

06.30.24

Proverbs  
Chapter 3 - A Most Valuable Heritage  
Divine Direction (vs. 5-6)

**Proverbs 3:5-6:** 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 your paths straight.

As we come to Proverbs Chapter 3, we realize that we have a parent wanting to leave an inheritance. What do you leave your child? You want to leave him the best. Scripture tells us in Proverbs that a wise man leaves an inheritance for his children, but what is the inheritance? I mean, what is really valuable? So, we begin to realize that what is really valuable is the wisdom; is falling in love with the right things. More specifically, as we go through the Book of Proverbs, we see that wisdom is literally personified in some way, as the attractive woman that is alluring us to love the right things. It ultimately culminates, and we've mentioned this several times, but I want you to have a point of reference.

If you go back with me in Proverbs 31. You begin to see the mother sitting down with the son and saying, "Son, this is what kings do." Read it with me. If we look in Proverbs 31, just by way of where we're heading in all of this progress, it starts off in the first verse as she calls him "King Lemuel," which means dedicated to God.

(Proverbs 31:1) "The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him."

As it goes on,

(Proverbs 31:2) "What, O my son?"

She begins to pour out her heart to him.

It says this if you're dropping down to verse 4,

"It is not for kings, O Lemuel,  
It is not for kings to drink wine,  
Or for rulers to desire strong drink,

(Proverbs 31:5) For they will drink and forget what is decreed,  
And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

(Proverbs 31:6) Give strong drink to him who is perishing...

In other words, you be merciful to those that are suffering.

“... And wine to him whose life is bitter.

(Proverbs 31:7) Let him drink and forget his poverty  
And remember his trouble no more.

(Proverbs 31:8) Open your mouth for the mute,  
For the rights of all the unfortunate.

(Proverbs 31:9) Open your mouth, judge righteously,  
And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.”

Then it goes into verses 10 through 31, and we oftentimes refer to the Proverbs women. As the Hebrews would see, this is literally wisdom proclaiming that you've made a good choice because wisdom will embrace you, wisdom will clothe you; wisdom will make you look good in the gates, the place of decision making. We realized that the young man has made the right decision. He has chosen wisely. He has embraced wisdom, and the one that he loves is wise, because that's what he chose. Scripture is telling us be careful where your affections are; where your treasure is.

So, we go into Chapter 2, and we begin to realize that these treasures are things that we should be searching for, and treasures are not always obvious. They're not always easy to spot. So, he says you have to seek for it; you have to desire. God begins to reveal the heart of the young lad or anyone, it's got to be in this.

If you look with me in Proverbs 2:2, it says it in this way,

“Make your ear attentive to wisdom,  
Incline your heart to understanding;

(Proverbs 2: 3) For if you cry for discernment,  
Lift your voice for understanding;

(Proverbs 2:4) If you seek her as silver  
And search for her as for hidden treasures.”

Well, what are the treasures? Well, you begin to see what the treasures are as we come into Chapter 3 and how it really protects us. What are the treasures that God is going to give us? Well, if you look in Proverbs 3:4,

“So you will find favor and good repute  
In the sight of God and man.”

I know that perhaps it's not a treasure that most people think of when they think of treasures. They think in terms of perhaps the monetary, but God is saying one of the greatest treasures you could have is the favor of God upon you, and God will give you a good reputation among men if in fact you love the right things. So, you begin to see in this particular chapter, the treasures coming out.

In fact, as it as it drops on down in the passage, it says in verse 13,

“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom  
And the man who gains understanding.

(Proverbs 3:14) For her profit is better than the profit of silver  
And her gain better than fine gold.

(Proverbs 3:15) She is more precious than jewels;  
And nothing you desire compares with her.

(Proverbs 3:16) Long life is in her right hand;  
In her left hand are riches and honor.

(Proverbs 3:17) Her ways are pleasant ways...”

