

Sermon Series: Extraordinary Direction

Sermon Title: The Soul's Compass

Sermon Text: Proverbs 1:1-7

Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Introduction

I've been on my knees this week praying for God's extraordinary direction for Northshore Church! If we want to know God's direction and will for our lives we desperately need to hear from God! And the way we hear from God is through His precious Word and through the Holy Spirit's inspiration and His reminders of God's Word to our hearts and minds! Jesus said...

John 14:26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

And The Holy Spirit will never contradict God's Word! So many people want to know God's will for their lives, but we simply will not discover God's will if we neglect God's instruction manual, the Bible. When it comes to physical directions most of us rely on GPS on our phones to get where we are going, but an old fashioned compass is still a good backup just in case you lose signal or power. Many of you may know that I love flying and had around 40 hours of logged flight time with my dear friend and brother in Christ Wayne Fisher, who fought the good fight, finished his race and is with our Lord in Glory! Boy I miss that brother! He taught me how important it is for pilots to understand everything about a compass and how it works. With a compass true north is according to the earth's axis, not magnetic north. So it's important to understand that compass readings vary from 7.9° to 6.7° west of true north! For a pilot that is called variation. And then there's compass deviation caused by other magnetic sources in the cockpit. And depending on which direction you are flying, when you are turning, the compass will temporarily indicate erroneous readings until you get back to straight, level and unaccelerated flight. Because of these issues, modern aircraft use the compass mainly as a backup, not as the main directional tool.

However, when it comes to our soul, the Word of God is an irreplaceable directional tool. People have tried to replace it with other things, but with disastrous results! In the coming weeks we are going to discover how our extraordinary God gives us His extraordinary direction through His Word. We are going to use the Book of Proverbs as a template or guide for this study. We will find this ancient wisdom still very much relevant for life today. The most important topics of life are addressed in this collection of God inspired sayings. Topics like trust, integrity, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, avoidance of evil, right living, proper priorities, stewardship, friendship, and relationship with God and our fellow human beings! The Proverbs give us a moral compass for our soul and when we heed the wisdom contained therein, we will see how our extraordinary God + ordinary people = Transformed lives! You can be assured that God's Compass for the Soul, the Bible, will always point us in the right direction! The writer of Hebrews puts it this way...

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

America once relied on the Bible as a moral compass. However, the Bible has been slowly and systematically removed as that compass. America is now navigating the treacherous waters of an emerging global society without a soul compass. Many great leaders in our history depended upon the Bible to be their soul's compass. Abraham Lincoln, during the Civil War, stated the following in a presidential proclamation concerning a national day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer...

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own...We have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness...All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace."

To what offended Power was Lincoln referring? The God of the Bible! The same God who had made this proclamation to the Jewish nation of Israel...

2 Chr 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Of course, the U.S. was formed with the idea of religious liberty, so we are not a Theocracy, ruled by clergy representing God, we are a democracy, ruled by people! Lincoln knew this, but recognized the Christian foundations and godly principles upon which our nation was founded. So he was imploring the people of the United States, who rule with their votes, "to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness..."

And what divine teachings was he referring to? The Bible, which states...

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And do you know which president was the first to offer his own inaugural prayer? Dwight Eisenhower! His prayer, in part, called for God to give his administration, and I quote,

“the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of the land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race or calling. May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory.”

Whose glory? It was under Eisenhower that the Pledge of Allegiance gained the words “under God.” Eisenhower made this statement in a speech broadcast nationwide...

“Without God, there could be no American form of Government, nor an American way of life.”

I believe that our extraordinary God has given us the Bible, His Holy Word, as a compass for our soul. This morning we will begin our study of how the Bible, our Soul's Compass, gives us extraordinary direction.

Prov 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prov 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;

Prov 1:3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;

Prov 1:4 for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young--

Prov 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--

Prov 1:6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Solomon has just told us that our Soul Compass, the Bible, is a very complex and powerful instrument for finding direction in life. First it is good...

For Attaining Wisdom

Prov 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prov 1:2 for attaining wisdom...

