



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

THE FAITH TO FOLLOW

KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 3:5-8 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Proverbs 3:1-4; 26:12 | Malachi 3:10

► SUMMARY

The grace of God is demonstrated by the fact that He has a plan and purpose for our lives that He wants to reveal to us.

It's a pathway He's designed specifically for each one of us, yet some of us may fail to consider this. We move through life without giving God a second thought. Instead of wondering whether our lives have counted for anything, we can choose to believe that the Lord has the best plan for us, discover His path, and get on it as soon as possible.

► SERMON POINTS

If we don't fully trust God, we may be reluctant to follow the path He's chosen for us.

Even though He always leads us the right way, our fears or uncertainty could cause us to sidestep His commands and opt for our own course. Proverbs 3:5-8 tells us what's required to follow the Lord and what the benefits will be.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding" (v. 5).

■ **God commands us to trust Him.** Trust is a strong belief in someone's integrity, ability, and character. This is the kind of confidence we are to have in the Lord. Then, whatever He says or requires of us, we will know with certainty that it is best. If we lack trust, we won't follow Him and will find ourselves living outside the

will of God. On the other hand, if we've spent a lifetime trusting and obeying Him, we can testify that He has never let us down.

■ **The basis for trust in God is His sovereignty.** He is the divine Ruler over all things and all people at all times. His sovereignty is His wisdom, power, and righteousness all wrapped into one. The Lord's purpose is always right and good even if it doesn't look that way from our perspective. We can't always understand why He allows illness, trouble, or heartache, but we can know that He is a loving and trustworthy God. If we don't believe this, we'll question His will when situations don't match our expectations. That's why we're told not to lean on our own understanding. When we don't comprehend what's happening, we can trust in God because He never changes. Knowing that He's always gracious, merciful, and kind allows us to rest in His sovereign will for our lives. He knows us intimately and has chosen exactly the perfect path.

■ **The degree to which we are to trust God is with all our heart.** Instead of relying on our own knowledge, perception, or reasoning, we should put our total trust in the Lord. This requires more than just agreeing with Him. We can actually agree with God about many teachings in the Bible without actually trusting Him. Agreement means we believe something is accurate, but genuine faith responds to that belief with action—we do what God says because we trust Him to guide us the right way. Wholehearted trust also means we can't pick and choose areas we entrust to Him while trying to keep other parts of our lives under our control. It's foolish to rely on our own perception

because it is so limited, but God's understanding is complete and eternal. Even when we don't comprehend or like what's happening, we can still rely on His loving wisdom and respond in trust.

“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (v. 6).

■ **To acknowledge someone is to recognize him.**

But when we acknowledge God, we are not merely admitting that He exists but confirming that He is our Lord who has authority over us to give us direction in every area of our lives. In each choice or situation, we acknowledge Him by surrendering to His will and trusting Him fully.

- **“He will make your paths straight.”** When we follow the Lord's guidance, He protects us from side roads and eliminates obstacles and confusion along the way. In basic terms, the straight path is the one of obedience. We may stumble along the way or need redirection, but God repeatedly brings us back when we have a heart to obey Him. His path isn't always easy, but it's always the best. When we think we can do a better job of plotting our own course for happiness and prosperity, it may look good for a while, but eventually we'll suffer the wear and tear that comes from taking unprotected detours.

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil” (v. 7).

After instructing us on what to do, God then gives us a warning.

- **“Do not be wise in your own eyes.”** Proverbs 26:12 says, “Do you see a person wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Whenever we choose our own way instead of trusting the Lord, we are playing the fool because one day we are going to stand before God and give an account of how we

lived. But if we're wise, we'll seek the Lord, listen to His directions, and trust Him. Since He cannot lie, we know that He will always keep His promises, and whatever He says is true.

- **“Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.”** To fear God is to recognize and honor Him as not only the sovereign Ruler of the universe, but the Lord and Master of our lives. If we truly believe this, we'll turn away from sin and seek to live in obedience to Him.

“It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones” (v. 8).

Every day we are faced with a variety of choices, and what we decide to do is based on whether or not we believe God—that He has a plan for our lives and has chosen the best possible path for us. If we're willing to listen and trust Him, we'll discover that His path leads to healing and refreshment. There will be an underlying sense of peace, assurance, confidence, and satisfaction when we follow Him instead of going our own way.

► **RESPONSE**

- In what area of your life do you have the most difficulty trusting God? Why do you think it's so hard to trust Him with this? What promises in His Word could bring you assurance of His trustworthiness?
- Does knowing that God is sovereign over all the events in your life help you trust Him? Why or why not? Which of His other attributes motivate you to trust Him?
- It's easier to trust someone we know very well than someone we don't. With this in mind, how well do you know the Lord? Since the Scripture is God's self-revelation, what do you need to do to increase your trust in Him?

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