In other words, you have found the tree of life; chosen well. So, he will begin to list, in this particular chapter, the treasures that we reap when we love the right things, and the favor of God is certainly at the top of the list and good reputation among men is certainly there. Now, we begin to realize that we have another wonderful treasure that is given to us by God, and that is that God will make our paths straight. To realize that actually God will direct us into a place that is profitable, into a place that is successful, and to a place that is actually going to bring some sense of true fulfillment in our lives; that God will direct us in that to have the direction of God upon us. Can you think of a better gift? The realization of a parent is that you're not going to be able to be with that kid the rest of the life, everywhere he goes. You realize that even if you could, you wouldn't necessarily know exactly where to direct him in every single step he takes. So, you begin to realize that there is a source, is a power that will place that child in a place where he needs to be. If you could just get his hand out of yours and put his hand in God's, you realize that's the safest place he will ever be, and that's the goal that you start working towards. This particular passage is going to tell us, “You can have the direction of God in your life and son, this is what I want for you.”

So, the verse begins this way in Proverbs 3:5, you have to trust in the Lord. It's interesting that you have a father saying, "There's somebody you can trust more than me. It's the Lord." And the word that he used, "*bāṭah*" in the Hebrew makes reference specifically to having great confidence in; to the sense that you're actually bold about the decisions that you make because you know this is what God wants. You're trusting in somebody that knows far better than you, and you're fully convinced of that point. That's where your heart has to be. You have to sense that God knows far better than anybody else and "In everything that God tells me to do and in every way that He directs me, I'm going to go with what He says. I'm going to trust in Him with all my heart."

"Your heart" is not only dealing with the sense of the will and the desires that you have, but it actually brings it into the realm of emotions. When Scripture tells us that we should not be anxious for anything, but with all prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God, what it's talking about in that particular setting is that your emotions are on board with your faith in God. In other words, I've heard people say, "I trust God. I'm just a little nervous about this." And I'm going, "You're not trusting God with all your heart, because if in fact you were trusting God with all your heart, your emotions would be in it too." This is why we quote the Book of James, that you consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. Well, that's your emotions that are involved in that as well, and it is that sense of confidence, "I believe God is good. I believe God is able and I believe God will take care of me. He says, 'I'll never leave you nor forsake you.' He says He has good plans for me. I believe this." And it is that heart that is literally all on board. So, he turns to his son, he says, "You've got to trust Him in everything, and you've got to be all there."

(Proverbs 3:5) "Trust in the LORD with all your heart..."

Then he uses an interesting picture, "lean not."

Throughout the Old Testament, leaning could be on a staff, could be against a wall, but it gives the picture of two fundamental things. One is relying on something. So, the point is that well, there are a lot of things out there that you could rely upon. There are a lot of things that we perceive that we should rely upon, but there's only One that you should rely on. You rely upon God. Then the other part of that is rest. So, when you have a staff, you rely upon the staff and or you rest on that staff. Scripture is telling us that we're not relying upon our understanding. We're not leaning on that, and we're not resting on what people say, we're resting in what God says. Sometimes we find ourselves having to go to doctors and doctors love to run test. My father oftentimes said, "They're called practitioners. They're still practicing." So, you're still going through all of the practices in which they do, and they run tests, and they are trying to find out what's going on. So, people begin then to wait upon the results of the test, and I oftentimes thought that's so crazy that we don't have peace until we hear the results of the

test. That would be leaning on the wrong thing. Leaning on the right thing would be, "God's got this. Whatever they say, it's not in their hands. Whatever they say, this is God's leading and it's God's direction." Isn't it wonderful to know that we can have peace before we hear the results? We'd actually have peace before we hear the results because we're leaning on, we're resting in what He says. Don't rest in your own understanding; the way that you perceive things; the way that you could sum up things, your insight. Man has a lot of interesting insights. They have a lot of wonderful ideas. There is a way that seems right to a man

"...do not lean on your own understanding.

(Proverbs 3:6) In all your ways acknowledge Him..."

Admit that He's in control; know who He is and recognize that and admit that. Walk in that mindset. Now, the phrase that he uses in the end of these verses, the place that I really want to concentrate, and that is,

"In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight."

