the heart: "Lord, we trust you."

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## NOTES

DAY 4

# Beyond Our Understanding

> PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7 ESV
>
> *"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

## VERSE STUDY

"Do not lean on your own understanding." For many of us, understanding is the key that unlocks peace. As soon as we understand a diagnosis, a problem or how something is going to be fixed, we can relax. Until then, we cannot. But understanding our circumstances is not a requirement for trusting God.

God does give understanding; Proverbs itself is full of the pursuit of wisdom and insight. Yet the deepest trust, the kind of leaning that changes us, tends to happen precisely when something in our lives goes beyond what we can understand. That is where Paul's promise lives, a peace "which surpasses all understanding."

Notice the shape of the passage. Not anxious about anything, but praying about everything, and doing it with thanksgiving. The peace that follows does not wait for the answers to arrive. Peace when we do not know where a diagnosis is heading, or how the finances are going to work out, is exactly the peace that surpasses understanding. It guards the heart while the mind is still unsatisfied.

Seasons of unsettling news make this concrete. Rumors of new illness, disrupted travel, warnings to keep supplies on hand: each one invites the mind to run every scenario. Practical preparation is not faithless. But if peace comes, it will not come from a cupboard of dried beans and lentils. It comes from trusting the Lord. Isaiah said it this way: "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3).

## TAKE HEART

We do not have to figure everything out before we are allowed to rest. God's peace is offered in the middle of the unknown, and it stands guard over our hearts and minds while the answers are still on their way.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. According to Philippians 4:6-7, how can we experience peace even when we do not understand our circumstances?
2. What situation are we trying to understand our way out of right now, and what would it look like to pray about it with thanksgiving instead?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Book of Common Prayer, Prayers and Thanksgivings 59, For Quiet Confidence

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Write down the one situation that most resists understanding right now. Each day this week, pray about it in Paul's pattern: name the request, and name at least one thing to give thanks for alongside it.

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## NOTES

DAY 5

# In All Our Ways

> PROVERBS 3:6 ESV
>
> *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."*

## VERSE STUDY

The word acknowledge is the hinge of this passage, and it was this week's word of the day. To acknowledge God is to recognize him and bring him into whatever we are doing. Trust is shown not only in what we believe but in the way we actually live.

At first glance, ways sounds like directions: the way to the store, with God rerouting us like a map app when we take a wrong turn. But there is another sense of the word. The way we make bread is not a destination; it is a process. As the notes put it, the emphasis on ways in Proverbs 3:6 is not merely geographical but behavioral. It covers how we conduct our lives, make decisions, handle relationships, respond to adversity and pursue our ambitions.

That means the shallow concerns of life matter to God as much as the profound ones, a point the message drew from Oswald Chambers. Even the ocean has a shore, and the shallows are as much a part of the sea as the depths. It comes naturally to acknowledge God in a hard diagnosis. It is just as much a part of following him to acknowledge him in how we bake a loaf of bread (perhaps making a second one for a struggling friend), how we drive home, or how we respond when asked to mow the lawn.

Paul says the same: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). This is not a call to anxious navel-gazing over every pencil we pick up. It is an invitation to practice the presence of God in ordinary moments, because that is where spiritual formation happens and where we become more like Jesus.

## TAKE HEART

No part of an ordinary day is too small for God's attention. The dishes, the commute and the grocery list are all places where he is willing to meet us, and each of them can become an act of worship.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Which of our ordinary, everyday ways (work, chores, conversations) rarely include any thought of God?
2. What might change if we did one routine task this week as a way of acknowledging him?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Book of Common Prayer, Prayers and Thanksgivings 57, For Guidance

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Take up this week's practical takeaway from the notes: focus on how we are doing something rather than what we are doing. Choose one routine task each day and do it slowly and attentively, giving thanks.

