

## The Biblical Path to Divine Direction

Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 16:1

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People embarking upon a vacation or business trip do not ordinarily just hop into the car and head toward the general direction in which they want to go (all the time having no idea which highways they need to take to get to their destination). I don't know about you, but I do not like to be lost. A good map or clear directions are worth their weight in gold. We will make all the necessary preparations, reservations, and accommodations just to travel from one point on the map to another for a vacation. But do we take a similar degree of care when considering how to travel in this spiritual pilgrimage from earth to heaven? Do we earnestly appeal to the God who is all-wise to guide our steps moment by moment each and every day? Do we fervently study the road map (i.e. the Scriptures) given to us by the Lord? Or do we become so preoccupied, so worried, or even so self-confident that we look to our own shortsighted wisdom and resources to carry us through each day?

We have the promise of divine direction given to us in Proverbs 3:6: "And he shall direct thy paths." But dear ones, the order and sequence given to you for your direction must be heeded if you would enjoy this blessing: (1) Trust in the LORD; (2) Lean Not upon Man; (3) Acknowledge the LORD; and then (4) He Shall Direct Thy Paths.

### I. Trust in the LORD ("Trust in the LORD with all thine heart").

A. The Hebrew word for "trust" conveys the idea to repose, to relax, or to lie down.

1. No doubt you have had the experience of having worked so hard that you come to the side of your bed exhausted and just collapse upon your bed. That is the idea behind the word "trust." I doubt you have ever found yourself unable to rest all night because you were worrying as to whether your bed would support you throughout the night. Dear ones, because you have confidence in your bed, you can relax and rest rather than worry and fear. Let me ask you, when is the last time you stood next to your bed and debated with yourself for an hour as to whether your bed would support you or not? That's foolish you say. I agree. And yet how much more foolish we are when we do not trust our heavenly Father, who being Almighty God, not only upholds us and supports us moment by moment, but upholds and supports the whole world and the entire universe by His sovereign power.

2. Here we are suspended in space upon this huge sphere we call earth. God upholds and supports this planet by His almighty power and has never once allowed it to fall, and yet we worry whether God will catch us if we cast ourselves entirely upon Him and His promises. O, we of little faith!

3. Before you can repose and rest in God (as you do at nights upon your bed), you must know who He is and that He is infinitely more worthy of your confidence than is a mere bed.

B. Consider who it is that you are to trust. The object of your trust is "the LORD" ("Trust in the LORD"). The Hebrew word for "the LORD" is also translated "Jehovah" in various places. This is the personal name of God and is used more in Scripture than any other designation for God.

1. Because this name of God is derived from the Hebrew verb "I AM", it conveys the idea that God is entirely self-sufficient in Himself. He is the Creator of all things and is not dependent upon any creature. He has absolutely no needs. All things exist by Him and for Him.

2. "Jehovah" also conveys to you that God is eternally self-existent. He is not bound by the past, present, or future. He always is "I AM." Only He can say I WAS, I AM, and I SHALL BE (all at the same time). Just as the space (which Jehovah created and which we call this vast universe) cannot contain Him, for He is infinite and has no boundaries; even so time (which we know in terms of past, present, and future)

cannot contain Him, for He is infinite and cannot be confined or limited to just the past, or just the present, or just the future. He transcends all space and all time.

3. "Jehovah" also reveals to you the ever-present God of your salvation (He is "a very present help in trouble" Psalm 46:1-3). Although not bound by time, He condescends in undeserved love and mercy to reveal Himself to you in time. He is not some God who simply created you with great power and then left you to yourself. He has come to you to be your Redeemer and your Deliverer in your present afflictions and trials through faith in Jesus Christ—not because He had to, but because He chose to—not because you deserved His deliverance, but because He chose to manifest His justice and His grace in Christ Jesus to you through Jesus Christ. Dear ones, in Jesus Christ, you are absolutely assured that God has become your Heavenly Father who loves you forever with a love so strong that He withheld not even His only begotten Son from the cursed death of the cross. Jehovah hears your cries, and sees your tears, and knows your anguish of heart. And even when He does not deliver you immediately as you pray He would, His "delay" is for your well-being (that you might cast yourself upon Him all the more).

