



Sermon – February 16, 2020
Dr. Deron Biles

Verses Covered This Week

Proverbs 3:1 – 10

Malachi 3:10

2 King 17:33

Luke 6:38

2 Chronicles 26:15

Matthew 22:36 – 37

Jeremiah 17:5 – 8

Ecclesiastes 12:12 - 13

Well, you carry it in your pocket or your purse every day. It's in the songs that we sing, it's in the currency that we carry, it's been twice challenged and upheld in court. It's on schoolhouses, it's on courthouses, it's on firetrucks, it's on police cars, it's the motto of the state of Florida, and on the Mississippi state seal. It's on all gold coins and half dollars and silver dollars and quarters since 1908; every penny since 1909, every dime since 1916, and every coin since 1938. It's been the motto of our country and on all currency since 1956. It is the phrase, "In God We Trust". Now I don't presume to know the motivation or the sincerity of every person who proclaims that phrase, but I suspect for some, that is false advertising. Because you and I know that trust in God cannot be coerced. And it cannot be prescribed. Well good morning, Central, it's such a delight for Jaye and for me to be back with you; to share with you a word from the book of Proverbs this morning. On a truth that it took the wisest man who ever lived a lifetime to learn.

If you brought your Bible, let me invite you to open with me to the book of Proverbs, chapter 3. J. M. Barrie, who was the author of Peter Pan, once said, "All the world is made of faith and trust and pixie dust." But since you and I don't live in a world with pixie dust, we're going to have to make do with the other two. And I want you to see from Proverbs chapter 3 how Solomon writes about those two things. About faith and about trust. In what I believe is the central thesis of not just Proverbs chapter 3 and not even just all the book of Proverbs, but the life of Solomon wrapped up in two verses. Proverbs 3:5 and 6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways know Him and He will make your ways straight.

I have a bad habit. Tell me if you do something like this. Every once in a while when I'm making my way out to the car and my arms are full and I'm fumbling to try to get the keys and unlock the car, I'll set something on the roof of my car. Has anybody ever done that? My previous car had a, had a circle stain right above the door, just the size of my coffee cup. I set it there so many times it just kind of had a stain there in the car. So I realized some time ago, that's a bad habit because every, most of the time when I do that I remember to bring my coffee cup back in the car. But every once in a while, I forget, drive off, and leave whatever I left on the roof thrown all over wherever might be the street. And apparently, I've passed some of my bad habits to my children. My wife and I, Jaye's with me, we have four boys and our third son, the oldest of our twins, is named Jonathan. And several years ago, Jonathan was, on Wednesday night at the church where we were members at the time, and after Wednesday night prayer meeting and Bible study and youth activities. He was on his way to his car to return home and set his Bible on the roof of the car. Just as he did that, some of the kids that were in the parking lot there distracted him and captured his attention and he walked away for just a few minutes, made his way back to the car, drove home before he realized he'd left his Bible on the roof of the car. So we all got in the car, we made our way back to the church, and we looked, it's dark, we looked. It was a black leather bound Bible. We looked, but we couldn't find it. Now you need to know that my dad, who has been in ministry all of my life, still in ministry, early on in his ministry, had a habit. He'd begin the year with the Bible and he'd, throughout that year, he'd preach with that Bible. He'd write notes in the Bible. He'd have sermon ideas. He'd have his life story, his personal testimony, in the pages of that Bible. And then at the end of the year, he'd give that Bible away. I have two Bibles in my library that I cherish greatly, that came from my father. Now that particular Bible that Jonathan had with him was a Bible that came from my father. He set it on the roof of the car, drove off, and we couldn't find it. The next day, I was at Southwestern Seminary in the student center and I got a call on my cell phone from my dad. My dad said, "Deron, did you lose your Bible?" And in that moment, I did what every good father would do. I threw my son under the bus. "No, sir, dad. I did not lose my Bible. But I know somebody who did." Now here's what happened. Later that night, it was dark, and right, the street right outside the church where we were members is Highway 377. Sometimes called Denton Highway. You can make your way to Denton if you stay on 377 long enough. It's a busy intersection. It's a busy set of road. And somehow that Bible stayed on the roof until John turned south on 377 and the Bible fell off and it opened to Proverbs chapter 3. My dad had highlighted, with a yellow marker, verses 5 and 6. And a young couple, driving down the road, saw what they thought was an open Bible. Stopped in the middle of a highway, young lady was driving and the young man in the passenger seat got out, picked up the Bible, and found Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6 highlighted. And on the side of the road, rededicated his life to the Lord. You see that young man was distant from the Lord. He turned away from the Lord and knew that he did. And on the side of the road, hearing Proverbs 3:5 and 6, recommitted his life to the Lord. They went home, told the girl's mother that story. She looked in the front cover of the Bible, saw my dad's name and called every Tom Biles that she could find until she found my dad in Tampa, Florida. Told him that story. Jaye and I had the privilege of meeting that family and hearing that story first hand from them and reminded again that the word of God has the power to change your life. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. It's a verse that I, two verses that I remembered from my early childhood. If you grew up in Sunday school or vacation Bible school, those are verses that you remember. But you know as is all is true of all of Scripture, those verses compact in a context. Really all the book of Proverbs and specifically all of

