

# Proverbs 3:5-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-3/proverbs-35-10/>

*There are two paths before us: trusting in the Lord or in our own ability to reason. When we trust God, it leads to peace, contentment, and good stewardship.*

In the preceding four verses that begin Chapter Three, Solomon begs his audience to remember the teachings of the wise and to keep true to God's commandments. Perhaps what follows is best described as the "how to" behind that exhortation. In typical Proverbs fashion, these are statements about how to live in God's world, the practical steps to success as a human being.

How do we begin to live well? It all starts with who (or what) we *trust*. Accepting reality begins with *trust in the Lord*. The Hebrew word for *trust* is "batach" and it literally means "have confidence in." Trust is about where we place our confidence and our hope. It is who or what we depend upon.

The word for *the Lord* here is Yehovah, the proper name for God used throughout Scripture. We have already seen it several times in the first few chapters of Proverbs. The literal meaning of Yehovah is "the existing one" or "self-existent." God is the only thing that was not created from something else. So, He is reality. He is existence. All we see and experience (in fact, all we are) is derivative of God's eternal nature. He is the only thing that truly Is. All else is created from and depends upon Him for its existence.

If Proverbs is an exercise in naming, accepting, and taking actions based on reality, it all begins with putting our confidence in Him who is the very definition of Reality itself, out of which all else flows.

In the ancient Hebrew society to which Proverbs was first addressed, the *heart* was the center of a person. It symbolized the very core of someone's personhood. The Psalms refer to it as the wellspring of life (Psalm 4:23). So to *trust Yehovah with all your heart* is to put the very core piece of who you are, the fundamental nature of your humanity, in alignment with God. Having confidence (*trust*) that this alignment is right, true, proper, and in our own best interest.

The alternative is *to lean on your own understanding*, which verse 5 tells us *not* to do. To *lean on our own understanding* is to try to divorce our humanity from God's divinity. In that instance, we trust primarily in our limited thoughts and perceptions. We act as though we are the source of life, the existing one, out of which everything flows, which is fundamentally false. When something doesn't make sense to us or we desire to control it, we rely on our human understanding rather than *trusting* in what God has to say. This leads to us choosing false perspectives, which in turn leads to self-destructive actions.

Verse 5 does not implore a passive and circumstantial belief. It is a call to *trust in the Lord with all your heart*. Put your full confidence in The Existing One. Give yourself over to the Personification of reality. Fully and completely. Verse 6 reinforces this: *in all your ways*

*acknowledge Him*. This does not mean only submitting certain parts of your life, but rather a full surrender.

The promise on the other side of this is that *He will make your paths straight*. He will guide and protect you toward your own best self-interest in service to others. He will lay the track for peace and fulfillment in this life, as well as in the life to come.

When we *acknowledge Him* rather than hold onto the idol of our own comprehension, God will *make our paths straight*. This does not mean He will fix all of our problems, perfect all of our circumstances, or plow the way so we do not have to endure hardship. It means the *path* laid before us will be true and real. The path to our ultimate benefit. God is not concerned with perfecting our circumstances but with developing our character, and molding us into the person we were designed to become.

Solomon sets the other side once again, *do not be wise in your own eyes*, as a clear antithesis to trusting God. Being *wise in your own eyes* is trusting our limited experiences and imperfect ability to reason over God's infinite wisdom and benevolence. We are like children; children resist many things that are in their best interest, they fight against their parents' attempts to guide them, because they don't have the perspective to understand. We often do likewise with God. Our perspective is limited so we resist His direction. Being *wise in your own eyes* is being like a young child living independently, because they don't trust their parents.

This harkens back to what Solomon suggests in Ecclesiastes: that all of existence is vaporous, too big and grand for us to comprehend. And in the wake of that truth, we have two options: *trust* in God and His goodness (faith) and follow His ways, or trust in our own ability to figure things out (human reason) and choose our own way.