4. The object of your complete trust is not a manufactured bed, but the God who spoke this universe and all that is within it into being by His Word. The object of your entire trust (the LORD) cannot fail to hold you and support you. For nothing in the universe is stronger than He so as to prevail against Him. Nothing in this universe can alter or change the love that God has for His elect children (not even your sins, weaknesses, or failures, for He loved you and saved you already knowing the worst about you). The LORD simply has no equal. He cannot fail. He is ever faithful and true, and He will keep all His promises to you. Therefore, your confidence is never misplaced when you rest and relax in Him from all that worries and tires you in this life.

a. A young David cast himself upon Jehovah and a giant over 9 feet tall was brought to the ground by a mere stone in a sling.

b. A poor widow who was gathering sticks to cook the last meal for herself and her son trusted the word of the LORD through Elijah, and prepared a meal for Elijah rather than for herself and her son. The flour in her barrel and the oil in her jar did not fail throughout the entire famine.

c. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego rested in the Lord even when a fiery furnace was heated 7 times hotter than normal because they would not bow before an image. The Son of God kept even the smell of smoke from sticking to their garments.

d. Stephen reposed in the Lord when he was stoned by the Jews for his faithful testimony. Though not delivered from that cruel death, his faith was not misplaced, for He saw the Lord standing in heaven to receive him.

e. Paul was given a physical infirmity, which he called a "thorn in the flesh", to prevent him from boasting, but he rested in the word of the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

C. Note the extent of your trust: "with all thine heart." Such a God deserves not just a part of your heart, but is entitled to all of your heart. This does not speak of the size or the strength of your faith, but rather the sincerity of your faith.

1. How do you know whether your faith is sincere?

a. If the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible is the object of your faith, your faith is sincere. Where is your faith directed? What does your faith behold? Is it directed to your righteousness or Christ's righteousness? Does your faith look to your ability or does it look to God's almighty power? Does your faith rest in your faithfulness or does it rest in Christ's faithfulness? Does your faith eye and embrace the promise of God or the promise of man? No matter how small your faith, if you are looking to Jehovah and His promises rather than to yourself or to others (if you are looking outside of yourself to the God of your salvation), your faith is sincere. One may trust the LORD with all his heart and yet have faith the size of a

mustard seed. For it is not the size of your faith that moves mountains (whatever they may be in your life whether financial difficulties, whether health problems, whether besetting sins, whether stubborn habits, whether loneliness, whether unemployment, whether attacks from friends or foes), it is the object of your faith that moves mountains. And the object of your faith is Jehovah the LORD, who works that which is impossible to man.

2. How do you grow in faith?

a. You grow in faith by growing in your knowledge of Jehovah (a knowledge of who He is and a knowledge of how He works in history). For the more you know Him, the more you will trust Him and love Him. Your weakness of faith, dear ones, only reveals your present ignorance of the greatness, love, power, wisdom, holiness, truthfulness, and faithfulness of your God. To know Him is to trust Him.

b. Dear children of the living God, to the degree that Jehovah is a stranger to you, to that degree you will find it difficult to rest in Him for all your needs. This should be your constant prayer: "O Lord, teach me to know Thee. Teach me to commune with Thee. Teach me to see Thee at work in every area of my life and in the world all around me."

## II. Lean Not upon Man.

A. Not only are you positively to trust in the LORD, but if you would know God's direction in your life, you are negatively not to lean upon man. Here you may further understand the true meaning of "trust in the LORD", for it is contrasted here with what you are not to do with man ("and lean not upon thine own understanding"). Whereas you are to lean upon Jehovah with a sincere confidence that He will not and cannot fail you, you are not to lean upon man with that same kind of confidence, for man is limited in power, man is limited in wisdom, and man's love and faithfulness may change. But such is not true of Jehovah—the unchangeable God.

B. Here is one of the great hindrances to your trust and confidence in Jehovah. You walk by sight rather than by faith. You swallow the lie that seeing is believing. You may lean upon your own understanding as a man/woman in one of two directions.

1. You may lean upon your own understanding in fear, whereby your fears become so big, so real, so ever-present with you that God shrinks in size by comparison. Your fears and worries may cast such an enormous shadow in your life that the LORD of hosts is somewhere in the background. In such a case, your own understanding perverts what is reality, and it makes a person, affliction, or circumstance mightier than the God of creation. You cannot be presently trusting in the LORD while you act and think as if God cannot save you and deliver you from the clutches of that overwhelming fear (remember Peter who leaned upon his own understanding as he feared the wind and the waves and sank into the troubled waters).

a. The questions to ask yourself when fear grows to such a degree that you can hardly see anything else are these: Is Jehovah God absolutely trustworthy? Can He lie? For if the Lord is trustworthy and cannot lie then all His promises must be true (promises such as those found in Matthew 6:33; Matthew 7:11).

b. Dear ones, all of the promises of God are made to you in Christ Jesus, so that if you are in union with Christ, all of His promises are yours. And remember that trust and courage is not the absence of fear altogether, but is leaning upon the LORD as more powerful and trustworthy than all of your fears.

