

**Russell Kelfer**

**In All Thy Ways...  
Acknowledge Him!**

**# 931-B**

**Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# In All Thy Ways... Acknowledge Him!

When we began this study, we determined to don our spiritual backpacks, fix a sack lunch for the trip, and embark on a journey through that incredibly dense, but remarkably beautiful land known as Proverbs. Every trip has a purpose, and ours was clearly defined for us in the first few verses of the first chapter. There we were told that the objective of our journey was a treasure hunt. We were searching for wisdom. This journey, Solomon assured us, would result in our learning how to live and how to act in every circumstance. He promised that, by the end of the search, those of us who are simple-minded would begin to become wise. He promised to warn us of some problems we would face in the further journey beyond known as the Christian life. And he promised that those who were already becoming wise would become even wiser by exploring this treasure land for real nuggets of truth.

So our ultimate objective was WISDOM, and our first step was to define wisdom. Wisdom, we decided, is “the mind of Christ in control of the Christian”. And we determined that God’s kind of wisdom comes in basically three stages:

**Knowledge:** (the first stage) is coming to understand the mind of God. It is knowing God’s heart about a given matter. Knowledge about lying, for instance, is knowing God hates lying.

**Understanding:** (the second stage) is personalizing the knowledge you have received. Understanding about lying would be knowing not only that God hates lying, but understanding that you are a liar.

**Wisdom:** (the final stage) is the mind of Christ actually controlling us. It is the act of honoring our understanding by doing God’s will. Wisdom, where lying is concerned, simply means that God’s man, aware of God’s position, and aware of his own transgression, in God’s power stops lying. He is now becoming wise.

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So our objective for our long trek through the wilds of the proverbial forest of faith was to become wise, to come out on the other side different men and women who are in ever-increasing splendor being transformed more perfectly “into His likeness”.

Our determination, because the land we were about to explore was so dense, was to make the trip in four phases. “Four Faces” we called them—The Four Faces of Wisdom. The search for wisdom was to take us first through the land of humility, then to the rugged hills of self-control, across the rushing waters known as responsibility, and finally through the lush oasis known as generosity.

It has not been an uneventful trip. We were attacked immediately by a dangerous species of Christian corruption known as the “Perennial Problem of Pride”; and as we nursed our wounds, we were forced to examine “The High Cost of Humility”, and come in no uncertain terms to realize that God is looking for “Correctable Christians”.

No sooner had we passed through that unsettling experience that we began our climb through the mountainous region known as self-control. Self-control, we came to realize, was the will responding to the Word, even over the objections of the emotions and the appetites. Self-control was a tough mountain to climb because some of its enemies were internal: the enemies of impulsiveness, anger, envy, and fear. And yet some of its more overt enemies, those who attack from without, such as immorality, gluttony, drunkenness, and the tongue, proved to be so dangerous that we had to literally wear combat boots and battle helmets just to get through.

Just on the other side of that struggle, however, we came to the rushing rivers of responsibility, a word we came to realize was nothing more than our response to God’s ability to use us in the marketplace of life. We had to row past such potential problems as responsibility on the job, responsibility as parents, responsibility as children, responsibility as women, and responsibility as friends.

Finally, with some relief, we found ourselves on the other side of the rapids, and we decided to camp out and survey the land that was yet before us. There we found (much to our surprise) that the wisdom we had mined in our treasure hunt through Proverbs was not ours to keep. We had searched for and found

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glistening jewels of reality, but the very test of their reality would lie in our willingness to give them away.

And so we had to make that final journey through the land of generosity and learn how to give our lives away. We had to ask “Where Has All the Love Gone?” and we were told to “Open Our Eyes, They’re Crying”. There we stopped and learned how to “Reach Out and Touch Someone” and then, “How to Reach Out Together.”

As if that were not enough, we were told to empty our backpacks of our accumulated treasure and, like the Corinthians, release the ownership of what we had in order to free God to use it to bless and to benefit others. Then, backpacks emptied, we were told by our proverbial guide that there was a way to become sensitive saints, men and women who paid attention to those about us, finally men and women who became, by God’s grace... **encouragers**. The church of Jesus Christ was to be our home on this range where seldom is heard a discouraging word.