Proverbs chapter 3 is about wisdom. You can read through all of Proverbs 3 extolling the greatness of the Lord's wisdom and the wisdom that you and I have found in God's word. But here in these first 10 verses of Proverbs chapter 3 there is an unusual set of instructions from the father to a son. Now look with me in Proverbs 3 and what I want you to notice are five couplets. There are five sets of instructions from Solomon to his son. Now they are in a very interesting structure. What I want you to see when I read through these 10 verses, all of the odd verses contain instructions and all the even verses contain results. So the idea is those who follow the instructions of the odd verses will find the results of the even verses. Now listen as Solomon wrote to his son.

¹My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; ²for they will bring you many days, and a full life, and well-being. ³Never let loyalty and kindness forsake you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴And you will find favor and great regard with God and all people. ⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and don't rely on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight. ⁷Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. ⁸this will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones. ⁹Honor the Lord with your possessions and the first produce of your entire harvest; ¹⁰and then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine.

Now one thing that you need to know about all of wisdom literature, in particular, and Solomon's instructions and proverbs, when you see results kind of statements, they're not guarantees, but they are general truths in life. These things generally happen when you follow these set of instructions. Now Solomon has given us five couplets here in these first ten verses. Five sets of instructions with five accompanying results. And the structure of Proverbs 3:1 through 10 highlights that central instruction. Verses 5 and 6, that third set of instructions, and the structure sort of highlights what is the imperative of verse 5. When you look at verse 1 and verse 3 and verse 7, I want you to notice that the order of those verses is opposite the order that you find in verse 5. So for example, in those instructions, Solomon says first, don't do this, but do this. Look in verse 1. Don't forget my teaching, but keep my commands. Verse 3. Don't let loyalty and faithfulness leave you, but tie them around your neck. Verse 7. Don't be wise in your own eyes, but do fear the Lord. And then go back to verse 5 and you notice it's just the opposite order. Do trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't rely on your own understanding. So you see that the central theme here is highlighted in verse 5. And then when you capture that with the imperative there that begins that verse; trust in the Lord, the command, it highlights what is obviously the central purpose, the central thesis of this section, trust in the Lord. Now look at those five instructions and you see five very significant things that Solomon is saying to his son. Number one is a sort of a general instruction about his command. These are similar to God's word, but they're more general than that. They are truths that Solomon is passing on to his son. My son, don't forget my teaching. It's just wise advice from a father to a son. I want you to pay attention to my instructions. I want you to, I want you to focus on the truth that I'm giving. Don't forget my teaching. Let your heart keep my commands. Focus on my instructions, Solomon says, and here's what will happen. When you keep my instructions, Solomon says, it will bring you many days and a full life. If you'll follow my instructions, it you'll follow wise counsel, it will lead to a full life. Now that's true in our lives today. If you'll

follow wise council in your life, it's going to lead to a more full and satisfying life. That's Solomon's first instruction.

Now the second couplet there in verses 3 and 4 is really about our relationship with, with one another. So look at verses three and four. Don't let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Or some translations say kindness and faithfulness leave you, but tie them around your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart. Solomon says, "Be a person of kindness and faithfulness. Don't let truthfulness and kindness forsake you." Don't allow yourself to be swept up in the cranky or untruthfulness of our culture. You have the choice to be kind or unkind, to be cranky or to be nice, to be truthful or to be untruthful. That's what Solomon is saying. Be a person of kindness. Be a person who loves truth, who lives truth, and here's what's going to happen. If you're a person who is kind and you're a person who is truthful, here's what it will be. And look at verse four. You'll find favor with God and man. If you're a kind person, if you're a truthful person, it will produce for you favor with people. That's our relationship with others.

