

PROVERBS

Father Knows Best

It was a cold and snowy Kansas day, and my dad and I had been hunting rabbits. Being a young kid, trudging through the snow up to my waist was a wonderful adventure. The snow chapped my cheeks and numbed my nose, but that couldn't stifle my excitement. Chilly as it was, my heart soared. I was Davy Crockett on his best day. So I trotted across the field in search of the next rabbit.

A small ditch full of water had frozen in the middle of the field. I came upon this ditch and decided to walk across it. After all, who doesn't like sliding around on a little bit of ice? My thought process was simple: ice, frozen solid, safe to cross. In my youthful ignorance I slid out onto the ice. "Hey Dad, look at me!" I yelled. "That's probably not the best idea!" he replied. Crack! Seconds later I was standing in freezing cold water. Talk about a quick way to ruin a kid's day!

That story took place many years ago, but still it seems that I haven't learned my lesson. So often I walk out onto the ice of a situation, thinking that I have factored everything in and considered every possible outcome. Then with a crack and a splash, I find myself

standing in an unpleasant pool of mistake. Times like this always remind me that I am unable in my own limited understanding to know the right thing to do. When I lean on my own understanding, I fail. Just as my father had a better understanding of the situation, my heavenly Father has a better understanding of every situation and circumstance – in fact, He perfectly understands both the situation and the ins and outs of me, as a person. In every way, the Father knows best.

When you lean on your own understanding, you are bound to fail. You might find success for awhile, but eventually you will fall. Your life's direction will become crooked and confused. The sense of the Lord "directing your paths" is that of making straight something that has begun to wander. Have you ever felt like your life was wandering without direction or that the path you had taken seemed to turn back on itself? If you have, then chances are that you have not been seeking the Lord and trusting Him to guide you. Don't lean on your own understanding – trust Him who knows best.



LOOK CLOSELY

observation

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Mark the words describing our actions.

Mark the word LORD and pronouns referring to the LORD.

Mark the phrases “all your heart,” “your own understanding,” and “all your ways.”

Mark the phrase describing God’s response.

Identification Key

Develop your own key for identifying the various words and phrases in the text provided. Use different colored pencils, circles, boxes, underlining, etc., but be consistent from week-to-week.



THINK CAREFULLY

interpretation

Trust means to rely upon, to put confidence in. The object of that trust is **the LORD** who is worthy of trust as the faithful covenant keeping one. To **trust** in him gives the “sense of security and safety that comes from being under the care of another more competent than ourselves.” (John A. Kitchen, *Proverbs*, Mentor, 76.).

The **heart** is a reference to that place where we make our choices as well as those things which influence those choices—our ideas and attitudes.

To **lean** is to support your entire weight on something.

Understanding is used here in a negative way because it refers to “wisdom worked up from our natural selves as compared to the divine wisdom that God gives to those who seek Him” (Kitchen, 16.).

“In this context the word **acknowledge** urges the son to cultivate the habit of letting the LORD guide his actions in every area” (Peter A. Stevenson, *A Commentary on Proverbs*, BJU Press, 40.). By acknowledging the LORD we confess our own lack of resources and open ourselves to “God’s power and wisdom, which is a better guide to life” (Temper Longman, *Proverbs*, Baker, 133.).

The language behind the phrase “**direct your paths**” is literally “make your paths straight.” God not only shows us the best course to take, but with Him we avoid obstacles and uncertainties that might make our journey more dangerous.

Describe what it means to trust the Lord “with all your heart.”

Why is it important to trust with all your heart?

What do these verses imply about our understanding and the path that will take us on?

Finish the comparison below with as many reasons why you can trust in God and should not trust in yourself (example: *God is all knowing...I have limited knowledge*).

WHY I CAN TRUST IN GOD	WHY I SHOULD NOT TRUST IN MYSELF
God is all knowing	I have limited knowledge
God is always faithful	I am sinful



RESPOND WISELY

application

Make a list of other things or people that we could choose to put our trust in.

Read 1 Samuel 17:11, what was the response of Saul and all of Israel to the threats of the Philistine?

Read 1 Samuel 17:37, How does David's response explain what it means to acknowledge God in all your ways?

Write out some steps you can take to better acknowledge God in all your ways.

Discuss as a family some times when you have had to "Trust the Lord."

Describe for your family how God has directed you in the past when you have trusted Him.