Well, our journey is over, and our debriefing will be over as well, in just a few moments. Our real journey, however, is only in its initial stages. For our real journey will take us back into the real world (as indeed it already has), to see if, in fact, we have begun to attain a greater measure of wisdom, learned some humility, learned to exercise more self-control, learned to become more responsible as Christians, learned in reality, how to give our lives away. The test of wisdom is not how much knowledge we have attained because knowledge of itself only puffs up. It is not even how much understanding we have attained. Understanding by itself only leads to self-pity and discouragement.

No, our objective, you will remember was WISDOM. So the only measurable test of the success of our journey will be the actual implementation of the Mind of Christ in our lives. In other words, have we changed? Are we changing? The choices, remember, are ours. The power, remember, all comes from God.

Incidentally, your travel guide should be fired on the spot. It took him months longer than he promised to lead you through this wilderness and bring you back home again. I understand it’s a habit of his to travel slowly and talk too much. Nevertheless, here we are at the far edge of the forest looking back over the terrain behind us and looking forward to the land of application, realizing that what’s ahead will be an even greater challenge.

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Yet, we cannot conclude our journey without recognizing that there are some important final statements that Proverbs wants to make before we rush past the gates marked “finished” and into yet another Biblical pilgrimage.

These are not just loose ends that do not fit somewhere else. At first, I thought they might be. No, these are the essentials. These are the ribbons that tie up the package, the keys that unlock the treasure, the adhesive that holds all the pieces in place. Without them, humility is a joke; self-control is impossible; responsibility is an exercise in futility; and generosity becomes only empty self-righteousness.

So our final debriefing exercise this morning will have as its goal to leave with us, from the signposts planted all throughout Proverbs, a message of just what it is that makes wisdom work. Our title is “In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him.” Our outline very simply is this:

- I- The Four Faces of Wisdom.
- II- The Final Phase of Wisdom.
- III- The Final Step to Wisdom.

We have looked at the four faces of wisdom and glanced ever so quickly at where we have been. The final phase of wisdom; however, still clamors for our attention. It is the act of acknowledging once and for all, and once and for always who owns the land. Proverbs, on the surface, may seem like a self-help book, a do-it-yourself manual on Christian behavior. But it's not!

Proverbs, like all of Scripture, is a picture book of the Character of God. As a picture book, it portrays with incredible reality the truth that we belong to a GOD who IS... a God who is everything, a God who is perfect. We must not leave this land of such rich and valuable treasures without being reminded by the signposts at the exits that wisdom is not the result of what we do. Wisdom is a person, and wisdom is the result of allowing that person to take total control of our lives.

The final phase of wisdom is the act of bowing before wisdom and worshipping HIM. So let's take a quick journey through those final few feet of the proverbial pathway and remind ourselves of three basic facts in closing.

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FACT 1- GOD'S WORD IS PERFECT

If wisdom is the mind of Christ controlling us, then we must never forget that God's control comes from saturation with and obedience to the perfect Word of God. If you have not yet acknowledged that the Word of God is infallible, eternal, immovable, and complete, you have not really grasped where wisdom comes from. Listen to what Proverbs says about God's perfect Word.

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:20-23)

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: (Proverbs 6:20-23)

My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. (Proverbs 7:1-3)

All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. (Proverbs 8:8-10)

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

(Proverbs 13:13)

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Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.

Add not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.  
(Proverbs 30:5,6)

I would like the privilege of paraphrasing and then condensing those six passages so you and I can see in a nutshell what Proverbs is saying about us and the Word. It is saying this: “Christian, pay attention to the Word of God. Listen to everything it says. Everywhere you look, you ought to see the Word, the Word, the Word.”

“Memorize it. It will change the way you live. It will change your heart, and your heart controls the way you live. Don’t ever stray from what the Word teaches. Again I say, memorize it; write it on your heart, so Satan can’t erase it. It will lead you everywhere you go. It will protect your mind as you sleep. It will tell you God’s plan for you as soon as you awake. It’s like a beacon God has given you to show you where to go and to help you see when you’ve gotten off course. So if you want to really live, the Word of God must become your very life.

“And remember, every word that God has ever spoken is perfect. Not a syllable is in error or insincere. God will make each word plain, if you will only ask Him. Don’t ever treat the Word with contempt. God disciplines those who do. Once again, the reason is that every word God speaks is perfect. He surrounds the lives of those who trust His Word, but woe unto them who use the Word as a base on which to build their own substitutes, who add to the Word for their own benefit. God will rip away the very shield you erect, and you will be found to be a liar, for you will have taken lightly the Living Word of God.”