2. A second way in which you may lean upon your own understanding is in the direction of self-confidence when you think your gifts and abilities are so sufficient to meet your needs that you do not need to cast yourself upon the Lord or you forget to cast yourself upon the Lord. When everything is under control (or so it seems), your need of God may drift into the background. The Lord does want you to use your minds, your bodies, your gifts, and your resources as means to serving Him and others. God wants you to use

means such as, doctors, medicine, hard work, and godly advice from others. But He does not want you to trust or lean upon the means He provides, or to act as if the means He provides is sufficient in itself to provide for your needs. God alone is to be rested in as the object of your faith (1 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

a. The questions to ask when self-confidence leads you to forget, ignore, and neglect the Lord are these: If every breath I take comes from the Lord, is not every step I take and every decision I make from the Lord (Proverbs 16:1,9)? Am I so wise that I can never err? But God is all-wise. Am I so strong that I can always provide for myself or deliver myself from every temptation or from every trial? But God is able, for He is the almighty One.

b. Beloved, one of the most conspicuous fruits that one is not leaning upon his/her own understanding in either the direction of fear or in the direction of self-confidence is thanksgiving to God for who He is and all that He has done. A thankful heart reveals a trusting heart. Does the thanksgiving that pours forth from your mouth reveal that you are leaning upon the LORD, or does the murmuring, complaining, or boasting reveal that you are leaning upon man?

### **III. Acknowledge the Lord.**

A. When you look at the English word “acknowledge”, you should see in it the root word “know.” In fact, the Hebrew word used here for “acknowledge” is the word “know.”

1. Here the Lord commands you to know Him in all your ways (i.e. not only to profess Him with your mouth as being the One who directs all of your ways in a general sense, but to know Him in a familiar sense in all kinds of circumstances that confront you in life). How we become so preoccupied with our work that we forget to know the Lord in all of our ways. That does not mean that you must consciously pray and seek God’s will before making every single decision in life (from the socks you wear, to every step that you take). Rather it means that you should live in the conscious presence of a sovereign, holy, loving, and faithful God throughout the day. You should, however, want to know and perceive the Lord as working to glorify Himself in the mundane parts of your life as well as the important parts of our life (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

2. Dear ones, is Christ simply a part of your life or is He your life (“For to me to live is Christ” Philippians 1:21)? Have you relegated the LORD to a neat, comfortable corner in your thoughts, desires, words, and deeds so that He doesn’t make life too uncomfortable for you, or do you want to know the LORD in familiar fellowship in all your ways (in both blessing and in suffering)? Do you want Him not only to comfort and encourage you when you are down, but do you also want Him to rebuke and correct you when you stray? Do you want His will in your life more than anything else (even if you struggle daily with the desires of the flesh)?

3. Many will say they want to know the will of God for their lives, but then when they know it, they suppress it, or ignore it because it is not what they wanted to hear (just as did the Jews in Jeremiah 42:1-3,6, 10-11 and Jeremiah 43:1-2). Your desire to know the will of God for your life or to receive His direction in your life will be manifested in your desires to obey Him in that which you already know to be His revealed will for you. We are only hypocrites if we want to know God’s will where it is unclear, and yet are not willing to do His will in the areas in which He has already clearly revealed it to us.

### **IV. He Shall Direct Thy Paths.**

A. Literally, the promise here reads, “and He shall make straight thy paths.” That is, instead of having confusion as to which course or path you should pursue, He will make clear the paths you should take.

B. Dear ones, here is the promise of God upon which you can stand when you are struggling, confused, afraid, worried, or discouraged. The all-knowing and all-wise God knows the beginning from the end. He has ordained all your steps. He is not lost even if you may feel as if you cannot find your way. He is not

out of control, even if you feel as if you are spinning on an icy road. Jehovah promises to make your paths straight or clear before you. He doesn't promise that there will be no problems, heartaches, pains, disappointments, persecution, or afflictions. But He does promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you. He does promise that He will not give you more than you can bear. He does promise to supply all that you need in this life to glorify Him. He does promise the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life. He does promise to make your paths clear in this life (by the proper use of Scripture and providence).

C. Will you trust Him and walk in those paths when they are revealed? It may mean working where you don't want to work. It may mean waiting longer for your healing than you want to wait. It may mean throwing away certain magazines, movies, or music. It may mean suffering for your faith in Christ and His truth. Do you need God's direction right now or in the future concerning a decision you must make? Trust The LORD in sincerity. Lean not upon man. Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. And He shall direct your paths.

Here, dear child of God, is the bed of the righteous in which you can rest and be in safety and security. For who or what can alarm you when the Lord is He in whom you rest?

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