When we rely on being *wise in our own eyes*, the way becomes crooked and confused. The consequences don't work like we thought they would. We find that our ability to control is an illusion—we can't actually control other people or circumstances. We find that our perception is inaccurate—things aren't what we thought they were. The superior alternative is to *fear the Lord* and *turn away from evil*. The *fear of the Lord* includes the discomfort of putting our trust in something we cannot control. But the alternative is to embrace the illusion that we can control things that, in reality, we can't. The root of *evil* is the temptations, lies, and untrue promises that there is a better way that does not include submission to God.

We have all experienced what happens when we ignore God and try things our own way. It leads to confusion and frustration. The *fear of the Lord* is the starting point for knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). If we elevate our *fear* of God above all other fears, it leads to trusting Him. And if we trust Him with our whole heart, we are ultimately freed from all other fears. —Whatever we put our *trust* in will ultimately determine our path in life. It will influence the perspectives we choose, which will shape the actions we take.

Trusting someone outside ourselves is a vulnerable act. Trusting ourselves stems from a refusal to see reality as it is. Instead of being *wise in our own eyes*, trusting God means learning to be

wise according to His ways. This can and will be uncomfortable for our flesh, but the alternative is certain futility, folly, and madness.

Every alternative to trusting God leads to evil. If we do not *turn away from evil*, we end up leaning into it. If we don't trust God, then we will trust something that opposes God. We have no choice but to *trust* something, because we are limited creatures. We have no ability to gain comprehensive understanding. Only God is worthy of our *trust*, simply because He is the author and maintainer of existence and reality. All other foundations for understanding are false, and will lead us down a path of destruction.

In the Book of Job, Job models the challenge of being human: we must *trust* God and remain faithful even (and especially) when we do not understand the circumstances going on around us.

Ironically, this letting go and trusting God is the best *path* not only to a straight and true perspective, but is also the key to a vibrant and healthy life—*it will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones*. Again, this is no guarantee a person who trusts God will never have difficulty. It is saying that trusting in God is aligning ourselves with reality. And when we align with reality, when we adopt a true perspective, the likelihood of plagues like stress and anxiety drops because we are not fighting against the very nature of things. Fighting against reality takes a physical as well as a spiritual toll. Generally speaking, the best way to feel at peace in your own body is to trust God and align your heart with reality. Trusting God is good for the mind, soul, and body.

In verse 9, Solomon gives another command—to *honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce*. To *honor the Lord from our wealth* means to give money from our possessions to further God's work in this world. This can take many forms, from helping a neighbor in need (James 2:14-16) to being generous to others (1 Timothy 6:17-19). It might involve supporting people and activities dedicated to the worship of God, as many of the prescribed offerings in the Mosaic Law were dedicated to support. As with the rest of Proverbs, this is a principle. In the New Testament era, believers have the Holy Spirit to guide them to faithfulness in this arena.

Jesus expanded this principle to include a perspective that God owns all our material possessions, and we are managing them during our period of stewardship, which is our lifetime on earth. When we die, all we steward will pass to the stewardship of others. When the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he might “do” to inherit “eternal life” Jesus answered with an action. This makes it clear that Jesus was not answering the ruler's question as though he were asking how to get to heaven. No one can get to heaven through “doing.” The Greek words translated as “eternal life” mean the highest possible quality of life. That begins with being justified in the sight of God through faith in Jesus (John 3:14-16). In that sense eternal life is a free gift, apart from deeds, or “doing” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

But in order to enjoy the experience of eternal life during our time on earth, we must walk in faith, which requires action. It requires making choices to walk in wisdom rather than folly. The starting place for wisdom in the arena of finances begins with making it our first priority to set aside funds to finance God's work. Jesus expanded the principle by telling the rich young ruler,

whom He loved (Mark 10:21) to sell all he had and come and follow Him. The fullness of wisdom with our finances is not only to set aside the first of our finances unto the Lord, but also to recognize the reality that all we possess is rightfully God's. Therefore, understanding this reality, we should adopt a perspective that we own nothing, and can take nothing with us, so we ought to act as a steward seeking to please our generous and benevolent Master. ([For more on this topic, see our Tough Topics article "Money and Possessions"](#)).