Now I must very simply ask you to ask yourself how wise you are where the Word is concerned. Not how knowledgeable, but how wise are you? Does it consume your thoughts? Or is it an addendum to your day? Do you memorize it and meditate on it all day long as though you were reprogramming your mind to conform to the Mind of Christ? Or is the Word to you like a Coca-Cola. Is it just the “pause that refreshes.” Oh, you may know it’s the “real thing”, but do you know it is EVERYTHING? As Job declared, “Is it worth more to you than your necessary food?” In other words, if you have a choice whether or not to skip a meal or miss your time in God’s Book, does it even enter your mind that the food you get from the Word will last forever?

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Is the Word your decision-maker? Do you treat the Word with respect and acknowledge it before your family for what it is, THE WORD OF GOD. Or do you treat it with contempt, quoting it with fervor before your Christian friends, apologizing for it in the presence of those who do not grasp its power?

The Word of God is perfect. It is finished. It is everything. You add to it, and God will discipline you and prove you to be a liar. You ignore it, and God will allow you to wander from truth and miss the mark He's set for your life. You honor it and cherish it and receive it for what it is, and God will use it to totally transform your life.

If the Word is less to you than God says it is, then you have some adjusting to do to bring your life into harmony with the mind of Christ. If you're not memorizing it daily, not studying it daily, not meditating on it hourly, not honoring it constantly, then you need to go home and set some new standards for yourself where the Word is concerned. It is a must if you are to appropriate the final phase of Wisdom.

### FACT 2- THE WILL OF GOD IS PERFECT.

We live in a world that is characterized by making light of the Sovereignty of God. It is a world that delights in portraying God as a kindly old gentleman who once had power and authority, but who somehow, in His old age, has lost His touch. At any rate, the world assures us, God is no longer in control of the details of our lives (if indeed He ever was), and it is now up to us to be the captains of our fate.

Even in the church, the sovereignty of God is being questioned by some, and the perfectness of His unchanging plan for us and for mankind is now being preached with question marks rather than exclamation marks. And so in the process, to the degree that man has questioned the plan of God, man has lost the power of God.

I would like to remind you, as we conclude our journey through the Land of Wisdom, that all of the principles Proverbs proposes rest the weight of their validity on the fact that God's Will (His plan for our lives) is absolutely perfect. It may not take the course we've plotted. Indeed, it often doesn't. Many of the detours are of our own making; all God does is use our mistakes for our good. Many of the detours are seemingly beyond our control.



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But unless we believe that His Will is good and acceptable and perfect, we cannot stand with authority on His Word, because we are not standing with confidence on His Will.

First of all, Proverbs reminds us that though God has exclusive control of all of mankind, He has assumed particular responsibility in the lives of His children. He not only is in control, He is in love, and He wants what is best for those He loves.

The Lord does not let the soul of the righteous go hungry, but He frustrates the desire of the wicked.

(Proverbs 10:3 Berkley)

As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting fountain.

(Proverbs 10:25)

When the storm sweeps by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous are rooted forever.

(Moffett)

In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of refuge.

(Proverbs 14:26)

The LORD is far from the wicked: but He heareth the prayer of the righteous.

(Proverbs 15:29)

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

(Proverbs 18:10)

Paraphrased and condensed, Proverbs is saying this: “God is in total control of His children’s lives. He will see to it that their needs are always met. Just as a sudden storm comes and sweeps things away unexpectedly, so He will come, and, in a moment, the unbeliever will be gone. But not so with His saints. Like everlasting fountains, He will see that they flow with grace forever. So trust Him, Christian. He is your place of refuge when storms come. The wicked cry, but He hears them not. When you cry, God always hears. So honor His Name by resting in His Will. Run to Him when you are troubled, there in his arms you will always be safe.” You see, Beloved, God has a flawless plan for your life. His will is perfect.

Secondly, God’s will even includes controlling, when necessary, the response of those He chooses to use in your life.

The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.

(Proverbs 21:1)

In other words, God can still use that unbelieving husband to accomplish His will in your life. God can still use that rebellious or ungrateful wife as a tool to conform you into His likeness.

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God can still use that crude or insensitive boss to mold you and teach you on the job. God's will is perfect, and He uses whoever He chooses, often when they do not even recognize they are being used, to accomplish His purposes.

Thirdly, God's perfect will is often beyond our understanding; but still He shall accomplish His purposes, for He has decreed it.