There are two words that he uses that seem to be almost exactly the same, and yet there is a difference. The one is "way," "your ways," and the other is, "He'll direct your paths," or "make your paths straight." "Way" and "path" have a different meaning to them, very subtle though, because if you were to look it up, and probably as you go through the Hebrew lexicon you would say, "Boy, these are almost the exact same word." They actually are two different words. They're "*derek*" and "*ōrah*." They are actually two different words, but in the understanding of them, you have to dig a little bit deeper. It is almost like digging for a buried treasure would be. But God wants us to make the distinction because He gives the two different words in the same text, and He's wanting us to see what He's doing in this. So, what does He mean by when He says, "In all your ways acknowledge Him"? So, you would define this word in the passage as a word that is really referring to a choice that you're making when it's talking about "In all your ways." In fact, all the way through, up to this point, the father is saying, "Son, you have to guard against the ways of the evil ones."

If you look in Proverbs 1:15,

"My son, do not walk in the way with them..."

The decisions that they make; the places that they're heading.

(Proverbs 1:19) "So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence..."

If you look in verse 31, they each go their own way and they're going to pay for that because they went a particular way.

If you look in Proverbs 2:8, he says that God guards the path of justice. Here again, he has the two words within the same text.

“... And He preserves the way of His godly ones.”

Drop on down to verse 12,

“To deliver you from the way of evil...”

(Proverbs 2:13) To walk not in the ways of darkness.

Ultimately, in the devious ways, he says in verse 15.

(Proverbs 2:20) “So you will walk in the way of good men...”

So, when he's talking about the word “way,” he's talking about not only a direction that you choose, but a manner in which you think; a manner in which you do things.

It's probably best described if you look in Proverbs 16. You'll see this concept of, “This is the way that I've chosen; this is the path that I've chosen.”

If you look in Proverbs 16, it says,

(Proverbs 16:1) “The plans of the heart belong to man,  
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”

(Proverbs 16:2) All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight...”

What is that talking about? What he's talking about is the decisions that he makes, the thoughts that he has, the manner in which he sees things. It's sort of like leaning on your own understanding; your perception. All of the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord the Lord knows the depth of why you're doing what you're doing. There are things that we choose to do, ways that we turn to. Actually, before there was GPS way back in the days when there were like maps. Have you ever seen those things? There were maps, paper, they were paper, but anyway, if you want to go any place, and sometimes you'd get a paper map. You're heading to a place, and you realize it's not on the map. They didn't update them as fast as they do today. So, you'd be driving, and I remember a number of times, especially when I was out in California, thinking, “I feel like it's this way.” And my wife would say, “Well, why don't you just stop by and ask somebody?” “I don't want to ask somebody.” So, here we go, and I make this turn because I think, “This is the way to go.” So, I make this turn and I'm heading on this road, and before long I find myself on a path where I have no idea where I am. It ends up in a dirt road, and I'm not sure where the dirt road ends up. I go, “Oh, that's not the major road that I've been looking for.” The point was I went my way. The result was I found myself on a path. So, the separation of the two words is that the one is a picture of the decisions and the choices that

you make, the direction that you feel that you need to head. The other, "path" itself, refers to kind of like a rut. It is a road well-traveled. The picture is that you find yourself in this place, so to speak, and you wonder how you got there. So, God will make your paths straight; the place that you find yourself, God will bring about good in. I read where this guy said, "My wife and I laugh at how competitive we are, but I laugh more." The point of that is, if you choose to be first, if you choose the way of competition, that's a way of thinking. "I'm going to be competitive, I'm going to win." You find yourself on a path that is always competitive. You find yourself residing there.

So, it's sort of like the disciples in Matthew 20 where it talks specifically about the fact that James and John come up to Christ and their mother is in the picture going, "Have one sit on Your right and one sit on Your left." And God says, "Look, you guys are heading for the wrong thing. You've made a wrong turn. What you're trying for is that whole competitive thing, and to be first. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven will be the least and the servant of them all. You need to turn and go this way, and now I'll make your path straight." When he refers to the word "path," what he's referring to is not only a place that you find yourself living and residing, but a place that becomes a familiar way to you.