Solomon must have been listening when his dad, David, was singing one of his songs found in Psalm 37:30...

Psa 37:30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

Psa 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.

Did you notice? It said the “Law of his God is in his heart.” That’s our soul’s Compass. The Word of God gives us direction. It shows us the path and lights our way. Solomon’s dad, David says this in Psalm 119...

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Without the wisdom of God, we will default to our own wisdom, and the problem with that is we have limited vision, multiple blind spots, and difficulty seeing in the dark. God offers to help us with the light of His wisdom. If we refuse that light we may find ourselves lost, wondering, helpless, and devastated. On the other hand, when we follow His light we can say with David..

Psa 119:100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

Psa 119:101 I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

Psa 119:102 I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

David had made some pretty serious mistakes in the past, but he had made the decision to no longer depart from the extraordinary direction of God's laws. That's wisdom! Our Soul Compass, the Bible, has another extraordinary use. It is also good...

For Attaining Discipline

Prov 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prov 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline;

The word discipline has many facets. It may be the discipline of the Lord or it may be self-discipline. You may say you don't like discipline. It may not always seem pleasant, but it is always necessary. Solomon's father, David, had said this about...

God's Discipline

Psa 94:12 Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law;

Solomon said this about God's discipline...

Prov 3:11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke,

Prov 3:12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

And then there's using God's Word for...

Self-Discipline

Prov 6:23 For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,

Prov 6:24 keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.

This applies to the guys and girls. Girls, don't let some smooth talker deceive you and pull you into sin and immorality. Heartache follows. Discipline yourself spiritually to be ready for the temptations that are surely to come. Solomon says...

Prov 10:17 He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

And the writer of Hebrews tells us this in the New Testament...

Heb 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Godly Discipline has great rewards. Our Soul Compass has yet another extraordinary use. Our Soul Compass is good...

For Understanding Words of Insight

Prov 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prov 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;

And once again, Solomon's dad, David, has some powerful words for us...

Psa 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psa 119:104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Psa 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Psa 119:131 I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.

Psa 119:132 Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name.

Psa 119:133 Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

God offers you His understanding and that can help you avoid being led down a terrible path and the potential that sin could rule over you! Some in this room today stand on the edge of a cliff. The voices of the world are telling you to jump into sin. They say: "it's okay, everybody's doing it. It's fun and besides, that old preacher with the goatee, he's just old-fashioned and close minded. Forget that moral compass thing. It's a thing of the past. We don't need a compass anymore. We'll find our way without it." Here's an insight for you: Misery loves company and they don't want to be left alone in their bad decisions. I once told my Dad, "But everybody's doing it!" He said, "If everybody's jumping off a cliff to their death are you going to jump off the cliff?" Who you allow to be your voice of authority in your life is so crucial! And the following use for our Soul Compass is a great argument for why the Bible should be our strongest voice of authority. Solomon goes on to say that God's wisdom is awesome...

For Acquiring a Disciplined and Prudent Life

Prov 1:3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life...

We've already talked about discipline, but it must be important for it to be mentioned a second time. And we get some practical advice on an aspect of discipline: Prudence!

Definition of Prudent...

Prudent: acting with or showing care and thought for the future (Oxford: dictionary)

I believe it is prudent and wise for us to focus on today, and not to dwell on the past or worry about the future. However, that does not mean we are to ignore the past or the future. Choices we make today affect our future and either creates for us a past we would rather forget or helps forge a future we can be excited about. A prudent person lives in the moment, but learns from their past and gives careful consideration as to how decisions today will affect their future and maybe the future of others! The world still teaches the only thing that matters is what makes you happy right now! Like this old rock song that said tomorrow doesn't matter tonight. That's a line and a lie! That kind of reckless abandon can wreck your life. Let's see what our Soul Compass says about prudence...

Prov 12:16 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

How many lives have been lost because someone decided not to overlook an insult. And if physical life is not lost, anger, resentment and bitterness can surely take a heavy toll on our emotional, mental and spiritual lives. Paul brings together a number of verses from the Psalms and gives us an overview of what can happen to people who reject God's call for us to be prudent.