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established. (RSV)

Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way? (Proverbs 20:24)

Every step man takes is of the Lord's choosing; and thou poor mortal, wouldst thou plot out thy path? (Knox)

There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD. (Proverbs 21:30,31)

Wisdom is none, prudence is none, counsel is none that can be matched against the Lord's will. (Knox)

Our task is to obey. God's task is to perform. Our task then is to rest. We simply cannot totally understand all of the things that are happening. The apostles had this problem. They prayed for God's will. They longed for God's Kingdom. The only problem was they had no idea that His will meant a cross and that His Kingdom was within. So when the heat was on, they fled like cowards or cursed like sailors. They wanted God's will. They simply were ignorant of what His will was; so when it came, they panicked.

That trauma that has your life in a tailspin right now has not caught the Master off-guard. You may not understand how something so devastating could possibly work together for good. But you are not God. Rest, beloved; His will is perfect...even this. Though He may not have planned it, He will yet use it as though He had. His will is perfect.

### FACT 3- HIS WAYS ARE PERFECT

By His ways, I mean those incredibly unique, decidedly-different paths He takes to accomplish His purposes. They are 180 degrees from man's. Man's ways exalt man's strength. God's

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ways use man's weakness to exalt God's strength. Man's ways, therefore, depend on success. God's ways often bring success out of failures.

Man's ways exalt the physical. God's ways exalt the spiritual. Man's ways desire immediate action. God's ways are slow and awkward, using time as a tool to change, rather than as a thorn to be removed. God's ways are higher, Isaiah reminds, as much higher as heaven is above the earth. But, beloved, God's ways are perfect. Proverbs 14 explains the difference between God's ways and ours.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. (Proverbs 21:2)

Man's ways are always right in his own eyes, but the eternal has the verdict on his life. (Moffett)

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. (Proverbs 5:21)

Man's goings are observed by the eternal; He takes account of all his ways. (Moffett)

God says there are two basic solutions to every problem. One is logical by man's natural reasoning; the other is logical only by God's supernatural reasoning. The cross, for instance, is illogical to the natural man, so he rejects it and finds death. Further, Proverbs says we can always justify doing things man's way or counseling people to follow human logic, but God is not fooled. He alone has control of the verdict. He only honors His higher ways, ways that are unacceptable to the unregenerate mind. His ways to successful marriage, for instance, are unacceptable to the natural man. Man's way equates equality with rights. God's way equates equality with roles. Man's way demands its way or flees. God's way loves even when the object of his love is not lovable. God's way submits even when the one to whom she submits is not worthy in her eyes.

God's way is at total enmity with man's way. BUT IT WORKS! It changes lives. It transforms character. It transmits testimony. Oh, we want God's will, but how we struggle to avoid God's Ways. We so often pray for patience or for discernment or for wisdom or for a ministry, and yet we chafe so when God uses tribulation to bring patience, disappointments to create discernment,

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conviction to develop wisdom, or allows a trial to prepare us for a ministry with those who are undergoing similar trials.

We want the ministry, but we don't understand His Ways. We forget that redemption came by way of Calvary. The Epistles came by way of a prison. We forget that Stephen's victory came by martyrdom; that out of the ashes of failure, Peter developed the heart of God. We forget, because we forget about God's higher ways.

Before you rebuke God in the midst of your struggle for allowing your pain, consider His higher ways. Could He not be, through the very pain you so loathe, be answering your prayers of long ago? God's Word is perfect. God's will is perfect. God's ways are perfect.

God has summed it all up in one passage of Scripture which we must read together as our final act of wisdom before we exit the land of Proverbs and set our course for still another Scriptural journey. That passage of Scripture perhaps more than any other captures the entire theme of proverbs in only a handful of sentences. I think it is appropriate then that we conclude our tour of the Province of Proverbs by reading it. Turn to Proverbs chapter three, and let's read the first six verses.

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

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

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.  
(Proverbs 3:1-6)

Do you see what God is saying? He is saying My Word is perfect, trust it. My will is perfect, rest in it; My ways are perfect, so relax. Verse five is perhaps the one verse I would like to see us engrave on our hearts as we leave our study of this incredible treasure house of wisdom. Listen to what it is really saying. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart." The word "trust" in the

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Hebrew means to be stretched out upon with confidence; to have a sense of well-being based on something or someone in whom you have placed your total confidence. It means, as a result, to feel secure or be without fear.

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. (Psalms 22:4)

The word “lean” is a similar word. It denotes the act of placing one’s total weight upon something or someone as one would lean on a staff or a crutch.