Now verses five and six is our relationship with God. So you see the general instruction in one and two, our relationship with others in verses three and four. Our relationship with God in verses five and six. But now look at verses seven and eight. Here's the instructions on our relationship with ourselves. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Rather, Solomon says, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Don't believe that you are the central focus of all wisdom. He's talking about arrogance. He's talking about pride. Don't be a prideful person. Don't be the kind of person who only trusts in yourself. Don't be wise in your own eyes, Solomon says, but instead fear the Lord. If you'll fear the Lord, Solomon says, it will prevent for you that pride that corrupts, that pride that overtakes your life. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Instead, fear the Lord. And here's what's going to happen. That will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones. Now that Hebrew word there in the first part of verse 8, that would be healing for your body, that word is actually the Hebrew word for navel cord. My wife and I have four boys and they have given us now six grandchildren. The youngest, three weeks old yesterday. You know that navel cord is essential. While that child is in the womb, that navel cord is life-sustaining. That's what Solomon is saying. If you'll be a person who's not arrogant, not wise in your own eyes, but rather a person who fears the Lord, it's going to be life-sustaining for you. It's health for your belly button and for your bones if you'll be a person who fears the Lord.

But now, that's our relationship with ourselves. But finally, look at that last couplet in verses nine and ten. Here's our relationship with stuff. Honor the Lord with your possessions. But not just, notice not just the first of our possessions, look what Solomon is saying. He's telling us to honor the Lord with our obligation, but he's also telling us to honor the Lord with everything that we have. Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruit of your produce. The entire part of your harvest. Then your barns will be completely filled and your vats will overflow with new wine. This is not a health/wealth gospel. This is not a promise that says if you'll trust God, God will make you rich and healthy. What it is saying is, if you will trust God with your possessions, God will bless you. Bible has more to say about the distribution of wealth than it does about the acquisition of wealth. If God has blessed you with things, and let's be honest, God has blessed us with things. Solomon says, "Honor the Lord with what you have." If you don't trust God with your possessions, you don't trust God. Give God what belongs to God. That's the first fruit of our produce. But you give God everything that you have. And here's what Solomon says will happen. God will bless what you have. That's consistent with

what the Bible says. Remember Malachi chapter 3, verse 10. God says, “Test Me now in this and see if I will not open up the windows of heaven, pour out a blessing for you that you can’t sustain.” Or Luke chapter 6, give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, be spilled out into your lap. That’s the promise of God. God will bless you if you will put God first in your resources.

