

Where to Lean When I Don't Understand

Prov 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

I. Introduction

1. When faced with an uncertainty, about choices, we ponder what we know, and get a feeling about that knowledge.
2. It is a feeling of being more comfortable with one idea over another idea. So if someone asks us what we plan to do while we are still in that decision-making process, we might answer them, "Well I'm not sure but I am leaning toward this option."
3. And what we lean toward is based on a feeling we get about what we know, and that feeling is called our "understanding".
4. And if we do not yet have all the facts, we will have less understanding than we would if we did have all the facts. But our understanding gives us a feeling. Either a comfortable feeling, or an uncomfortable feeling.
5. Let me give you an example and then some definitions.
6. You want to buy a car and may be drawn to one because of how nice it looks. We'll call it car #1. We get an early feeling of comfort about car #1 based on what our eyes can see. From our limited understanding, we have a good feeling about it. But what we don't know is the engine has a cracked block and blown head gasket, but since we don't know that, and because our level of comfort is based only on what we see, so far, our limited understanding makes car #1 our first choice.
7. The car right next to it on the lot, car #2 is not as pleasing to our eyes as car #1, and that causes to get a feeling about that car as well. You don't care to look further at it because what you see is all that your understanding is based on at that moment. But under the hood of car #2, there is a well-tuned and dependable engine with a lot of life left in it.
8. At this point, you are leaning toward car #1. Would it be wise at this point to decide, "I want to buy car #1-let's make a deal"?
9. No. At that point we cannot trust our knowledge of the situation or lean on our understanding of the choices before us. We need further facts before we can make a wise decision.
10. Life is full of such situations where we trust our understanding as being true even though we have an incomplete understanding.
11. But the message this morning is to help us lean on the right thing when we don't understand. Where to lean when I don't understand.
12. I feel this is a topic of a lifetime, that if we get a better handle on this, so many of our struggles of life would be easier to walk through. And I didn't say easy, but easier.

II. Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom

A. Definitions

1. First, I want to give some definitions that will help us get a biblical understanding of this important subject. And those of you who followed our series on the three important words of Proverbs will remember this.

- a. Knowledge: information/facts you have taken in.
 - b. Understanding: carefully observing that new knowledge to sift, sort and discover how it relates to other knowledge.
 - c. Wisdom: the skill of applying understanding into life situations.
2. I'll give you an example how these work together.
 3. We get knowledge by looking around and gathering facts.
 4. We increase our understanding of the situation by having more facts to consider.
 5. And when once we have a more complete understanding, we can use that understanding to come up with a wise answer.
 6. Understanding does not come without knowledge. The more knowledge we have, the greater our understanding grows.
 7. Wisdom does not come without understanding the knowledge we have. The more understanding we get, the more complete our wisdom is.
 8. That is unless God has given the spiritual gift of wisdom where God miraculously provides that to you.

B. Example

1. Five word phrase. "I just cannot see it."
2. _____.
3. R, S, T, L, N, E, O, I, A, C, J, U
4. This can help us see why we cannot trust in our understanding when we don't have enough facts.
5. Yet our tendency is to still place our trust in our understanding.
6. "I really feel that car #1 is the right choice."
7. That is until we get more facts. Get the CARFAX friend. When we have more facts, then you can increase your understanding, which will help you make a wise decision on which car to buy.

III. What to understand when we don't understand

A. The contest between trust and understanding

1. *Prov 3:5-6*
5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
2. When we read this verse, we are plainly instructed where to put our trust when our own understanding is lacking.
3. When we say, "I just don't understand why God would let this happen," the answer to our understanding is really simple. It is because we don't have all the facts at our disposal that God has.
4. That is where trust comes in.

B. Unlimited understanding

1. God is trustworthy. Who can be more trustworthy than God?
Ps 147:5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

2. God is trustworthy when we consider that His understanding is infinite. The opposite of infinite is finite. And that is what our understanding is—finite, limited, restricted.
 3. That is because we do not know it all.
 4. Isaiah compares our knowledge to that of our Creator.:
Isa 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.
 5. God is everlasting. We might live 120 years, but in comparison to the everlasting God, that is nothing.
 6. We have not lived long enough to come anywhere close to God’s understanding.
 7. And when we read, “there is no searching of his understanding,” that means His understanding is endless. As Psalm 147:5 said, infinite.
 8. And if we are considering whose understanding it is better to trust, should we trust ourselves, one of God’s creations, or should we trust the Creator of all things?
 9. As Creator of the ends of the earth, how can we think that our understanding is better to trust in than God’s?
- C. Perspective
1. Let’s talk about perspective for a moment.
Job 28:24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven;
 2. We can’t lean on our understanding because we simply aren’t at a place where full understanding can be achieved.
 3. And with most issues, our earthly perspective limits the facts available to us, requiring a higher perspective. And if a higher perspective is not possible for us, we need to trust someone who does have a bigger perspective.
 4. But God who sees the whole heavens has the highest perspective available to us. That is why it is best to put your trust in Him.
 5. Suppose in a battle, a troop is moving through a valley and they hear explosions coming from somewhere. But because of their location in the valley, echoes are coming from all around them and they cannot tell from where the explosions are coming from, nor who is responsible for them.
 6. But when a scout ascends the hill, and using his field glasses, then he is able to see the troop movements and is able to identify enemy positions.
 7. In the early days before atmospheric observations and electronic communications were possible, weather predictions were made by philosophers.
 8. It wasn’t until the 17th through 19th centuries that weather instruments came about, and the telegraph networks of the mid-19th centuries.¹
 9. There was no such thing as a 5-day hurricane advisory, much less a tornado watch six hours early.
 10. A higher perspective was needed. And even with Doppler radar and satellite images, weather balloons, aircraft hurricane reconnaissance, we still have difficulty making accurate predictions, because there are unseen factors that are unobservable to humans.