Rom 3:14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

Rom 3:15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Rom 3:16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

Rom 3:17 and the way of peace they do not know."

Solomon, then points out another difference that prudence can make in our lives...

Prov 12:23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly.

How many people have been devastated by a gossip, by someone who had no concern for the hurt their words might cause. Someone might say, "but it's true." That may be the case, but that doesn't give you the right to broadcast things to the world. I know you've heard this advice before and it's not a Bible verse, but I believe it applies in many cases...

"If you can't say something good, don't say anything at all."

I understand there are times when you see something, you have to say something, and there are times when people need to be held accountable. But much of the time, when we are negative about someone else, it's unnecessary and not helpful. Solomon later says this about prudence...

Prov 13:16 Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.

Prov 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.

Prov 14:15 A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

It's important that we "think before we act!" Or think before you speak. My Dad had a sign above his desk at his office that said, "Put your brain into gear before you put your mouth into motion!" Great wisdom. And your source of knowledge is important. Some folks think they have all the answers about everything. No matter what the conversation, they've got the answer. Sometimes, they end up just showing their ignorance. A prudent person uses the understanding God has given them before they take a single step!

Prov 22:3 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

A person without prudence will suffer because of their poor choices. God's extraordinary direction for us is to allow prudence to be a huge component of our lives! And this next component of what our Soul Compass has to offer is foundational, fundamental and instrumental...

For Doing what is Right, Just and Fair

Prov 1:3 for...doing what is right and just and fair;

We are going to camp out here for a few minutes because this is so important when it comes to God's will for our lives, and He has given extraordinary direction to believers on this point! Solomon elaborates on this in chapter Proverbs chapter 2...

Prov 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Prov 2:7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

Prov 2:8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Prov 2:9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair--every good path.

No matter how much the world talks about doing right, pursuing justice, and being fair, without a Soul Compass, there is no basis for right, just, or fair. There is only this person's opinion or that person's opinion. Or maybe it's the opinion of the majority that prevails. Is that always right? I don't think so. The majority of people at the trial of Jesus, shouted "crucify Him!" And what about racism? If the majority are racist. Does that make it right? No! When people choose to ignore

God's Word they will not be right, just or fair. So many injustices have been done because of the neglect and rejection of God's instruction! From Slavery to the Holocaust! Today, a majority of Americans, according to all the research and polls, do not believe in absolutes, and have rejected God's Word as an authority for life. They believe morality is whatever you want it to be. God's Word is considered irrelevant. The new morality is now whatever society deems acceptable and as a result, many of our young people are confused, mixed up, and troubled. Their moral compass has been taken away from them. I think we should give it back!

I want to share something with you that is so important for us to understand. God wants us to do what is right, and just and fair. How do we do that when there are so many different opinions on things? Is there a way to hold to your God given convictions and still be loving, kind and Christlike? Absolutely! Let me say this. We have folks who come to our church that don't agree on political things, but we worship together and love one another and help one another when there's a need regardless of political persuasion! If we're not doing that then we're not being Christ-like, and that's what the word Christian means: Like Christ! And we have folks who come to our church with different opinions and interpretations of certain things in Scripture but we worship together, pray together and help one another when there's a need.

We don't have to give up our God-given convictions to love one another! And one of the reasons we have Northshore Orientation is so we can be sure those who become covenant members at Northshore Church at least agree on the major doctrines we have here at the church. This is important for unity because we draw our teachers and leaders from folks who have been through those classes and it would not be healthy for our church if everyone was teaching a different doctrine and interpretation about the foundational beliefs we have decided to embrace as a church body! Some have attended Northshore Orientation and decided they would still like to attend our worship services and worship with us, but not become members because they have some differing viewpoints. You don't have to be a card carrying member for us to love you and minister to you and your family! We don't have cards!! There was a German Lutheran theologian named Rupertus Meldenius who put it this way: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." And while we are Biblically conservative and teach and preach what the Bible teaches on how we are to pattern and live our lives, we seek to communicate those things with the love and compassion of Jesus! We seek to minister to members and attenders alike, and to love them as they walk through the ups and downs of this life.

