

Trust Wisdom:  
Lean not on your own understanding  
(Selected Scripture)

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*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. Acknowledge him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight.* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

As we survey the 66 Books of the Bible, the tension and tipping point of every hero or heroine in the Christian faith turns on one question:

**Are they going to trust the Lord with all their heart and lean not on their own understanding?**

Saul, David and the writer of Proverbs (Solomon) are measured for all of eternity. They are measured not by their natural abilities, not by their pedigree, not by their strengths or weaknesses, nor their wealth, but whether or not they trusted the Lord with all their heart and leaned not on their own understanding.

Prior to Solomon, in the Book of Judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes and the children of Israel were consumed by Canaanite idolatry and immorality. As a result, Yahweh was rejected over and over and for 350 years Israel suffered the consequences of being ruled by foreign nations (who happened to have human kings). When Israel evaluated their circumstances, it wasn't the wicked idolatry and immorality or the foolishness or the ingratitude they identified as problematic; rather, they pinned their struggles on the fact they didn't have a human king. So Israel cried out for a king!

God reminds Samuel what is behind this request, "*For it is not you (Samuel) that they have rejected, but it is me that they have rejected as their king. Just as they have done from the day that I brought them up from Egypt until this very day, they have rejected me and have served other gods.*" (1 Sam 8:7). Samuel warns the Israelites what it will be like to have a human king - war, slave-labor, taxes - but the people refused to heed and cried out for a king (1 Sam. 8:19-20).

God decided to give Israel their human king, but Deuteronomy 17:14-20 makes it crystal clear how every king of Israel should be evaluated. The king was not to accumulate horses for himself, not to marry many wives (lest his affections turn aside), not to accumulate much silver and gold, must have a copy of the Law, read it and live it, and must not exalt himself above his fellow citizens. As Solomon says in Proverbs 3, God's king must demonstrate that they are not leaning on their own understanding.

Saul  
1 Samuel 9:2 says that Saul (was) a handsome young man. There was no one among the Israelites more handsome than he was; he stood head and shoulders above all the people. Saul made a very good first impression, but Saul only went along with God's plan until he thought of a better plan. We see this in two ways:

1) During Saul's reign, he had success fighting the enemies of the North and South, but the enemies of the West, the Philistines, always dominated Israel. 1 Samuel 13 tells us that an extremely intimidating Philistine army is waiting (3,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, thousands of foot soldiers, all with iron weapons) and Israel's army was hiding in caves, cliffs, and secret places. On this day, Samuel is nowhere to be found and Saul takes things into his own hands and decides to take on the role of Samuel and initiate the battle with sacrifice (1 Sam. 9:9).	2) The Amalekites were a people who did great damage to the Israelites, so God's instruction to Saul was to destroy them all. 1 Samuel 15 says that Saul and the Israeli army pushed the Amalekites all the way down to Egypt. But again, Saul rejects God's Word and captures their king (Agag) and keeps everything that is of value - the best animals, etc. After the victory, Saul sets up a monument for himself (15:12), which is a picture of his self-confident heart. Once again Samuel confronts him, but Saul says that the animals are for sacrifice. Samuel says to Saul - God wants obedience, not sacrifice; you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you!
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Saul's unwillingness to trust God with all his heart disqualified him from kingship and marked the beginning of the end for Saul. Saul quickly spirals and in his jealousy and insanity spends the next 13 of his 40 years as king chasing David. God's strength is cut off by Saul's self-confidence; he wanted to lean on his own understanding.

David  
Since God rejected Saul, there needed to be one who would take his place. Samuel is sent by God to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse to anoint the new king of Israel (1 Sam. 16). One by one the sons of Jesse pass before Samuel and everyone is shocked that none of these men who are strong and good-looking and made good first-impressions (much like Saul) are chosen by God. God reminds Samuel - I have not and will not ever operate the way the world operates. You are fixated on the outward circumstances and strengths; I am focused on his heart dependence on me (1 Sam. 16:7). There is one more son, a 15 year old shepherd in the fields. God says - this is the next king!

