



The Living Word

With Bob Russell

How God directs our paths

Proverbs 3

MAYBE YOU HAVE memorized the promise of Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." The *King James* translates the final phrase, "He will direct your paths."

We believe that promise. It sustains us through uncertain times. But just how does God direct our paths? One woman was uncertain about whether it was God's will for her to take an overseas flight. One evening she prayed for guidance. The next morning when she awakened the clock radio read exactly 7:27. That was the kind of plane she was scheduled to take! When the trip was safely completed, friends could not persuade her that it was a shallow way to determine God's will.

While there may be dramatic signs occasionally, **God directs our paths primarily through his Word.** When we saturate our minds with the truth of Scripture, we become familiar with the mind of God. His wisdom becomes second nature to us. God's Word is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105).

A lamp does not illuminate the entire journey, but it reveals the safety of the next step.

God directs us through open doors. Paul wrote, "A great door for effective work has opened to me" (1 Corinthians 16:9). A. W. Tozer suggested, "If God is in it, it flows. If it's forced, it's of the flesh." That doesn't mean there are no obstacles to overcome, but it does mean we don't have to hammer the doors down.

God directs our path by closing some doors. The apostle Paul said he was "kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching

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the word in the province of Asia." And "when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (Acts 16:6, 7).

God directs our path through the counsel of mature Christians. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22). God speaks through the combined wisdom



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of Christian friends who know us well.

God directs through the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. After we pray, study God's Word, and seek wise counsel, there should be an inner peace about the direction we choose. "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

J. L. Kraft, who built the cheese and dairy empire, said when he had difficult decisions to make he analyzed the facts, prayed, and slept on it. Then the next day he followed his first impulse and never looked back. That method had proven effective often enough that he believed God used it to direct his paths.

God leads through a variety of methods, but he does lead. "This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls'" (Jeremiah 6:16). ■