

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

May 30, 1999

Scripture *Proverbs 3:5*

Sermon: *Steps to the Good Life*

I love the story of a business man who had an appointment in Buffalo. He learned that a train arrived there at three o'clock in the morning. He said I will be able to get some sleep, get in, in the middle of the night and get a few hours of rest before my very important business engagement. When he got on the train, he told the conductor that he needed to get off the train at three o'clock in the morning. He said I usually can wake up, if for some reason I do not, I am really going to depend upon you to help get me off the train. I just need to warn you. Many times when I wake up in the middle of the night, I am disoriented and I will say things that I really don't mean to say but what ever I say, just ignore them and make sure I get off the train at three o'clock in the morning. He went back to his sleeper and went to sleep. When he awoke, he realized it was five o'clock in the morning. He looked up the conductor and told the man everything he could think of, that he was incompetent and he went on and on. Then he went on back to get his bags and the man who was standing next to the conductor said "I never heard a man take as much as you did, why in the world would you let a man talk to you like that." He said "oh that is nothing, you should have heard what the man said at three o'clock this morning that I put off the train to go into Buffalo." Sometimes other peoples decisions impact us but most of the time it is our own decisions that determine how we are going to make out in life. I am sure that you have already realized that of all the things God has made, that we are the only thing that

has to make a decision about life. Everything else operates by instincts or by laws. When God made us, He in essence, gave us a bundle of building blocks. He says now it is up to you to make the right choices to determine what your life is going to be. For example you never turn to a dog or a puppy and say what are you going to be when you grow up. We turn to a boy and we say what are you going to be when you grow up. In that regard I like what Paula Poundstone, a female comedian, said. Adults are always asking children what are you going to be when you grow up. The reason is, they don't have the foggiest notion of who they are and they are trying to get some ideas from kids. We ask a child what are you going to be when you grow up because we are aware that it is the decisions that they make, that to a large degree, is going to determine the kind of person that they are going to be. It doesn't stop with little children. It determines all of our life as we make choices, then we begin to live with the consequences in our life. The passage of scripture that I am about to read for you talks about how God can help you to make the right decisions. What it is going to say to you is that you need to enter into a partnership with God and with His help then you make the decisions of life. He is going to warn you that if you try to make them without consulting Him, with out being in partnership with Him, that you are going to make some awful choices. Many of us that are in this room realize that we have made wrong choices because we tried to make them ourselves. The passage of scripture is going to give us some principles to help us how to form this partnership. Before I read it I want you to hear what it is going to say. It is one of the great promises in the Bible and it is going to say to you that God will direct your path. Let me tell you what that word is. It is Yashur. It simply means that if you are in a wilderness and you don't know which way to go. Someone comes along and says I know the way and they cut the way and lead you along. The Bible says all of us are in a sense in a wilderness. So

many choices, so many decisions, not knowing which way to go and God says if you will enter into this partnership with me, I will cut the way. I will blaze the path, I'll lead you along and I will direct your path. How can we enter into this partnership with Him.? It is very important that we know how to do that so that this promise can come through in our life. My daughter who is a missionary in Africa, as you know, lives in a part of the country where they do not have a telephone. Members of this congregation, along with others, helped to buy my daughter a satellite telephone. All around the world today, there are satellites who are going around the world. What you do is buy this special kind of phone and if you can get it into the right position, it can connect with that satellite. In Africa, they can talk to anybody around the world. The key is to make sure that phone is at the right direction and then it can make contact and then the message can go out. The same thing is true with our life. We need to know what is necessary to get out lives arranged right so we can make contact with the Father, so He can direct our paths. Let me read for you this passage of scripture. What it is going to tell you is the three things that have to happen in your life if you are going to make contact with Him so He can fulfill His promise and He can direct your life. He says this. Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, lean not to your own understanding, in all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Position 1. We have to come to trust in God. When you learn to trust anybody, you do that over a period of time. It is a building of a relationship. The people that I trust are the people that I know are faithful, people who will keep their word, people who have a sense of integrity and people who care for me. Over a period of time as I get a chance to know those people, than I come to the point where I can trust them. Several years ago my father came to see me. We were weaving through the city where I lived and my dad turned to me and said I sure am glad I can trust you because

