

BACK TO SCHOOL: PROVERBS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Trusting God

Proverbs 3:5-6, 25-26; 4:18

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LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/back-to-school-proverbs-for-everyday-trusting-god/>

When I was in elementary school, I was excited on the day I was selected to be the runner, to go downstairs to the school cafeteria and bring up the tray full of milk cartons for our afternoon break. In fact, I was so excited, I hurried up the steps and missed the top step! Milk cartons went everywhere! A teacher helped me clean up (a fourth-grade teacher, kind of scary and grouchy). She mumbled, "Haste makes waste." I was puzzled. But my parents explained to me that was a proverb, a pithy, brief statement of universal truth, easy to remember. You know other proverbs. A penny saved is a penny earned. One good turn deserves another (or, as I heard, one good turn will get you the covers!).

Someone recently said the Book of Proverbs, containing God's wisdom, was the earliest version of Twitter, brief, 140-character tweets of truth. I'm not so sure I want to go there! You see, we live in the Information Age, but the problem that is we have lots of knowledge but not a lot of wisdom. Wisdom is how to use/organize knowledge. Our information comes at us like water out of a fire hydrant. We need to know how and what to drink, how to be wise. God's wisdom is organizing knowledge to BUILD CHARACTER, BUILD COMMUNITY AND HONOR GOD.

And 3:5-6 is a perfect place to begin. Two simple questions. How much of our heart is supposed to trust God? ALL. In how many ways are we to acknowledge God? ALL. Every area, every section. We can't just have a "God of the gaps" faith, using God only in emergencies. God wants to help us in all areas. If you think the Bible has nothing to do with real life, that faith is disconnected from everyday life, think again. Abraham Kuyper once said that the resurrection of Jesus means that every square inch of the cosmos belongs to Jesus Christ.

One phrase in this passage looms large for me. "And do not rely on your own insight..." When Charles Foster and the Pastor Search Committee of FBC first contacted me about coming to be your pastor, I said no, because there were at least three logical reasons for me to stay where I was. We had spent seven years raising money to build a Christian Life Center and were getting ready to break ground. Second, our son Joel was half-way through high school. Third, I was happy where I was. But I remember I kept praying these two verses in my morning prayers. And trick is, to do this in the small, everyday areas of our lives as well.

Because we are proud and flawed, we naturally resist this phrase, "lean not on your own insight." The truth is, we like to lean on our own insights. The American virtue of self-reliance is deeply ingrained in us. I once heard a woman at BWA, a pastor from Italy. She said we should think of our salvation in Christ as a liberation from culture's controls. But stop and think. Why would we want to lean on our own insight? We see through a glass darkly. We can't see around corners. We only see in part; God sees the whole parade.

Most scholars believe that this Book of Proverbs was probably collected into its final form about the time Israel-Judah was overrun by its enemies and taken into bitter captivity. Do you suppose they quoted these verses, wishing they had trusted God instead of leaning on their own understanding? Someone asked, "How do you avoid mistakes?" Answer: "By getting wisdom." "How do you get wisdom?" "By making mistake." Amen.

And this leads me to ask: Are we better than we used to be at trusting God or worse? Are we growing as Christians? Staying the same? Getting worse? Why? It seems we ought to be improving, if we've been at it for any length of time. One of our morning's verses is 4:18, using the idea of movement, improvement, progress. **But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.** I heard someone say recently, "I know more of what my gym expects of me than what my church does." Is there at FBC an expectation of growth, engagement, maturing in our commitment to trust God in all things? Many centuries after these proverbs were collected, a man named Paul wrote that in Jesus Christ himself "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

In my daily time with God lately, one of the prayers that I have been led to pray regularly is that my faith will lead to deeper faith, that my trust will lead to more trust. In the little Baptist Church where I grew up, we often sang, "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him; how I've proved him o'er and o'er. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, Oh for grace to trust him more!"