So you have five instructions, a general instruction, instructions about our relationship with others, instructions about our relationship with ourselves, instructions about our relationship with things. But really, verses 5 and 6 is the central focus of this passage. Trust in the Lord. It’s the theme of Solomon’s message. It’s really the theme of Solomon’s life. It’s the lesson when Solomon came to the end of his life, he finally began to understand. And what I want you to see in verses 5 and 6 are four truths that are essential for finding divine direction in your life. Look again at verses 5 and 6. Trust in the Lord. First thing that I want you to see about finding divine direction in your life is the instruction to trust in the Lord exclusively. Trust in the Lord. That word describes an exclusive kind of relationship where you trust completely, ultimately, solely, only in Him. Trust in the Lord. To Him belongs our highest trust. One of the saddest verses that you find in all the Bible is in 2 Kings 17, verse 33. It’s talking about the nation of Israel right before the nation of Israel was destroyed. 2 Kings 17 is describing some of the reasons why the Israelites were destroyed. And the Bible says they trusted in the Lord and served other gods. It’s like a split personality. They trusted in the Lord and served other gods. Now if someone were to look at your life with Holy Spirit insight, and they were to write about your life, would they say that you and I trusted in the Lord and something else? Is there something at the end of that sentence for you? You trust in the Lord and yourself. You trust in the Lord and your resources. You trust in the Lord whenever everything goes well for you. You trust in the Lord when God answers all of your. Is there anything else at the end of that sentence for you? Then that’s not really trusting in the Lord. Solomon’s talking about the kind of trust that is an exclusive kind of trust. Who is it in your life that is on your most trusted list? Who tops that list for you? Solomon says there’s really only one person who should stand atop your most trusted list. That exclusive list is not Allah, it’s not Mohammed, it’s not Buddha, it’s not Krishna, it’s not Nostradamus, it’s not Sun Myung Moon, it’s not L. Ron Hubbard, Merrill Lynch, or Judge Judy. Who’s on the top of your most trusted list? It’s not Facebook, it’s not Twitter, not CNN, not Fox News, not the internet, not yourself. Not a Hollywood actor or a sports figure. It’s not a political party or the president or congress or your boss or your spouse or your lawyer or your doctor or your pastor. Your absolute exclusive trust belongs to the Lord. Trust in the Lord. That’s the kind of trust that Solomon is describing. Is that the kind of trust that you have with the Lord today? David said, “Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” Solomon says, trust in the Lord exclusively. But I want you to know secondly, look further. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. The second thing that Solomon is saying to find divine direction in your life is to trust the Lord absolutely. That means that you trust the Lord regardless. You trust the Lord with all your heart. Let me ask you a question. What would it be like today if you trusted the Lord with all your heart? Not some of your heart, not most of your heart, not when it’s convenient for you. But you trust in the Lord with all your heart. It is a complete reliance on Him. Not just some of your heart, not just when the journey is easy, not when you like the destination, not when you enjoy things along the way, but you trust the Lord with all your heart. The Bible says of King Josiah, one of the eight good kings of Judah, the Bible says in 2 Chronicles 26, verse 15, Josiah trusted in the Lord until he became strong. Then his heart turned away. He sometimes trusted in the Lord. You see, it’s so

easy for us to fall victim to the deception of sometimes trusting in God. Israel sometimes trusted in God. But that's true of many others throughout Scripture. King Saul sometimes trusted in God. Samson sometimes trusted in God. Solomon sometimes trusted in God. Listen, the disciples, before the resurrection, sometimes trusted in God. Demos sometimes trusted in God. The churches in Ephesus and Pergamum sometimes trusted in God. But that's not the kind of relationship that Solomon's describing here. He says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." Job says, "Even if He slays me, I will trust Him." Today with Solomon, I want to challenge you to evaluate the level of your trust in the Lord. Do you trust Him exclusively? Do you trust Him absolutely? Those are the first two steps to finding divine guidance. But look further in the story. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding.

The third thing that I want to suggest to you about a step for finding divine guidance in your life is you trust the Lord intellectually. Did you see that in the text? Do not rely on your own understanding. Matthew chapter 22, some experts in the law came to Jesus and they asked Him a question, "What's the greatest commandment in all the law?" Jesus said, "Well let me tell you what the greatest commandment is, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and your mind.'" Love God with your heart and your mind. Well Solomon is using those same two things, but he's talking about trust. Trust God with your heart and trust God with your mind. Did you know that you can trust God with your mind? You can trust Him intellectually. You can trust Him experientially. You can trust Him with your mind. Lean not on your own understanding. The word lean here means to put your weight on something. It means to rely on something. The tense of the verb really is saying, stop leaning on your own understanding. Now it's significant that Solomon is the one writing this. We have an entire book in the Old Testament called Ecclesiastes that describes Solomon's journey to find understanding. It's literally his pursuit to find wisdom. And he talks about all the things that he tried all along the way. He tried money, he tried alcohol, he tried elicit relationships, he tried all different kinds of things. Hard work. He tried accumulating everything he could find and in the end, do you remember what he said? It's foolishness. Trust in the Lord. Don't trust in all the things. Don't lean on your own understanding. But trust in Him. At some point, if you profess your Christian faith, at some point, this is going to happen to you. Might be in a book. Might be something you read on the internet. Might be in a classroom in college or high school. Someone is going to challenge your faith. They're going to do it on intellectual reasons. They're going to say something like this, "My belief in science conflicts with your belief in faith." What are you going to do? Solomon says, "I can trust the Lord with my mind." He's not saying, "Trust the Lord in ignorance." You can trust God with your mind. You can trust God with the reasons for believing. What he's saying is, lean not on your own understanding. He's not saying, don't have understanding. He's not saying, don't be led by your understanding. He's saying, "Don't lean on your own understanding." Don't rely on your understanding. And when the limits of your understanding conflict with what the world's professes to be truth, the Bible says, don't lean on your understanding, rely on Him. Solomon says, "You can trust the Lord with your mind." Jeremiah sets up these two things in Jeremiah chapter 17. Same kind of parallel relationship that we see here in Proverbs chapter 3. Jeremiah says, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man. He's like a bush in the desert. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. He's like a tree by the water." And that's really the comparison Jeremiah is saying. Who do you want to be like? Do you want to be like that bush in the barren desert or do you want to be like the tree by the stream of water? That's what Solomon is saying here. You can trust God with your mind. Trust God exclusively. Trust God absolutely. Trust God intellectually.