So you might be inclined to ask: Well what's the benefit of membership? A member is held accountable by other members to live the standards and principles set forth in God's Word and this leads to a greater level of fellowship that would not otherwise be attainable! I don't know how many of you here have ever watched The Mandalorian, which is a show in the Star Wars Saga. It's pretty violent so I don't recommend it to children, but most of you know one of its characters who is popular with children who've never even seen the show: Baby Yoda, who is really named Grogu. But the Madalorians on that show will talk about some of their principles and then they will each say, "This is the way!" So let me repeat something...

A member is held accountable by other members to live the standards and principles set forth in God's Word and this leads to a greater level of fellowship that would not otherwise be attainable!

This is the way!

And when we think about the bigger picture of learning to live with people outside the church who disagree with us on things, and especially when it comes to religion, this Scripture guides my doctrine...

John 14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

So followers of Christ say: Jesus is the way! The way to heaven is through Jesus and His precious blood that was poured out on the Cross of Calvary! We have been given, in Scripture, steps for a person to follow to accept Jesus as their Savior:

Admit you're a sinner and in need of a Savior!

Believe Jesus died on the Cross to be your Savior!

Commit your life to Him by calling on His name to be Saved!

I call that the ABC's of Salvation. We share those and preach those with great conviction! I believe with all my heart, when a person sincerely admits, believes and commits their life to Jesus they gain eternal salvation through the grace of God and if you're saved by grace you stay saved by grace and not by works! "This is the way!"

So when it comes to who is saved and who is not, only God knows a person's heart! I trust God's judgment, His mercy, His grace and this Old Testament passage about His character, which by the way, God gave to me on the side of interstate 20 between Jackson and Vicksburg, MS years ago when I was majoring in Bible at Mississippi College. I was struggling with the reality of injustice in the world. I pulled to the side of the road with tears in my eyes and God led me to this passage in my Bible...

Deuteronomy 32:3 I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

I've trusted God's heart ever since! I've had Muslim friends, Buddhist friends, atheist friends and worldly friends. They are friends and I love them. I don't agree with them, but I love them and seek to show them God's love by the way I treat them and by sharing God's plan of salvation with them when I am given the opportunity! How many wars could have been averted down through the years if people could talk about their faith and share their faith, rather than hate and

despise those who disagree with them. Paul elaborates on Jesus' teaching on this subject in Romans...

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

There is a powerful movie put out by Voice of the Martyrs about Richard Wurmbrand's wife Sabina who was a Jewish Christian. She shared her story of faith with some German soldiers and with the very man who had killed her family because they were Jewish. I'm afraid the church as a whole has not done a very good job of sharing and explaining our story and our values and our Jesus to those with whom we disagree in a Christ like manner. Scripture is clear,

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

1 Peter 3:16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

So we must be Christlike in the way we handle things without losing the conviction that if we reject the Bible as our compass for the Soul, our society, our nation, our community, and our young people are in great peril. The values and teachings of the Bible must be awakened in all of us and especially in our youth. In fact, our final use of the Compass for the Soul states that it is good...

For Giving Knowledge and Discretion to the Young

Prov 1:4 for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young--

Prov 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--

Prov 1:6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Nothing in this world can give you what the knowledge of God can give you. Nothing! Solomon says we should...

Prov 8:10 Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold...

The knowledge of God will bring to you the peace and purpose that everyone in the world seeks, but few find. The peace and purpose of God can't be bought, and it is worth more than all the silver and gold in the world! Will you be among the few who follow the true path of wisdom, or will you follow the crowd to a life of disappointment?

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Our society needs desperately to regain respect, adoration, honor and healthy fear of The Almighty! We are foolish to think God will continue to Bless America if we despise His wisdom, His discipline, and the extraordinary direction He offers us!! Let's pray!