The word “understanding” is a word used 247 times in the Old Testament meaning the ability to discern, particularly between right and wrong.

The word “ways” is a word relating to a path one would take constantly, thus wearing it down, or treading it underfoot.

The word “acknowledge” is a word used again and again in Scripture to denote knowing or ascertaining or admitting to knowledge, deferring to what you know to be true.

The word “all” simply means to be without exception.

What that verse is saying is this: “Christian, throw the whole weight of your life on Jesus Christ. Hold nothing back. Do not, even for one second, trust yourself, or your own wisdom apart from Him. In every decision you make, even the most insignificant one, defer to His Higher ways, regardless of what you would naturally do. If you do this, and only if you do this, God will become responsible for the outcome. He will chart your path, and He will keep you on it.”

You see, the issue is Lordship, not dedication. Lordship, not even commitment. It is Lordship. Lordship is more than dedication, more even than commitment. Lordship is abandonment. Lordship is throwing the entire weight of your life on Jesus Christ, leaving all the results to Him. Lordship makes no excuses. Lordship leaves no exceptions. Lordship condones no compromise. Lordship leaves no back doors. Lordship allows no seeds of idolatry. Lordship leaves no alternatives. Lordship says, “Jesus, I’m yours. Take me, make me, if need be, break me. I’m yours. I’ll not question your word. It is perfect. I’ll not question your will. It is perfect. I’ll not question your ways. They are perfect.”

What’s lacking today that was present in the early church is

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Lordship. Men lost their standing in the community, lost their families, lost their jobs, lost their reputations, but they had so thrown the weight of their lives on Jesus Christ and were so consumed by His Kingdom and His Lordship that like Paul, they were set free to proclaim:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ,

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung (*garbage*), that I may win Christ,

And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;  
(Philippians 3:7-10)

Do you hear what Paul is saying? He's saying

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

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.  
(Proverbs 3:5,6)

So quietly now, and humbly now, we walk through the gate that takes us beyond the property marked "Proverbs". When we began, we placed over the door as we came in, the words, "Enter and find wisdom." I pray that we have. Today, over the door as we exit, are the words, "In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him." I pray that we shall.

### IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

In all thy ways, acknowledge Him  
'tis not some passing phrase  
It means we count as perfect  
His Word, His Will, His Ways.

It means we trust His Word to be  
Our total, perfect guide;  
That ne'er will e'er we add to it  
Nor claim one word denied.

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It means we trust His Will to be  
Divinely error free;  
That yet whate'er He brings to pass  
I know 'tis best for me!

It means we trust His Matchless Ways  
In e'en those trying hours  
To be no less than perfect ways  
(Though so much higher than ours!)

In all thy ways, acknowledge Him  
That's God's unchanging Word  
And what it means is throw yourself  
On Jesus Christ as Lord!

With love, He will surround you  
Till all life's days are through  
He'll take control; He'll flood your soul  
He'll do what's best for you!

In all thy ways, acknowledge Him  
And from life's stress be freed  
For if the Son shall set you free  
Ye shall be free indeed!

Let me ask you, has there ever come a time in your life when you threw the whole weight of your life on Jesus Christ in total abandonment? Or if you did, has time erased the impact of that moment? Has there been a time when you said, "Lord, you do with me and with my life whatever you choose however you choose whenever you choose. Here's my career. Here's my family. Here are my children. Here are my ambitions.

"Lord, you may want me to bear testimony of your grace in the darkest jungles of Africa. I acknowledge you, send me. You may want me simply to give my life away on the street where I live, Lord. Here am I, use me.

"Lord, you may choose to bless me with prosperity and good health. If so, I acknowledge you. Or, Lord, you may choose to take from me everything I have to boast of, everything I have to cling to and leave me nothing but yourself. If you so choose, I pray I'll choose to still acknowledge you."

This could be the most beautiful moment of your life, if you should choose to turn loose of every restriction you have placed on God's control of your life. Maybe it's a person you said you'd

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never give up. Maybe it's a habit you said you'd never give up. Maybe it's a place you said you'd never go. Maybe it's a ministry you said you'd never let God use you in. Maybe you've just been afraid of what He might ask you to do. Dear friend, think about it. Does it matter what He asks? Not if His Word is perfect! Does it matter what He does? Not if His will is perfect! Does it matter how He does it? Not if His ways are perfect! He knows what's best, beloved. He'll do what's best, if we'll but rest. Here's His request: "In All Thy Ways...Acknowledge Him."

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