

Avoiding the Pitfalls of life

Natural Inclination Vs. Wisdom

Perspective is sight – either close up or from a distance.

From a distance a man may look incredibly handsome and debonair, but get a little closer and suddenly, you see that the man of your dreams is gone. What changed? Perspective.

When you are young certain things were so important – popularity, getting a driver's license, making the team in sports, getting to watch the new TV show (the original Star Trek, with William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy). Later on priorities shifted: getting through finals in college, meeting up with that girl you've had a secret crush on, and making big plans for the future in graduate school or in your profession.

A few years later you discover that your dream job is full of problems, traffic is exhausting, the kids with school and activities seem enormous. Business of life is overwhelming. Somewhere in the scope of time you say to yourself (unconsciously), "If I'd only known then what I know now, I'd"

Perspective is the key. If you could go back in time and have a long talk with yourself, what advise would you give?

Imagine this: God, who is outside of time, has given us His timeless word of truth, so that we could know what to do and what not to do. We'd altar our destiny!

One day a miserable man was taking a walk on the beach when he came across an ancient lamp. So he picked it out from the sand and as he brushed it out, suddenly, a genie appeared, offering him one free wish. To which he answered, "*I would like a copy of the Wall Street Journal, dated one year from today.*" There was a flash and some smoke and there appeared at feet one copy of the Journal he requested. He quickly turned to the stock pages. He began to dance and sing as he looked at all the sure investments he could make. "*I'm rich!*" he shouted. Then he noticed on the opposite side of the stock page, an obituary column, where he saw one of the headlines, "*Millionaire, {his name}, dies.*"

Perspective!

Today:

Wisdom Vs. Natural Inclination

Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view.

Solomon wrote these words,

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.

(Pr. 3:5-6)

Proverb: "to represent something" (Latin)

A statement in the place of many words

... a crisp saying, briefly stated, given to regulate our lives.

"Proverbs is a rich treasure house of short sentences
 drawn from long experiences."¹

Outline:

1. Our Responsibility: Trust in the Lord
 - a. Don't lean on our own understanding
 - b. Acknowledge Him in all our ways
2. God's Response: Make our paths straight

I. OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO FULLY TRUST GOD

At the root of the term in Hebrew is the idea of

'throwing oneself down, lying extended on the ground-casting
 all hopes for the present and the future upon another, finding
 shelter and security there.'²

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Active Spirituality*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), Introduction xii.

² Swindoll, p. 27.

The same word is used in Pr. 23:23,

“Then you will walk in your way **securely**, and your foot will not stumble.”

If we trust in the Lord {The covenant keeping God},

Then He will not let us down like riches.

“He who trust in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.” (Pr. 11:28)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart

Trust with the inner being – seat of our intellect, emotion, and will
– our conscience and our personality.

Casting all your cares upon Him for he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

“This I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, In the Lord, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Ps. 56:10-11).

The first symptom of a lack of trust is worry or fear.

The opposite of a perspective of wisdom is our natural inclination.

1. Natural inclination.

Trust...

And do not lean on your own understanding.

We instinctively lean on our own natural inclination.

Lean – (Heb. Shan-ann) “to support oneself, as though leaning for assistance”

The idea of resting one’s weight upon something else as though leaning on a crutch.

Strong negative – Do not lean on your own limited point of view,
On our own way of thinking, but to the Lord’s wisdom.

Isaiah had strong words concerning this,

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.
 Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him,
 and to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.
 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,”
 declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are
 My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
 Is. 55:7-9

Struggle – We think the battle belongs to us.
 The battles of life always belong to the Lord.

Ex. 17 – The battle between Israel and the Amalekites.
 A graphic story of a battle in which a life and death struggle were literally
 left in the hands of one man, Moses.

Vs. 8-13

God’s victories are won by God and in God’s way.

And do not lean on your own understanding.
 In all your ways acknowledge Him,

2. Acknowledge Him -

Acknowledge – “to recognize”
 Recognize God’s presence – realize that we are not alone.

Prayer is a key way of recognizing and acknowledging God.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication
 with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the
 peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your
 hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

We can trust and pray, or not pray and worry.

Prayer brings God together with our difficulties.

Birds do not sing because they have an answer,

they sing because they have a song.
Vance Havner

I. OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO FULLY TRUST GOD.

II. GOD'S RESPONSE IS TO FULLY LEAD US.

And He will make your paths straight.

Make straight – The term means “to make smooth, straight, right.”
Idea of removing obstacles that are in the way.

The grammar implies intensity (Piel stem)

“When the Lord is fully relied upon to handle a given situation, He will remove all the obstacles and smooth out our path thoroughly, not halfheartedly.”³

Last summer I played with a gigantic toy – a backhoe. The trail behind our house was so overgrown with blackberries that we couldn't access it. With the hoe I put in a new trail by removing the large berry vines and then scraping the trail smooth with the bucket. It would have taken me days of painful labor to cut each one by hand, not to mention the dirt work. The machine did the job in a few minutes.

God says that He will make our path straight by clearing away the obstacles.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM IN THIS LIFE

- Seeking God instead of earthly gain.

Jesus said,

“But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

C. S. Lewis wrote,

“If we seek this world, we lose both heaven and earth;
If we seek heaven first, then this world will be thrown in as well.”

³ Swindoll, p. 31.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM FOR THE LIFE TO COME

Our natural inclination thinks only of this life. We tend to ignore eternal things. From God's perspective, however, eternal life is more important than this life.

Jesus told the parable of the rich man, who after having a bumper crop, decided that it was time to retire. He said to himself,

“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:19-21).

One day this life will be over. How can we be ready when that time comes?

- **Realize:**

“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death”

Pr. 11:4

Christ died to take away our sins and give us righteousness.

We are saved by faith.

Eph. 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith;
and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”

(Eph. 2:8-10).

We are not saved by works; but we are His work, made for good works.

- **Respond:**

Acknowledge your need for forgiveness and cleansing.

Invite Christ to be your Savior

Submit to Christ as your Lord and God