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## Day 1

**Study:** Proverbs are written in a Hebrew poetic form, called parallelism. This means each sentence has a relationship to the others, sometimes offering the same idea, a contrasting idea, or elaboration on the idea of a previous sentence. If you look at Proverbs 3.5-6, you can see each verse actually has two thoughts, or two sentences. What is the relationship between the first half of v.5 and the second half? What is the relationship between the first half of v.5 and the first half of v.6? What about the relationship between the last half of v.6 and the rest of the poem? We will go over this more each day, but it is good to understand up front that there is a relationship between these thoughts.

**Study:** Read Proverbs 3.5-6. When you see LORD in all capital letters in the Old Testament, it always refers to the true God. Many centuries ago, God revealed a name for himself, but we tragically have lost the knowledge of how to pronounce that name correctly. All we have today is the consonants. We think it is pronounced YAH-way [usually written Yahweh]. The convention in English Bibles is to render this as LORD in all capitals. Solomon says we should trust in God with all of our heart. The Hebrew word for “heart,” pronounced LAVE, can mean your physical heart, but metaphorically it can symbolize your inner being, your mind, conscience, will, or reason.

**Reflect:** Try to memorize the first half of Proverbs 3.5. Say it to yourself several times and then write it down. As you work on memorizing this passage this week, consider how it applies to you personally. What does it mean to trust someone? Solomon says to trust in the true God with ALL of your heart, or ALL of your being. In what ways can we sometimes start to trust in ourselves? in someone close to us? in the world’s way of doing things?

**Pray:** Pray for God to show you if there are any ways in which you are trusting in yourself, someone else, or the world’s ways of doing things, and then confess this and be free. Commit to trusting God, and to trusting him with all of your being, exclusively, not relying on anyone or anything else.

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## Day 2

**Study:** When you study a passage in the Bible, you have to understand its “literary context” to fully understand the passage. The literary context is the larger part of the Bible in which the passage occurs. In this case, our passage is part of Proverbs 1-9, which are one integrated unit. In Proverbs 1-9, Solomon is advising his son to rely on a woman named “Wisdom,” who symbolizes God’s revelation. Solomon says if his son will rely on God’s revelation, then it will lead him to true spiritual life. Solomon warns his son that Satan wants the son to rely instead on a woman named “Folly,” who symbolizes fleshly human reasoning, because relying on that will lead the son to spiritual death. This is what is happening in Proverbs 1-9, this is the literary context.

**Study:** Read Proverbs 3.5-6. We can see that the second half of v.5 elaborates on the first half, but offering the contrasting idea: if you are trusting God with all of your “heart,” all of your being, then you will not be trusting in anything or anyone else, and thus you will not be “leaning” on your own understanding. What does Solomon mean by “lean” here? Read Proverbs 2.6. Notice again the parallelism, that the second half of the verse elaborates on the first half. True wisdom is revealed by God. What we have in the Bible is God’s specific revelation for us, so we have to rely on that for our true wisdom to guide us to true spiritual life. Read Romans 1.21 and Hebrews 3.13. Does it make sense to you that, if we have a human nature that is corrupted by sin, then our ways of thinking also will be corrupted? As you experience “progressive sanctification” – in other words, as you experience miraculous transformation by God to be more like Christ – your thinking will become more reliable. But it will become more reliable because it is becoming more consistent with God’s wisdom; so it is more reliable because it will agree more with God’s revelation. That is why we must always check our thinking, our decisions, our methods, against God’s revelation, the true wisdom from God.

**Reflect:** Try to memorize all of Proverbs 3.5. Say it to yourself several times and then write it down. As you work on memorizing this passage, consider how it applies to you personally. Are there times when you know what the Bible says, but you choose to live your own way? This could be something that seems minor, like disobeying civil authorities by speeding. It could be that you skip church frequently, hold on to hate for someone, get drunk, use porn. Or do you ignore God’s revelation, not bothering to study it, trusting in yourself to find the right path and know what is right? Solomon says this is folly! Read Proverbs 9.13-18: what is the result of taking this path? Is that what you want?