¹ <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/features/WxForecasting/wx2.php>

11. But our God who is looking to the ends of the earth, has a perspective that we can trust. When I don't understand, I can lean on Him!

12. You cannot get a higher perspective than God:

Ps 33:13-14

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

IV. Where to lean

A. On the One who knows me

1. When we don't understand, we need Somebody with infinite understanding to trust in who knows us, loves us, and cares about us.

2. We have that in God:

Ps 139:1-17

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

*8 If I ascend up into heaven, **thou art there**: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.*

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

*11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; **even the night shall be light** about me.*

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

B. On the one who knows all things

1. There are times when our heart troubles us, and that keeps us in confusion. Again, that is because of our limited understanding of what is happening.

2. And in such times, we need Someone who knows all things:

1 John 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

3. There are times when self-condemnation makes us feel down on ourselves and like we should not even be trying to live for God.

4. It feels like mockery or even hypocrisy.

5. We cannot always trust our feelings.
 6. But we cannot always trust our own heart.
 7. That is when we must rely on the fact that God is greater than our heart.
 8. And because He knows all things and still loves us, we must put our trust in Him.
 - a. When we say, “I just don’t understand.”
 - b. When we say, “Why do I feel this way?”
 - c. When we say, “This is just too confusing to me.”
 9. When we are at such a place, we cannot lean on our own understanding and we must lean on Jesus.
 - a. The One who knows our heart,
 - b. the One who loves us;
 - c. the One who has a higher perspective.
 - d. Put your trust in Him!
- C. Steps to help our lean
1. When we get to the place of fully trusting God with the situation, we can see the truth in this statement: **“If I could see what God sees, I would not change a thing.”**
 2. When I don’t understand and feel hurt at God, don’t lean on that. Trust in His kindness and goodness and better perspective.
 3. Until there are enough facts before me, I can’t understand. There are too many blanks before me to figure out the puzzle.
 4. Because of limited facts and the resulting incomplete understanding, it is not wise to lean on our understanding.
- D. Consider our own lack of understanding
1. I know I’ve shared this story before, but several years ago, when I was working as a junior assistant for one of the vice presidents in the university, a position as a senior assistant came open when a new vice president’s position was created.
 2. The office was just down the hall from my office, it was more pay, I had most of the qualifications, and it looked like the perfect job for me. So I applied for the position and got an interview.
 3. I knew all the people who interviewed me and it went very well.
 4. But someone else was hired.
 5. I fought with my heart over that one. I couldn’t understand why I didn’t get the job because it was the “perfect” job for me. At least from my perspective.
 6. I had a chance to meet the person who was hired, and I’ll admit, at first I had to fight my feelings about being nice and friendly to her because of my hurt heart.
 7. But God is greater than our hearts and He knoweth all things.
 8. And what I didn’t know that God did know, was that it wasn’t very long before the structure of that office changed and that position was eliminated. That woman lost her job in only a few months.
 9. She was gone, and I’m still there. And eventually a job opportunity was presented to me that I didn’t even go looking for.

10. When we choose to trust in our own understanding, it is a recipe for continued despair.
- V. Conclusion
1. In closing, I want to consider two passages to help us leaning on the right thing.
Prov 3:5-6
5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
 2. If we can bring ourselves to trust Him and acknowledge His work in the situation, He WILL direct our path.
 3. So what do we do with our hurt feelings? What do we do with our lack of understanding? What do we do with our lack of knowledge?
 4. Well as we have already discussed, we grow in understanding as we acquire more knowledge.
 5. Here is a piece of knowledge that will help us find rest for our souls:
Matt 11:29-30
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
 6. A yoke is a device that attaches a beast of burden to the burden he is supposed to bear. The yoke holds the plow or wagon to the mule, horse or ox, so that the strength of the ox is what is carrying the burden.
 7. But when Jesus says, “take my yoke upon you,” it will not be the strength of an ox, it is not your strength, but is Jesus’s strength that carries the burden.
 8. When we get yoked with Jesus, that means Jesus does the heavy lifting and we simply go along for the ride.
 9. But it is not just a matter of taking on His yoke, in the process, we learn of Him.
 10. There are some weighty things that He may require of us, but He will show us when we need to pick up heavy things.
 11. If we only pick up what He tells us, He will carry that weight for us.
 12. There will be some things that He says we shouldn’t touch because it is not a weight He intends for us to bear.
 13. But if we try to pick it up anyway, we end up bearing that on our own.
 14. But His yoke is easy and His burden is light.
 15. We need to read the verse that precedes this one:
Matt 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 16. Where to lean when we don’t understand...lean on Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Find rest in Jesus as He does the heavy lifting.
 17. Not understanding is often a painful place to be. But you can find rest for our souls when we put our trust in Him.