

Text: Proverbs 3:1-6

Title: “Street Smarts ... for Direction”

ILLUSTRATION – There’s an old Peanuts cartoon where Lucy tells Charlie Brown that life is like a folding deck chair. Charlie says, “Like what?” Lucy replies, “Have you ever been on a cruise ship? Passengers open up these folding deck chairs so they can sit in the sun. Some people place their chairs facing the rear of the ship so they can see where they've been. Other people face their chairs forward so they can see where they're going. On the cruise ship of life, Charlie Brown, which way is your deck chair facing?” With a puzzled look on his face Charlie answers, “I've never been able to get mine unfolded.”

Finding and following the right direction in life is one of the great themes of the book of Proverbs. Turn to Proverbs 3. I'm in this series from Proverbs entitled “Street Smarts.” The wisdom we find in Proverbs is for living skillfully in our everyday life in such a way as to honor God. Proverbs is really a collection of wise sayings. Some think they were used by parents to instruct their children. Others believe that the Proverbs served as the curriculum for leadership training of young men and women who would take their place in King Solomon's vast royal administration. Whatever the case, we are talking here about the things that need to be *taught* to our children and students ... and that need to be *modeled* by all the rest of us. **Read Proverbs 3:1-4.** The next verses are two of the most familiar in the book of Proverbs. **Read Proverbs 3:5-6.**

ILLUSTRATION – Just a couple of blocks from our church there is a house with a sign out front that says, “Palm Reader.” I've never been inside a place like that but I understand that people pay money to a person who claims to be able to see the future by looking at the lines in your hands. People actually pay money for non-sense like that. Why? We're all searching for direction in life. But the Bible shows us a better way. For us as believers we want to live in the center of *God's* will.

My aim today is to help us learn how to live in such an interactive relationship with God that we will be enabled to know and follow the will of God for our lives.

But finding God's will can be very confusing. Is it like a game of scavenger hunt where someone has hidden clues in different places and you have to go from one place to the next to find the next clue? No, God isn't playing a game with us when it comes to His will for our lives. Maybe we're afraid of knowing God's will because if it's God's will it must be something we're probably not going to like.

Listen! We have a good God who desires that we know and do the right thing in life. And this good God who *expects* us to walk along on the path of His will also *illuminates* that path so we can walk it. So we've been memorizing a verse together through this series:

MEMORY VERSE - Proverbs 2:6 - For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

So wisdom comes from the mouth of God ... it is His Word. But remember that 2000 years ago that Word became flesh ... took on a human body ... in the person of God's Son Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ personified all the wisdom that we see on the pages of Proverbs. So the quest for true wisdom in life is the quest for Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30 - Christ Jesus ... has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

All the principles and precepts found in Proverbs are impossible for us to attain to in our own strength and wisdom. However, when Christ enters our life He does so by His Holy Spirit who comes to live in us. He is the Spirit of Christ so He is the Spirit of wisdom.

These verses show us how to live in such a vital relationship with God that we will find God's right path for our lives. Let's just focus on Proverbs 3:5-6. The wisdom of Scripture shows us...

1. WHAT WE DO

You read the first verses of Proverbs 3 and you quickly see that we don't just sit on the floor with our legs crossed with our hands held upwards and our fingers clinched together and hum. There is something we are to do. In spite of the fact that God pours out His wisdom, we are required to search for it. It doesn't come to us naturally; there is a quest for it. We see that in...

Proverbs 3:1 - My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

Proverbs 3:3 - Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

ILLUSTRATION – It would be great if our lives were like the ride out at Six Flags where you get in the little car, and it has a steering wheel, but it doesn't work. There's an accelerator and a brake, but that's about all the control you have. The course has already been predetermined; you aren't responsible for anything but just to get in the car. That's not the way life is. Certainly God is sovereign and He determines the right path. But God expects us to make the right decisions and to choose the course that He reveals.

Now the key that unlocks all of this is the phrase...

Proverbs 3:5a - Trust in the LORD...

It's the picture of someone throwing themselves face down on the floor. We're talking about absolute abandon and surrender to the Lord. The name "Lord" is the most sacred name for God

in the Bible. When the OT people of God saw this name they were reminded that God made a covenant with His people and obligated Himself to be everything for them.

We are to...

TRUST IN THE LORD ENTIRELY.

Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all heart...