As Hebrews 5 will tell us, if in fact you will walk in righteousness and continue with this, you will be able to train your senses. It is a training of your senses. So, that's where you reside, so to speak. This is where you find yourself. I would like to say that a lot of times where I decided to go on my own understanding and choose to go a certain way that I almost always found myself in a really good place, but most of the time I found myself in a very bad place, very disappointed, very confused, and very much needing some kind of direction. Scripture is telling us that you need to think the right way, right from the beginning, "In all your ways, acknowledge Him." Well, let's put it another way, "In all your ways, acknowledge that His way is right." That's the best way to put it, and you'll see this in Deuteronomy 32.

Turn there with me to Deuteronomy 32. This wonderful passage is a passage of Moses and the declaration that if you just listen to God, you'd be ok.

(Deuteronomy 32) "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

(Deuteronomy 32:2) "Let my teaching drop as the rain,  
My speech distill as the dew,  
As the droplets on the fresh grass  
And as the showers on the herb.

(Deuteronomy 32:3) "For I proclaim the name of the LORD;  
Ascribe greatness to our God!"

Why? Look at verse 4 with me. He's the Rock, and what we're talking about is stability. Ever gone a certain way and found yourself very unstable, very insecure? Well, that would be the opposite of a straight path, and we're going to build on that because the wonderful ramifications of that word, "He's going to make your path straight." I mean, it goes into so much detail.

As we come into the passage, underline it,

(Deuteronomy 32:4) "The Rock! His work is perfect..."

Now, when he's referring to the work of God. It's not only referring to what God does, but it's referring to the treasure that you receive as a result of the things that you do. In other words, we all do things and pursue certain things; we are busy doing certain things, but at the end of the day, what's the treasure that you get? What benefit did you have? What's the advantage of what you did? Were people blessed? Were people better because of what you did? Did you actually produce something of any value? When Scripture refers to this word "work," it's referring to not only that He achieved something, but He achieves something of great value. So, the passage says that His work is what? Perfect, complete; without any flaw in it. His work is comprehensively flawless. There's never a day that He would walk away going, "I really regret that I did that." Now there will be passages that refer to the fact that God was sorry that man turned out the way that he did, but God was never sorry about what He did.

(Deuteronomy 32:3) "For I proclaim the name of the LORD;  
Ascribe greatness to our God!"

(Deuteronomy 32:4) "The Rock! His work is perfect,  
For all His ways..."

See there, "all His ways," all the choices that He makes are what? They're just.

"... A God of faithfulness and without injustice,  
Righteous..."

And I want you to outline this word,

"...upright is He."

Don't turn back yet, but if you think back in your mind to the passage that we're looking at in Proverbs 3:5-6, you trust in the Lord with all your heart, you don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, well, you do what He says; you go His way, and He will make your paths straight. That's the same word, "upright." Now, here's the interesting thing about this word. The word itself gives a picture of the great generosity of God. Actually, I can't remember who it was that had written about this particular passage, but he refers to this word



as obsequious. Now, that means it gives a picture of God almost standing on the edge, and can hardly wait to do something more, and do something good. It's an interesting picture because oftentimes we think of the word "upright" as strict and staunch, and "He's going to do the right thing," but it really gives more the inference of somebody like, as you read in Isaiah 30:18, the Lord longs to be gracious. Just to kind of emphasize this, "obsequious" is really not a compliment for the most part. When somebody uses that particular word, what they're saying is that you're going overboard in your kindness. You're trying to do too much.

What's interesting is, if you look in Deuteronomy 32:6, he says, "Is God not your Father?" So, he puts it in the context of somebody that really loves you. What does the father want to do? Well, he wants to give his kids everything, even, really, in many respects to their hurt, because it's in his heart to give. So, he goes, and he says,

(Deuteronomy 32:8) "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,  
When He separated the sons of man..."

He called out a portion for His people, and He said, "This is your allotment." And He then begins to give this picture of Him encircling His people like He's just not going to leave them. "You need something else? You need something else?"

The way that it reads is in verse 10,

"He found him in a desert land,  
And in the howling waste of a wilderness;  
He encircled him, He cared for him,  
He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

(Deuteronomy 32:11) "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest..."