Later David is dropping off bread and cheese right in the middle of Goliath's mockery of the Israelites (1 Samuel 17). David hears this and is angry. "Who is this man who dares to defy the armies of the living God?" Saul's armor and weapons just don't feel right on David. Instead David uses the exact weapons he used to defend his sheep. After Goliath curses him, David proclaims, "You come at me with swords and spears, but I come at you in the name of the Lord" (1 Sam. 17:45). On that day, God kills Goliath.

After this David demonstrates unbelievable humility and entrusts himself to God despite Saul's quest to kill him for 13 years. Two times (1 Sam. 24 & 26) David has opportunity to kill Saul but spares his life. Saul eventually dies and David becomes king and he rules for seven years over Judah and eventually over all of Israel. But God won't allow David to build the temple, because he was a man of war and much bloodshed. And one night when he should have been leading the army in battle, he sees beautiful Bathsheba bathing. King David sleeps with this married woman and she becomes pregnant and David seeks to cover up his sin and conspires to have the woman's husband killed in battle. Nathan uses a clever parable to confront David's sin, and David is immediately broken. God not only forgave David and restored David, but out of the Davidic line will come the perfect King of kings and the Lord of lords.

### Solomon

God comes to Solomon, the son of King David and Bathsheba, in a dream and declares, "Ask and I will give it to you" (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon could have chosen anything, but what he wanted more than anything else was wisdom, insight, the ability to lead God's people wisely. This response so pleased God that not only did God make him the wisest man ever, but He also gave him the royal jackpot of everything and anything his heart could desire (1 Kings 3:13, 10:23-26).

1 Kings 4:32 tells us that Solomon spoke 3000 proverbs and 800 of them are included in Proverbs. In Proverbs, the term *hokma* (wisdom) is central and it means *the skillful execution of life*. It's the intellectual, emotional and spiritual capacity to walk through adversity and life fearing the Lord over everything else. Through God's *hokma*, the righteous commits his way to the Lord for success. Under Solomon's wisdom, there was a central government with almost no tribal distinctions. From an industrial & materialistic standpoint this was the golden era for Israel. Solomon's building and public works programs were amazing and most importantly, he built and dedicated the Temple.

Trade, expanding borders, alliances, and significant wealth - it was never better. Yet times of prosperity more often than not lead to spiritual corruption, and unfortunately it was no different for Solomon. Solomon struggled with trusting the Lord with all his heart and not leaning on his own understanding. 1 Kings 11:2-4 described what happened, "From the nations of whom the Lord has said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love...and his wives turned his heart after other gods and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God." Solomon's heart turned to other gods. We don't know for sure, but some believe Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon in his youth, the books of Proverbs in his middle age, and the book of Ecclesiastes at the end of life. Yet at the end of Solomon's life as we see in Ecclesiastes, Solomon seems to gain perspective again.

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The tension in Saul, David and Solomon's life is the tension in all of our lives. **Am I going to trust the Lord with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding?**

First, a warning about strengths. In our flesh, we cannot manage our strengths. Left to our devices, our so called strengths are often disastrous and counterproductive to the mission of Christ. Paul says they are not only a problem, but a hindrance, a liability. They often keep us from the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord (Phi 3:8). Yet don't disregard your strengths, because Christ has made you a new creation and those strengths don't need to be a liability anymore. The caution is to exercise those strengths in submission to the Lordship of Christ with great humility and in community.

Second, it is important that we know that God typically manifests and magnifies Himself through weaknesses. 1 Corinthians 12 declares: *His strength is made perfect in weakness!* Our weakness is made full by His strength. In that, God shows Himself most powerful in weakness. Christ's glory is the most spectacular against the backdrop of all of our short-comings, failures, and brokenness. His strength is sufficient and complete.