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## NOTES

DAY 6

# Who We Are Becoming

> ROMANS 8:28–29 ESV
>
> *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."*

## VERSE STUDY

"We are often more concerned with where God is taking us than who we will be when we arrive." That line from the notes cuts close. Most of our prayers about the future are about destinations: the job, the relationship, the outcome. God cares about those things, but the promise of Proverbs 3:6 is bound up with something deeper.

Romans 8:28 is often quoted on its own: "for those who love God all things work together for good." The next verse says what that good is aimed at: being "conformed to the image of his Son." God's purpose in the road is the person walking it. It is possible to go through something very hard and not grow closer to Christ at all, to come out more bitter, more angry, more forlorn. And it is possible to accomplish every goal while violating every value. This is not a goal-driven faith; it is a heart-driven faith.

Our age prizes efficiency. Software can now answer messages on our behalf, and even devotional life can become one more box to check. But spiritual efficiency is not a quality God is looking for. He is looking for effective Christians: people who feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, visit the sick and come to those in prison, the very things Jesus counted as done to him (Matthew 25:35-36).

The same holds for churches. Numbers, polished videos and excellent music are not the measure. The question is whether a church's people and leaders have a heart for what God cares about: the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed. Growth is worth celebrating only if people were cared for along the way. Bring that question home from the church to our own lives, and it becomes simple and searching: who are we becoming?

## TAKE HEART

God is less in a hurry to get us somewhere than he is patient in making us someone. The detours and delays are not wasted. He is using all things to shape us into the likeness of Jesus.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. How might our lives change if we focused less on where God is taking us and more on who we are becoming along the way?
2. Where might we be pursuing a goal in a way that quietly costs us our values?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*"Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies."*

Psalm 25:4–5, 8–10

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Pick one goal that occupies much of our attention right now, and ask a trusted friend an honest question about it: in pursuing this, what kind of person do we seem to be becoming?

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## NOTES

DAY 7

# Straight Paths

> PROVERBS 16:9 ESV
>
> *"The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps."*

## VERSE STUDY

Proverbs 3:6 ends with a promise: "he will make straight your paths." It does not say easy. An easy life does not always equate to a good life, a line from earlier this fall that was echoed this week. What God promises those who trust him, who refuse to lean on their own understanding and who acknowledge him in all their ways, is a straight path, one he works together for good in the way Romans 8:28 describes.

Proverbs elsewhere holds both sides together: "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." We plan, and we should. But the straightness of the path is God's work, not ours, and he may define straight very differently than we would.

The message closed with the story of Oswald Chambers, the Scottish teacher and preacher who died in 1917 while serving as a chaplain to soldiers in Egypt during the First World War. For years his wife, Biddy, had taken down his talks in shorthand, working in quiet partnership with him. After his death she turned those notes into a daily devotional that generations of believers have read ever since. Chambers never saw what God did with his words.

That raises a searching question. Would we be content if the thing we most want God to do through us did not happen until after we were gone, as long as it glorified Jesus Christ? Sometimes the straightest path God makes leads somewhere we never see. Trusting him means walking it faithfully anyway.

## TAKE HEART

God's promise does not depend on our seeing the whole route. The One who establishes our steps also sees where they lead, and he can be trusted with the parts of the story that unfold beyond our view.

## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. After a week with Proverbs 3:5, what does it mean for us to trust in the Lord with all our heart?
2. Would we be at peace if God's greatest use of our lives came after we were gone? Why or why not?

## DAILY PRAYER

*Before we pray, let us spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse: read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when we are ready, let us pray this over the day ahead:*

*“O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light riseth up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what thou wouldest have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in thy light we may see light, and in thy straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

Book of Common Prayer, Prayers and Thanksgivings 58, For Guidance

## ACTION CHALLENGE

Memorize Proverbs 3:5-6 this week. Pray it each night, phrase by phrase: trust, do not lean, acknowledge, and receive the promise of straight paths.

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## NOTES

MEMORY VERSE

*“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.”*

Proverbs 3:5–6

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