But I want you to note one other thing about finding divine direction in your life and that is to trust the Lord obediently. Look at the last part. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't rely on your own understanding. In all your ways, know Him. Your translation may say, acknowledge Him. It really comes from that word that means to know Him, it means you know who, not just that you know about Him, you know Him. You know who He is. You know Him experientially. It means that we don't base our lives simply on our own thoughts, but we know Him and we act based on what we believe. Our ways know Him. Let me ask you a question. Do all your ways know Him? Love Him with all your heart, trust Him with all your heart, know Him in all your ways. That means everything that we do, every thought that we think, every action that we take, all our ways know Him. Solomon says we trust God obediently. How would your life be different if all your ways knew Him? How would that change your decisions? How would that change your lifestyle? How would it change your conversations, not just on Sundays, but throughout the week? Do all your ways know Him? Solomon says, you can trust God with your obedience. The word ways here really refers to our lifestyle. All the decisions that we make, all the actions, all the thoughts, all the conversations; everything that we do. But here's what I want you to notice. That word ways is a synonym with the next word in that same verse; the word path. Know God in all your ways and all your ways He will make straight. The same word, they're two different Hebrew words, but they're synonyms in the text. Here's what Solomon is saying. If you know God in all of your ways, He's going to make your way straight. Maybe that makes sense in your mind because you found some crooked paths in your life. You found yourself wandering off the path outside of where you know is the path where God is leading you. Maybe there's some crooked things in your life that need to be made straight. This is the word that Isaiah uses in Isaiah chapter 40 to make straight the way of the Lord. Here's what the Lord is saying, or Solomon, is saying to us, the Spirit of the Lord inspired, that if you'll know God in all your ways, He will make your ways straight. There's the key to the divine direction in your life. If you'll trust God absolutely and you'll trust God exclusively, and you'll trust God intellectually, and you'll trust Him obediently, you will find divine direction in your life. Watch this. He will make your paths straight.

Solomon wrote three books in the Old Testament. And they're arguably three different phases in Solomon's adult life. The book of Songs written early in Solomon's adult life. The book of Proverbs written about middle age in Solomon's life. And the book of Ecclesiastes written near the end of Solomon's life. And I want you to see, I want you to hear one of the last verses Solomon ever wrote. It's at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes in Ecclesiastes chapter 12. After an entire book describing a journey throughout his life to find wisdom. Here's what Solomon concluded.

¹²Beyond all these things, my son, be warned: there is no end to making books, and study is wearying to the body. ¹³But when all is heard, here's the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep His commands, that's for all mankind.

In the end, Solomon says, "Here's what you need to do. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Now that may have taken the wisest man who ever lived a lifetime to learn, but it's something you can do today. Maybe this morning this is the challenge the word of God brings to you. Who do you trust?

Would you bow together in prayer with me?

Father, may we heed the advice of the wisest man who ever lived that we would trust in the Lord. I know there are some here this morning, Father, who are looking for divine direction. They're wondering about the will You have for them. Maybe they're worried about some decisions. Some this morning are worried about finances. Some this morning are worried about family. Some are worried about school. Some are worried about relationships. There are so many here this morning looking for divine direction. And I pray we are confronted again, we hear, we learn, and apply the words of Solomon in our lives that we trust You. That we don't just trust You when You do things the way we want. Our trust is not a negotiation; it is an absolute exclusive, intellectual, obedient relationship with You. We fully rely on You. God, I pray if there are any here this morning who have never, by faith, trusted in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior that today would be the day when we trust you. Maybe for the very first time. I pray we learn wisdom from the wisest man who ever lived. A simple word to trust. In Jesus name. Amen.