if you didn't know where you are going, I couldn't find my way back home. You tell your children if somebody comes along in a car and says get in and come riding with me. You say don't get in you can't trust everybody. What is the difference. Why would my dad get in a car with me and yet you wouldn't want a child who didn't know me to get into a car with me. We built trust over the time. How is it with God. I come to the point where I can say, I can give God my life. I have these decisions to make, I have these choices that are here, but I can trust God. I know that the decisions He is going to help me to make are the best decisions that are possible for me. The question then is, how do I learn to start trusting God. How do I come to the point where I can say I want to put my life in your hands and I want to be able to do it. Let me give you a couple of ways. One of the ways is you do it through reading the Bible. You are aware that the Bible is about four thousands years of condensed history. In this history, what you are going to read are person after person who have come to the point where they have been in situations in life. They have given it to God and they have said let me tell you, you can trust God. What this book is, is a uniform four thousand years experience, to say we gave our life to God, we trusted Him, we found that it is best. Let me give you one example. You recall that David was shut out of the court of King Saul for years. Saul was so jealous of this young man who looked like he was going to become the king and literally tried to kill him. One time when he was trying to find David, David hid in a cave. When the soldiers came by and started to go into the cave, they found a spider had come and weaved a web. The soldiers said nobody could be in there. Look there is a spider web there, nobody could have been in. The soldiers went on past. There is a Psalm which

says David, while he was in the cave, found that God protected him, God guided him. I trusted in God and God was there. Somebody has taken that little story and written some little lines that I have always remember. They said when God is there, a web is like a wall. Where God is not, a wall is like a web. What David and all the people in the Bible have found is that when you can trust in Him, a web is like a wall. You can come to the point where you can trust Him. The second way you can learn to trust God is that you begin to accept His promises. In the Bible there are over three thousand promises. You can take a different promise every day for ten years. As you begin to take them, you begin to find that it is true. One promise says “seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and I will provide all of your material needs.” I tried that one time. I was a college student, I didn’t have money to get through school. One day I said to God, I want to give you my life and I want to do what you want me to do and I will put you first in my life and now I trust you to take care of me. This Memorial Day I remember the brother just above me who was in the Air Force. After that experience wrote me and said I have just been promoted, I have gotten a little more money so what I would like to do is start sending you money every month to help you get through school. Through the years, what I found as I went through college is one thing after another began to happen and I recognized that I ended college without ever owing anybody anything. Now if you come to me then after these years and say, can you trust God. I will say yes you can. You can trust Him because I claimed one of His promises, I found it true and everytime I have trusted Him, in one of His promises, it has always come true. There is a third way you can learn to trust Him. You can learn to trust Him by the people you know. If I had given time this morning, I could

have said I want somebody in every section here, to stand and give an illustration of how you gave your life to God and God honored your trust and God blessed and guided you. There would be remarkable stories in this room. You have known people who could say today. they trusted. I have seen that and I know that it is true. The fourth way is your own experience. Your own experience says you have walked with God, God has been true. One man said it to me this way. I know God is going to provide for my future because God has been faithful to always provide for my past. You have found that true in your own life. So hear it again. You come to the point in your life where you say Dear God I want to give you my life. I want to get to the point where I trust you and if I trust you I will ask you and you will give me direction and I will know what decisions to make in my life. Can you ever come in your life to be able to say dear God I give you myself, now help me in the decisions I need to make. Many of you are familiar with the name of Borden. Borden was the first and largest milk company in America. Mr. Borden had a young son by the name of William. William was a young man who decided instead of going into business with his daddy that he would be a missionary. He went over seas, while there as a young man died, and daddy had to get on a ship and go overseas and get his body. He said he went into a very simple little room and picked up a Bible and the Bible was his sons. In the front of the Bible it had these words. No reserves, no retreats, no regrets. Through the years people have said that when you come to God with no reserves, no retreats, there are no regrets. You can trust Him to help you to make the decisions you need to make. He said make sure you don’t lean unto your own understanding. Now that doesn’t mean you wake up everyday and say I am going to be dumber than the day before. What that means is that when I come to the big decisions of life, I am not going to just depend upon me. I have entered into this partnership with God and I am going to say God I

