

Online Bible Study
Summer Shorts, Number Three: Proverbs 3:5-8

- 5. Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.**
- 6. In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.**
- 7. Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.**
- 8. It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your body.**

First, I need to say what I do *not hear* this passage telling me. I do not hear that my insight is worthless or unnecessary. God does not excuse me from using what intelligence I have to figure life out; I do, however, need to do my figuring on God's terms – to see life, self, and others in God's way rather than my own ego's way. I do not hear that God will make everything easy for me, with no bumps in the road, or take away from me the need to use my head in making choices. But I do need to use my faith to direct my head, and I need to look to the promises of God to inform and train my faith.

I understand the danger of being wise in my own eyes as foolishly thinking I have life figured out to a nicety and can judge others and myself rightly. I do not hear any admonition to disregard my own intelligence or put myself down. The danger is not in being smart about life but in being smart about life without regard for God. I believe we are being called to a new and different way of being smart. In whose service do I try to work out my life? What passions guide my choices? For example, a passion for wealth will take in one direction, a passion for justice in another. Desire for peace, harmony, and mutual well-being leads a person or a nation one way, but desire for pride and dominion leads in another direction. Fear urges me inward; compassion draws me outward.

I am warned not to be sure of my own rightness, and that includes any rightness I may construct with Bible verses, which I can easily misunderstand and misapply to a situation. We human beings judge by appearances and impressions; God sees the mind and will ("heart" in the Bible). I may draw conclusions by applying rules and standards; God works in compassion and mercy to redeem people and situations. Never am I so wrong as when I have convinced myself I'm absolutely right. There are warning flags. If any questioning of my rightness makes me angry and defensive, then there's something wrong with my rightness.

God, give me an open mind and an open heart, not because "anything goes," but because I trust you and believe you are far wiser than I am. Help me use the intelligence you have given me, but for the good you desire and not merely the goods I want. I don't see around the next corner. Teach me to be smart about life but not so foolishly smart that I count on my own rightness rather than your love and mercy.