When we trust God with all of our heart we trust God with every fiber of your being. We're entirely committed to His way and to His will. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. And when you are abandoned to God in this way the will of God will be the most obvious thing for you. Also we are to...

TRUST IN THE LORD EXCLUSIVELY.

Proverbs 3:5b - Lean not on your own understanding;

Our memory verse, Proverbs 2:6, says that understanding comes from the Lord. But here we learn that we have our "understanding" as well. Our understanding is mostly selfish and sinful and therefore faulty. And so often we use our understanding like a crutch.

ILLUSTRATION – Crutches are a way of supporting ourselves when one of our legs or feet is weak. We lean on our own understanding when we think, "I can figure this out on my own. I can make this decision on my own." That's the opposite of humbly falling down before God. So we spend all of our time trying to find our solutions to our problems and it never occurs to us to trust, fall face down, before the Lord. Ultimately we have to make decisions, but we can't do it leaning on own understanding.

Proverbs 3:7 - Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

Proverbs 28:26 - He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

We must also...

TRUST IN THE LORD EXTENSIVELY.

Proverbs 3:6a - in all your ways acknowledge him...

Look to God. Look for God. Recognize God's presence and His will. Know God. God's will is found in a relationship with Him. And when we're living in this relationship with Him the will of God will become the most obvious thing in the world to us. We will find God's direction for the big issues of life ... whom we are to marry, what job are we to take, how should we spend

our money, and more. It's also sufficient for the small things in life ... the way we talk with others, the way we spend our time, and everything else.

We're talking first about a faith relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. We have to start by confessing that our understanding is tainted and perverted because we are sinners. We repent of living life our way and we "trust in the Lord" with all of our heart by trusting in Christ. And then Christ comes to live with us. He becomes wisdom to us and we live the way God wants us to live. This is the way we live as followers of Christ. And God has promised that we will have all the wisdom we need to live the way He has called us to live. So that's what we do. But then we see...

2. WHAT GOD DOES

Proverbs 3:6b - And he will make your paths straight.

Over and over in Proverbs we see the words "way" and "path." God is concerned about the way we live our lives. When we look to God in all of ways we can trust that He will direct our path ... He'll make it clear and then He'll clear the way for you to do His will.

I tell you, God is faithful. And hundreds of times in my life as a believer the Lord has brought me back to these verses ... times when I've fretted about what is the right thing to do ... times when I've spent so much energy devising my own plans, leaning on my own understanding. But when I have taken God at His Word and fallen down completely abandoned to Him, here's what happens: The way becomes clear. In fact, I see how God has already started removing the obstacles along that path. And as I obediently step on to that path God confirms each step along the way that this is His will.

Now each week in this series I want to leave you with some...

STREET SMARTS FOR THIS WEEK:

- **Acknowledge the weakness of your understanding.**

Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 21:2 - All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.

- **Align your life with God's Word.**

Psalm 111:10 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

God gives guidance through His words and His commands in Scripture. Now the Word of God may not specifically answer every question you have about God's will, but if you saturate your

life in the word of God, you will be in a position for the Spirit of God to guide you in everything you do. So saturate your life with the Scriptures and align your life with the Word.

- **Access the wisdom of godly people.**

Proverbs 11:14 - For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Proverbs 15:22 - Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

God uses other believers in our lives. When we're living in a right relationship with the Lord we will be in fellowship with other believers. We all need loving and wise friends who can help us see the dangers and detours that might be hidden from our sight.

- **Accept the Lord's correction.**

The process of gaining wisdom comes through learning from our mistakes and correcting our ways.

Proverbs 3:11 - My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke,

Proverbs 3:12 - The LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

- **Act in obedience when God leads.**

ILLUSTRATION – Last weekend Nan and I took a little road trip for our anniversary. We like to travel backroads and see little towns that you wouldn't see on the interstate. I had the final destination put into the GPS on my phone, but we would see something we wanted to check out so I would turn off and go down a different road. It drove the sweet lady on GPS crazy! She kept saying, "Return to the route. Return to the route." One time we headed in the exact opposite direction we were supposed to go and she was shouting at us at every side street, "Make a U-turn. Make a U-turn." The GPS had an objective ... to get us to our final destination, and every time we got off course it was trying to correct us.

That's the work of God in our lives as we trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. Is God's Spirit saying to you today, "Return to the route. Return to the route?" Act in obedience to His call.