am limited in my understanding, limited in my view, and so God you are going to have to give me a new perspective. I have a little mental file in my computer and what it says is, this is my stupid file. It is getting bigger and bigger. It gets bigger and bigger and I add to it. When I just rush ahead and do things and never consult God whether I should be doing it or not. Years ago I was invited to go out and speak to a church in the country. I knew a short cut. You went down this road and you went over this small bridge and a couple of miles there was the church. I went down the road and there was a big sign, bridge out. I said to myself, self that bridge isn’t out. I shot down the road and almost ended up in the creek. I backed up and somebody had taken a can of black spray paint and put across the back which said welcome back stupid. Other people had obviously done the same thing. I want to tell you I have had a lot of welcome home parties. Welcome back stupid because I have come to the point where I thought I could do it myself. I had all the answers. I had it all figured out. I had never come to the point where I just sat down and said, now dear God I can look back at the past but I don’t know what the future has. I don’t know how you are going to weave all things together but I just come to the point where I give you myself. I depend upon your wisdom. I have often thought about little Mary. Little Mary was probably sixteen or seventeen years of age. One night she was startled because an angel came to her and said I tell you what I want you to do. I want you to let your body be an instrument to bring the Messiah into the world. Little Mary said I have never been married, I have never known a man. She began to understand how all of that was going to work. All the talk, all the gossip, all that was going to happen. But then she said, what ever you want. Mary could never figure out all of what was going to happen in her life. Instead of leaning to her own decisions, she said Lord you have a plan bigger than mine, I give you my life. If you are going to find the right answers, you are going to

have to come to the point where you stop always depending upon your self, start depending upon Him. Here is the last one. The third one says you must come to the point where you acknowledge Him in all your ways. This is the hard one so listen to me real carefully. If you are not aware, God is not a big computer in the sky who spits out information. So when you get to a point in the road where you say all right internet, by prayer, I punch my button and I want you to tell me where to go. That isn’t the way it works. God is your Father who wants to build a relationship with you. He shares with people who He knows are on the same wave length He is. A young man who was in his early twenties came to me one day, he had a big decision to make. He said I want you to pray for me that I will make the right decision. I had known him for twelve years and I said “I will be glad to pray for you but you are going to have trouble getting a good answer.” He said doesn’t God ask us to pray. I said He does but let me tell you what else He wants. He wants not to give you just an answer to that situation, then you run the rest of your life like you want to run it. What He wants is a faithful child of His who asks Him on a regular basis what you want me to do and Lord in all areas I want to serve you so in this areas what do you want me to do. Then He can communicate to you. Often you come to God and you say “God, what is Your will.” I want to suggest to you today that He turns it around and He is asking you that. What is your will? Do you will to serve Me? Do you will to follow Me? Do you will to be apart of me? Do you will that all that I am maybe surrendered unto you. Let me ask you that in those areas where you don’t want to give Him control of your life, that is the area you mess up in the most. It is when you feel that you can handle this. God, I don’t need you to run

my dating life, I can take care of that. I don't need you to take care of my economic life, I just graduated. I don't need you here, but this is the only place I need you. He says on no. You need me in all the areas of your life. Now will you come and say Lord, I take hands off of my life, I surrender myself to you in all of my ways, I acknowledge you. When I stand here this morning and look who is here I am aware of people who have all kinds of decisions to make. Some of you are making decisions as you just graduated about school, some of you have decisions about friends, some of you have decisions about who you are going to marry, some of you have decisions with your kids, some of you have decisions in your families, some of you have aging parents. We have the whole rafters here this morning. Lord, how am I going to make a decision, so many choices we can go. How do I make the right one. Here the promise again. If you will trust Me, if you will transfer your intelligence and say Lord, I want yours. If you will totally give me yourself, this is the promise. I will lead you out of the wilderness. I will make plain the path. I don't know whether it is true or not but somebody said one day that one of Wagner's operas had a million notes in it. The man said I went to hear that orchestra play a million notes and everybody was down here and everybody was warming up and there was all kinds of sounds. Then the conductor stood up and everybody played in harmony those one million notes. What you need is a conductor. You need somebody to pull all of the pieces together and make beautiful music out of it. I want to ask you today if you won't enter into a partnership with God and let Him direct your life.