

Proverbs 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. This verse provides the positive complement to verse 5's negative command. Having forbidden leaning on our own understanding, Solomon now commands comprehensive acknowledgment of God, promising divine guidance in return.

"In all thy ways" (בכל-דרכיך/bekhol-derakhekha) encompasses every area of life without exception. Derekh means path, way, course of life, manner of living. "All" (כל/kol) permits no exemptions—not just religious activities but work, relationships, decisions, thoughts, words, actions. God's lordship extends over all of life.

"Acknowledge him" (דָּעָה/da'ehu) means know Him, recognize Him, take Him into account. This isn't merely intellectual knowledge but relational awareness and practical submission. The same verb describes Adam "knowing" Eve (Genesis 4:1)—intimate, experiential knowledge. We're to intimately know and consciously include God in every decision and action.

"He shall direct" (יְשַׁר/yeyasher) means to make straight, smooth, right. The causative form indicates God's active intervention: He will make straight. This promises not that all paths will be easy but that God will guide toward right paths, removing obstacles, providing clarity.

"Thy paths" (אֶת-חַדְתֶּיךָ/orchotekha) are the specific roads we travel—individual

decisions, particular circumstances, concrete choices. While *derekh* (ways) is more general, *orach* (path) is more specific. God guides both our general direction and specific steps.

This verse establishes cause-effect relationship: comprehensive acknowledgment of God results in divine direction. We submit all to Him; He guides all. The promise doesn't specify how He'll guide (circumstances, Scripture, counsel, inner conviction), only that He will. Trust precedes clarity; obedience precedes understanding.

Historical Context

See Proverbs 3:5 for broader historical context. This verse's promise of divine guidance had particular relevance throughout biblical history when Israel faced directional decisions:

Abraham acknowledged God in all his ways, and God directed his path from Ur to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-4). Joseph acknowledged God even in slavery and prison, and God directed his path to Pharaoh's court (Genesis 39-41). Moses acknowledged God at the burning bush, and God directed Israel's path through wilderness to Promised Land (Exodus 3-4).

Conversely, failures came when God's people didn't acknowledge Him: Israel made a covenant with Gibeonites "and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" (Joshua 9:14). Saul presumed on God's blessing without seeking His will and lost the kingdom (1 Samuel 13-15). David numbered Israel without acknowledging God and brought plague (2 Samuel 24).

The exile resulted partly from not acknowledging God—trusting political alliances, adopting pagan practices, ignoring prophetic warnings. Jeremiah condemned those who "walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart" rather than acknowledging God (Jeremiah 7:24).

New Testament epistles urge Christians to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and "in every thing by prayer and supplication...let your requests be made

known unto God" (Philippians 4:6)—practical applications of acknowledging God in all ways.

Throughout church history, major decisions involved acknowledging God: Augustine's conversion, Luther's stand at Worms, Wesley's Aldersgate experience, missionary movements—all emerged from seeking God's direction. Conversely, church failures often trace to not acknowledging God—pursuing institutional power, embracing cultural ideologies, prioritizing human wisdom.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to acknowledge God 'in all thy ways'—including mundane daily decisions, not just major life choices?
2. How do we know when God is directing our paths, and what does biblical guidance look like?
3. In what areas of life do we most commonly fail to acknowledge God, instead making decisions based solely on pragmatism or human wisdom?
4. How does the promise that God 'shall direct thy paths' address anxiety about making wrong decisions or missing God's will?
5. What is the relationship between acknowledging God in all our ways and the peace that 'passeth all understanding' (Philippians 4:7)?

Interlinear Text

בְּכָל יְהֹוָה יָדַע אֵלָיו יְשִׁיר אֶרְחֹתָיו:
In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths

H3605 H1870 H3045 H1931 H3474 H734

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:3 (Parallel theme): Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Psalms 32:8 (Parallel theme): I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Philippians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Proverbs 16:9 (Parallel theme): A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Jeremiah 10:23 (Parallel theme): O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Isaiah 30:21 (Parallel theme): And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Isaiah 48:17 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

Colossians 3:23 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Colossians 3:17 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.