*To honor the Lord from the first of all our produce* means to make giving to the Lord's work a first priority when we budget our income. This wisdom principle comes from the Mosaic Law, which commands: "You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God" (Numbers 34:26). It makes sense that wisdom would come from God's Law, since God gave it as a source of benefit.

It also fits within the paradigm of being wise stewards, dedicating all we earn to seeking the good pleasure of our Heavenly Father. An important principle here is that God tells us He has given us all good things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17) so one of our stewardships is to ensure the income we use for ourselves is actually creating enjoyment. Presumably if God gives us something to enjoy we will be held accountable to enjoy it.

If we spend our income to satisfy appetites it leads us to become slaves to those appetites, rather than create enjoyment. This is folly. If we spend our income to acquire possessions for the purpose of impressing other people, we are serving our imagination of their opinion of us, which again is folly. A good way to break both of these toxic attitudes is to *honor the Lord from the first* of all our income. This breaks the toxic cycle and opens the door for us to enjoy our money. Enjoying our money is wise, with a great benefit to ourselves. Solomon says we should give in this manner: *So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine*. It is likely his example is largely speaking of our enjoyment of wealth. The Bible makes it clear that God is not transactional, so it most certainly does not mean "If you do this it guarantees you will get a certain amount in return."

This is an agricultural example, fit for the time of Solomon. A *filled barn* means a large crop that produced more than enough to feed the family for the year. A *vat* that overflows with *new wine* means the grape harvest was so plentiful that the *vats* to make wine aren't big enough to hold all the *wine* they will make. Both illustrations indicate a high level of productivity. We clearly can't bribe or manipulate God, as the wisdom book of Job makes abundantly clear; God is not transactional. He is not a spiritual Amazon Prime. If we can take this reality to heart, the practical implications for our perceptions and actions are vast.

First, generosity is an essential part of choosing a perspective that we are stewards of all we possess. Having a stewardship perspective ought to cause us to make the wisest of financial/business decisions. It shapes a perspective that should deliver us from seeking happiness through the quantity of consumption or the prestige of possessions. Each of these destructive life-perspectives typically create enormous distractions that lead to bad business decisions, such as bad management, or over-leveraging (to support even more consumption).

These verses also address our perception around *wealth*. Whether your *barns will be filled with plenty* or your *vats will overflow with new wine* depends a good deal on how big they are. The evil (or perverse) rendering of this verse might suggest that God is going to keep giving us ever-larger barns and vats. Ever-increasing money and power and fame. But that would make God transactional; the Bible makes it abundantly clear that this is not the case. Filling our *barns* and *vats* means God will bless our current activities when we make choices as good stewards. Upon reflecting, it is a practical observation; consumption leads to the squandering of wealth while good stewardship leads to increased productivity.

An alternative, foolish view would be for us to live in a state of discontentment with what we have. When our modest *barns* and *vats* are filled, rather than rejoice and enjoy, our dissatisfaction will lead us to get a bigger *barn* and bigger *vats*. Perhaps by borrowing more than is prudent. And the cycle will repeat, until we die unhappy.

In essence, if we take the path of foolishness, we don't allow God to fill our barns because we keep buying bigger ones. We are choosing a perspective that "more" brings us happiness, when "more" can never be obtained. We are chasing contentment while God is providing it. The key to contentment is being content, not reaching indeterminate levels of "more." That does not mean we can't expand. It means that we will be content, and enjoy what wealth we have, irrespective of the amount. That is the result of wisdom in the area of finances. And it begins with making generosity a first priority for our finances.

Trusting God is not just the best way to experience inner peace, it is also the best way to enjoy your *wealth*. It is good business. It is in our best interest, as are all wisdom principles. Solomon suggests it is more likely we will succeed in all areas of life when we *honor* God and align with reality. Having a wise view of money (or possessions) keeps us from being enslaved by materialism. It keeps us from living the futile life of chasing the unobtainable "more" that promises happiness, but never delivers.

## **Biblical Text**

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.  
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.  
8 It will be healing to your body  
And refreshment to your bones.  
9 Honor the Lord from your wealth  
And from the first of all your produce;  
10 So your barns will be filled with plenty  
And your vats will overflow with new wine.**