**Pray:** Pray that God will help you see the ways you have relied on your own understanding, and then confess. Submit to God today, and commit to regular study of the Bible, so that you can check your thinking against God’s revelation.

### Day 3

**Study:** In the Bible's wisdom literature, like Psalms and Proverbs, there are repeat characters: there is the "fool" who rejects or neglects God's revelation, to follow his own corrupted thoughts and desires, who follows the woman named Folly; and there is the "wise person" who acknowledges God's revelation as wisdom itself and follows this woman instead. Solomon wants his son to see this distinction, and choose to be a wise person who lives by God's revelation and experiences true spiritual life.

**Study:** Read Proverbs 3.5-6. Each time you read it, you will absorb more of it, and improve your chances of memorizing it successfully. In the first half of v.6, some translations say we should "acknowledge" God in all our ways [NASB, NET, ESV, NKJV], others say "submit" [NIV], "remember" [NIRV], "think about" [HCSB], or "seek his will" [NLT]. All of these are interpretations of the Hebrew verb rather than translations. The Hebrew verb pronounced yah-DAH literally means "to know." In the context of Proverbs 1-9, it always means to know someone intimately, so Solomon is advising his son "to know God intimately" in all the son's ways. "In all your ways" is exhaustive: it involves everything we do, say, or even think. So this verse is telling us that in everything we do, say, or even think – in those moments! – we should know God intimately; in other words, we should be in unity, in intimacy with God, we should be walking with God. Remember the parallel relationship of this sentence with the first half of v.5: *this* is how you trust God with all of your heart, with all of your being!

**Reflect:** Try to memorize all of Proverbs 3.5 and the first half of 3.6. Say it to yourself several times and then write it down. As you work on memorizing this passage, consider how it applies to you personally. It is common for people to attend church and consider themselves Christians, but neglect to develop a moment-by-moment relationship with God, to develop an every moment awareness of God's presence and God's desire to empower them to faith and obedience. How sensitive are you to God's presence each moment? How intentional are you about walking with him in every moment, disciplining your thoughts, your words, and your actions?

**Pray:** Pray for God to show you where you have fallen short in acknowledging him, in literally knowing him, in all your ways, and then confess this to him. Pray for him to help you to improve in this awareness of his presence and empowerment, and in being determined to walk with him in all things, all day long.

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### Day 4

**Study:** Read Proverbs 3.5-6. Now read Proverbs 15.21. This is another proverb written by Solomon. Though it is outside the immediate context of Proverbs 1-9, it is by the same author and in the same biblical book, so it might be informative to our study. Remember "Folly" is human reasoning that leads to spiritual death in Solomon's mind. Who finds joy in Folly? What happens if someone has true understanding from God? What do you think is the straight course in 15.21? If folly brings spiritual death, what in contrast do we know God's wisdom brings? So in Proverbs 3.6, do you think the straight path is obedience [avoidance of sin] or spiritual life [avoiding the negative effects of sin] or both?

**Reflect:** Try to memorize all of Proverbs 3.5-6. Say it to yourself several times and then write it down. As you work on memorizing this passage, consider how it applies to you personally. Are your paths straight? If not, why not?

**Pray:** Ask God to make your paths straight. Ask him to continue growing you to be more intimate with him, more like Christ in character and action, more yielded to the work of the Holy Spirit in you and through you.

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### Day 5

**Study:** We might paraphrase our proverb like this: *Trust completely in Yahweh and his revelation in the Bible, and don't rely on your own faulty thinking; know Yahweh intimately in every aspect of your life, and he will bring you on the straight path of true spiritual life.* Every day, every moment of the day, you have a choice of walking on the top line, trusting in God, living by his wisdom in the Bible; or of walking on the bottom line, trusting in yourself and obeying your corrupted flesh.

**Reflect:** Can you say Proverbs 3.5-6 without looking? Practice it once a week to keep it! Overall, which path have you chosen, to believe in Christ and his salvation or to trust in your own righteousness or methods? Having made that choice, which path should you choose each day, to walk with God by following his revelation or to trust in your own thinking and methods? Are you ready to submit to God, committing to live fully by his revelation and to trust him with the outcome?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you consecrate yourself [commit yourself to him and his purposes].