Caring over; brooding over.

"... That hovers over its young,  
He spread His wings and caught them,  
He carried them on His pinions."

I did some research on this. They say there's actually no documentation of an eagle ever doing this. However, there are witnesses that have said that they saw it, and the picture is that the mother eagle would even at times push the young out of the nest from a high distance and would then start diving. One couple in a book actually wrote, never more than 150 feet would the mother let them go, but the mother would then fly underneath the young and would catch the young on their wings. Connie and I actually saw an eagle with a hawk, and the hawk had a fish and was flying by and pretty proud of himself, I guess that he caught a fish, and the eagle

did a turn around and flew upside down and grabbed the fish from the hawk. The hawk didn't seem to argue and took off. To realize the ability of this eagle to do this; rare occasions you will see this, I think the point is that it's a rare action. God says, "I did it for you."

"... He spread His wings and caught them,  
He carried them on His pinions.

(Deuteronomy 32:12) "The LORD alone guided him,  
And there was no foreign god with him.

(Deuteronomy 32:13) "He made him ride on the high places of the earth,  
And he ate the produce of the field;  
And He made him suck honey from the rock,  
And oil from the flinty rock."

When does that happen? But it did. Here again, the point is that He did that which was rare. He did that which was impossible for His people. If God is guilty, He is guilty of doing too much. That's what He's guilty of, because He loves those that are His, and He longs to be gracious, and He waits on high to demonstrate these things. So, what He's demonstrating is very interesting, you might want to take note, His way. Now, when Scripture says that you trust the Lord with all your heart, you're now beginning to think not like you think, but like He thinks. So, in all your ways you want to be like Him, and He'll make your pass upright, straight, gracious, merciful, kind; longing to do good.

It's very opposite, if you look at a particular passage in Jeremiah 22, we begin to see the indictment against the Lord's people. His point was, "If you will do the right thing, if you'll think like Me and you're going My ways;" not your ways, because as Proverbs 16 says, there is a way that seems right to a man. Why does it seem right? Because, well, maybe it's good for him or works for him. In Jeremiah 22:3, it says,

"Thus says the LORD, "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor..."

You say to yourself, "Well, what about my time?" He goes, "Do God's ways. Make that turn." There's been times in my life where I go, "I think I want to go this way, Lord." And He goes, "Turn My way. You'll see that this road, this path, is a lot better."

So, the passage goes,

"Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

(Jeremiah 22:4) "For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings..."

You'll be like kings. Isn't that what we're talking about? We're talking about being a king, reigning with Him. God is training us in the Book of Proverbs to take the lead. What should we do? How do we train? We go His way.

Now, if you go a little bit further in Jeremiah 22, you begin to realize that man doesn't naturally think this way. So, his way sounds like this, pick up with me in Jeremiah 22:13,

“Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness...”

Not only is “righteousness” referring to virtue, but it also refers to benevolence. This is why even the Pharisees and Sadducees gave money to be seen by men, because they realized that that was an act of righteousness according to Scripture. It was one of the reasons why they want to give their money and let everybody see. The point is that righteousness is an act of not only doing the right thing and being virtuous, but it is an act of being gracious and kind and merciful.

“Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness...”

Now, when we're talking about building a house, I know he's going to actually give the pictures of actually constructing a building, but the reference is going to be to a household. The very name for building blocks is “*bēn*,” which is the same word for son. So, what are you doing? You're investing and you're building in the lives of your children, in the lives of your family; how they'll think, and what will be the benefit; what is important. Somewhere along the line, you're sending the signal of what is very important to your kids.

So, the passage reads, “Woe to him who builds a house without the sense of benevolence and virtue at the forefront.

“His upper rooms without justice.”

Upper rooms are an interesting picture of lofty places. What do you elevate in your home? What do you say this is the thing to do, this is the thing to aspire to? This is a lofty place.

“...upper rooms without justice,  
Who uses his neighbor's services without pay  
And does not give him his wages.”

