

“The Best Advice I Know to Give for the New Year”

Proverbs 3:5-6

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In 1976, I heard President Gerald Ford speak at an assembly hall in Virginia. I was impressed with his sincerity and warm spirit. He told us that Proverbs 3:5-6 was his favorite passage of scripture and some of the first words that came to his mind when he was informed of the impending resignation of President Richard Nixon, which meant he would become the thirty-eight President of the United States. I can think of no better words to guide any leader, especially a President.

Neither can I think of better words to guide us as we embark upon a New Year. The next twelve months will confront us with many decisions and challenges. Our abilities and resolve will be tested. Where can we turn to find wisdom and strength? Listen to the advice that Solomon gave to his readers.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths”
Proverbs 3:5-6.

Who is the most trustworthy person you know? For years, polls have revealed that those in the medical profession rank at the top, especially pharmacists, doctors and nurses. I concur and understand why. Our health is too valuable to turn over to anyone whom we do not trust with all our heart.

What does it mean to trust God “with all our heart” and why should we do so? After all, a lot is at stake in this decision, too.

In my opinion, trusting God means two things. First of all, it means to believe that God’s way of living is best. His way of arranging values and priorities, relating to others, using resources, handling problems, temptations and challenges is the best way. It is to believe that following Him will lead to fullness and life not emptiness and death.

Secondly, trusting God means we believe that He will do what He says He will do. We can depend upon Him to be reliable and faithful. We never have to worry about Him deceiving or misleading us as others are prone to do.

Can I trust God wholeheartedly, with no reservations or hesitation? Solomon certainly thought so and so do I. The Lord is worthy of our complete confidence, in contrast to others. How reassuring and comforting!

What does it mean to “lean not unto your own understanding?” Are we to ignore our ability to think and reason? No. However, we should never consider ourselves the highest source of wisdom and authority. Seek the counsel of others, especially those that have made wise decisions. Listen carefully to them and seriously consider their advice.

After a father picked up some film that had been developed, he became bewildered as he looked at the pictures. He saw a series of photographs of chair legs and window sills. Who took these pictures and why? He discovered that his preschool child had picked up the camera and randomly shot these scenes. Then it dawned on him that this was her world-view. These pictures revealed life from her perspective, which was totally different from his.

This led to the realization that those around him saw life differently than he did. Their world-view was not identical to his even though they traveled down the same road. He wondered what he was missing by looking at life only through his eyes and made the decision to find out. Solomon would consider him a teachable and wise man. Would he have the same opinion of you and me?

What does it mean to “acknowledge God in all our ways” and why should we do this? I think it means that the thought of God is not to be limited to special seasons or sacred places. Every decision should be made in light of God’s wisdom and will, the One whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours. All our steps should lead us down a path that would make us stronger and better so that we can do the same for His world.

You must take note of the word “all” that Solomon used in this portion of the passage. It was his second time to use this word in consecutive verses, “trust in the Lord with **all** your heart” and “acknowledge Him in **all** your ways.” Surely you sense the level of commitment and loyalty for which he called. It was the highest that could be achieved. All of life must be devoted to God.

What if we aspire to this level of commitment? What will the result be? According to Solomon, “He will direct your path.” God will come and walk with you along your journey graciously providing what you need each step of the way, especially guidance. You will never be alone or face any distracting problem, challenge or temptation by yourself.

That’s good news as we tread with some apprehension into a year filled with promise and risk. As a matter of fact, I can think of none better. Join me in accepting Solomon’s challenge today and everyday of 2004. I can think of no better advice to give you as we begin our journey.