What is it talking about? Well, what it's talking about is that you're pursuing lofty, grand, glorious achievement on the backs of others. You're using them. You're an opportunist in some ways. You're cheating them. As James would say, you're withholding pay. Sometimes we think that one of the wisest things that we could ever do is be frugal with our money. Other people use the word “stingy,” but Scripture will tell you one of the wisest things you could do is be generous with your money, for God is a debtor to no man. So, Connie and I have oftentimes

talked- I've always felt like if I have money to eat at the restaurant, I have money to tip. If I have money to tip, I try to tip as big as I can. It has to be within line, and you don't want to make the person think that you're trying to do something nefarious or anything, but what you want to do is send a signal that you care for that person. Look, you'll either walk away and they'll feel good about you, or you'll walk away, and they don't feel too good about you, but I have found on a number of occasions, it's an opportunity for me to witness to them and to come back and we begin to be friends. Now, they won't tell me that they're talking to me because I tip well, but I know why they're talking to me. Nevertheless, God has allowed me to use money for the kingdom of heaven. Could that be a waste? The same thing is true with how we oftentimes look for the greatest bargains and look, I like a great bargain on a car, but there's a point where I'm going, "You're going to lose money on this. I've got to pay you more for that." I know that sounds a little funny, but there have been a number of cases where I go, "That's too little. This car's worth more than that." There have been other times I go, "That's too much." But the point of the matter is that you're not trying to gain on the backs of somebody's loss, and that's what he's talking about within the passage; the possibility of even taking advantage of other people's kindness. I've made mention of a man that had a business of clothing stores, and he would give suits to pastors and missionaries, and I would oftentimes see pastors taking advantage of somebody doing that. My thought was always, "Why doesn't he give to somebody that can't afford it? Take my suit and give it to somebody that can't afford it." Because that's really what it's about. That's why he should be doing that. Yet people are thinking, "Well, can I get something from you here? Can I get something from you here?" They're calling up people, "Can you come and do this for me? Can you come and do this?" And it's the difference between a giver and a taker.

It fundamentally is the point of Psalm 37:21,

"The wicked borrows and does not pay back,  
But the righteous is gracious and gives."

So, there you have it right in this text. The point of it is, you're thinking like God. "For God so loved He gave." That's how God thinks. God's not trying to be the taker, He's trying to be the giver, and I think we get it confused in ministry because really, we should be the servant. We should be the ones giving.

There's a wonderful passage in Ezekiel 18, as he says, "You want to go the way of life? Then do not..."

(Ezekiel 18:16) "...oppress anyone, or retain a pledge..."

Do you know what he's actually saying? Pay the debtor's bill.

“...or commit robbery, but he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing, (Ezekiel 18:17) he keeps his hand from the poor, does not take interest or increase...”

Practice justice; deal faithfully. Then he turns to me, he says, “And then I'll let you live.” Yeah. What we're talking about is thinking like God thinks; the ways of God, the way that He thinks. It's taken us into that wonderful realm of the upright path. God says, “If you'll think this way, I'll make your path straight.” Now, what He's talking about is, straight is not only upright, but He's talking about the fact that it's going to be clear and it's going to be free from stumbling blocks. So oftentimes, even translated “make your way smooth.” It is amazing that when you begin to do things God's way, how He not only opens doors, but how He makes your way pleasant.

Jeremiah 31 if you look there with me, since we're in the Book of Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 31:9) “With weeping they will come,  
And by supplication I will lead them;  
I will make them walk by streams of waters,  
On a straight path in which they will not stumble...”

Did you guess that one? Do you want to know why we oftentimes stumble? You've chosen the wrong way. In all your ways, say, “I want to go God's way.” And He'll lead you beside streams of water, it will restore your soul. Even if you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you don't have to fear any evil. God is with you, right? You will not stumble. This is the fundamental point of 2 Peter 1. He says if these qualities or yours are increasing, they will render you neither useless nor unproductive, but you'll be fruitful in the things that you do, and you will never stumble. Why? Because in all your ways, you acknowledged Him.

I have to end by tying this to a very obscure passage and one that we wouldn't normally tie with this particular text, but I got to thinking about it and I go, that's exactly the hope that we need. The reality is we haven't always chosen the right way. I've made a lot of wrong turns in my life. So, how do I get on that right way and have God make my path productive? How do I do that? A very encouraging passage, turn with me to Genesis 18. You probably remember the passage where the Lord appears to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre, and at first, Abraham doesn't know who he's talking to, but he's talking to God. He finds out later, but the Lord declares to Abram, “Your wife's going to have a child.” Now, she's 90 or so years old and, “Ok, that's not happening.” The way that it's worded is very unique, very interesting, and the King James actually has a better translation on this particular verse, but it says this in the NAS,

(Genesis 18:11) “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.”

The way that King James will translate it is, “it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.”

At this point in her life, it's impossible because the path of women don't lead here at this time. The word that is used, “the manner of women” is the word “path.” The point is that we're at a place where we're in a rut. We're in a well-traveled place and this doesn't change anymore. This is the way it is, and God turns, and He goes, “But we're going to change it today. You're going to bear a child.” In other words, “I'm going to take you off this path.” Isn't that comforting when you think about it? Because really what you have here within the passage is something that is conceivably irreversible. The path is already there, it's not going to change. It's impossible. You've turned a certain way. You find yourself on a path. You find yourself in a place and you say, “Well, I guess it's just the way it is. That's just who I am.” And God goes, “But we can make you different.” If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17) God can change these things. How magnificent is it? Things that you perceive would be irreversible, God can change; God will change. That's why you go back to the first part of that verse, “If you trust in the Lord with all your heart.” When you're trusting in a man, you're trying to reason, “That's not going to happen.” When you trust in the Lord, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

I've got to end with this passage found in Psalm 16. Actually, I remember my dad sharing this with me just weeks before he passed away. One verse in particular out of this Psalm 16 that he shared with me, and I'll just read the verses that he shared with me. Then, we'll give the broader perspective of this chapter. It reads this way,

(Psalm 16:5) “The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot.”

He turns to me, and he goes, “Gary, “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.”” Isn't that a wonderful promise that God can give you, will give you in spite of all the things that we've done wrong; in spite of all the things that David did wrong.

I was sharing with somebody before the service, it is amazing to see all of the indictments that are given about David and his life, and all the sins are kind of pulled out of the closet and we see him in living color in the Old Testament, the Law. You go into the New Testament, not one bad word is said about David. David is perceived as the great shepherd of his kingdom. I mean, the same thing is true even of Lot, as it mentions “righteous Lot.” That God somehow can take the wrong turns that we made, and miraculously take us out of that path that we were in and put us in the one path.

(Psalm 16:7) “I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.”

People wonder, "How do you know that the Lord is leading you, directing your path?" If you'll set your affections on things above, if you'll love going His way, He'll begin to instruct you in the way that you should go. You'll soon find yourself on the path that is straight, that is pleasant, that is beneficial, that is gracious to people. You'll find yourself being a whole lot nicer than you ever were because that's the way of God. God longs to be gracious, and who would ever think that you would literally ditch your own way for an opportunity to help somebody else? But God will give you that same heart. Your initial thought is, "Wow, I'm not going to be able to go on vacation. I'm not going to be able to do the things that I spent all the money that I had for this." And God goes, "Watch how wonderful your life is going to be." And you find yourself on a path that is not only straight, it's not only pleasant, but you're not a stumbling block to anybody else either, and that's the way I want to live my life.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today and we want to trust You with all of our hearts. All of our emotions are in this too. We're confident that You know the best way to go. I mean, the way of servant doesn't sound good to us; it doesn't sound good to me; to present my body a living sacrifice? I don't know about that. But Father, I've found that when I do, the lines have fallen in pleasant places. I find myself in a path of righteousness. I no longer am causing people to stumble. I'm causing their way to be good. The effect that I have on others has brought a blessing to me. I've become like You. For I now have the Spirit of Jesus Christ in me.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed, that's what we're asking you to long for. For Jesus said, "I am the way." Confused about the way? Acknowledge Him. Go the way of Christ. He'll make your life meaningful.