

“The Path - Getting Help Along the Way”

Scripture: Proverbs 15:22

Graphics: path, road, direction, obstacles, help, mentors

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are called to stay on the path that leads our lives to a holy God who loves us and gives us grace and mercy. The Path is a metaphor for life, a process of progress from birth to death and everlasting life. Along the way, we must allow God to give us direction, correct our course, inform our hearts, give us help, keep our eyes on the road, and make us content when the destination is unreachable. The Path is God’s best plan for us and He will call us back to it every time.

Focus Phrase: God wants to show me what I don’t know through others to live His best life for me.

1. Introduction

- A. **[OPENING VIDEO - no introduction of video]**
- B. Our sermon series is called *The Path*. We’re resourcing this series of messages from a book by Andy Stanley called *The Principle of the Path*.
- C. This is week 4...and our message title is **Getting Help Along the Way**.
- D. Let’s Pray and then I have something I like to float by you this morning...
- E. **PRAY!**
- F. The theory I’d like to test on you today is, I believe that: **One of the most difficult things in life is to know what you don’t know. (repeat)**
- G. What do you think? Do you think that’s true?
- H. When I was in engineering school in my previous life, it didn’t take long sitting in Calculus 3 or Advanced Water Systems to understand that there were MANY things I didn’t know. When I started, I had no idea what I didn’t know.
- I. There’s a little book by Robert Fulghum entitled *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. It’s a fun little book about the basics of life. But when I went to seminary, there was so much I needed to know about the bible, about the church, and about leadership, that I may have gotten some good foundations in kindergarten, but there was SO MUCH I didn’t know.
- J. You’ve probably had a few of these yourself in your life.
 - i. If you’re a parent, how could you have known that you knew almost nothing about parenting until the day your first child was born?
 - ii. If you’ve ever done any kind of investing, you’ve probably made a mistake or two. How could you have known what you didn’t know until you made the mistake that cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars?
 - iii. If you’ve been or are in the military, on the day you reported to Boot Camp, how could you have known that you knew nothing until your Drill Instructor so politely demonstrated your ignorance to you?

- K. Here's where we're heading today (write this down): **God wants to show you what you don't know through others so that you can live His best life for you.**
- L. In this series, we've been learning about a very simple formula for getting from where we are to where we want to be. We're learning that **Your direction determines destination.** Getting from point A to point B involves more than hopes and dreams—it involves a **path.**
- i. So far, we've learned that life is a series of mid-course corrections. When we see danger, it wouldn't be prudent to ignore it. We want to take refuge in Jesus and avoid the danger.
 - ii. We've learned that one of the most common mistakes in determining which fork to take is trusting our hearts, which often lie to us.
- M. A great question to ask ourselves at this point in the journey is this, **“What story do I want to tell about this part of my life years from now?”** Said another way, “When I look back at 2021 and the things I did and said and the ways I was growing, what will the narrative say?”
- N. Today, we'll lift up an essential lesson for success along the path. So that when we look back on this season, we'll smile and give glory to God! The lesson has to do with **figuring out what you don't know, now.**
- O. How do you do that? How do you discover what you don't know that you don't know so that you can avoid the potholes and pitfalls and landmines you never saw coming?
- P. Well, thankfully, King Solomon, purportedly the wisest man to ever live, writing the book of Proverbs over 3,000 years ago, had some incredible wisdom for us. Again this week, we have just ONE verse! We can go DEEP and get some other scriptures to help us.
- Q. Open your bibles with me to Proverbs 15:22.

2. Scripture

- A. Proverbs 15:22 says this (let's say this together - on-screen). **“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”** (Proverbs 15:22)
- B. The first question I ask myself is: “How can I know what I don't know?” I mean, if I don't KNOW it, and don't KNOW that I don't KNOW it, then I'm oblivious, right? Well, yes, BUT...
- C. Just because you don't KNOW something doesn't mean it's not true or important. SOMEONE knows it, because it's important. Certainly, God knows it.

- D. So, how can I know what I don't know? Well, the answer is: **You seek advice from "advisers."** Specifically, you seek the right advice from the right advisers.
- E. And if it were that simple...if it was easy to seek counsel from many advisors, then we would all be on The Path, growing and content, heading in the right direction with God. But as we know, that's not the case many times.
- F. So, before we dive into how, let's see why we don't seek advice? I think there are three reasons:
- i. #1 - We think we already know what we need to know. "Been there, done that, got the t-shirt." We're content with what we know and don't want to know any more. The bible would label that as **ignorance**.
 - ii. #2 - It feels better to have people think we know where we're going than to let them know we don't have a clue. That's where our **pride** kicks in. "If I just keep my head down and pretend that I know, then maybe others will think I know." Sure...
 - iii. #3 (why we don't seek advice) It's too much work to figure out how to get advice. Maybe this is laziness or we just don't know who to talk to. The Bible calls this "**slothfulness**," which is a word we don't use very much, but it's very descriptive.
- G. So sometimes we make plans without counsel, and those plans often fail or at least wind up being less effective than they could've been. And many times it involves our own ignorance, pride, or slothfulness.
- H. OTHER TIMES, though, we DO get counsel...but we get inferior counsel because we take it from the wrong people.
- I. Instead of seeking advice from wise counselors, we:
- i. Get advice from our **friends**, who may not even understand. Or...
 - ii. We follow the **herd**, simply because it's easier. Crowd-sourcing has become the way we get recommendations and advice from complete strangers on social media. Is that the best? I'm not so sure. Or...(my favorite)
 - iii. We copy what our **parents** did. Now, our parents may have been wise and successful, and we want to honor them, but there may be things that we need to rethink and make different decisions about today.
- J. Andy Stanley writes: "I am constantly amazed at how resistant folks are to take their cues from people who are where they want to be. But I'm even more amazed at how quick the average person is to borrow a page or two from someone who's never been where he [or she] wants to be. How about the parents who parent like their parents and wonder why their kids are turning out the same way they did? And then there are the couples who treat each other the

way they saw their moms and dads treat each other and wonder why they are just as unhappy as their parents were. These are folks who have a good idea of where they want to be but are content to follow a map used by folks who've never been there.

This happens all the time among my friends. The great thing about having friends who share your season of life is that you have so much in common. But the downside to that is they aren't much farther down the road of life than you are. Friends are great for friendship. They aren't always great for advice giving. And often it is not their advice that gets us into trouble – it is the assumptions we make based on what we observe about our friends. These assumptions become a map we inadvertently follow. I call this phenomenon the *herd* assumption. The herd assumption happens when you assume that since everybody you know is doing something the same way, it must be all right. If everybody you know is mortgaged to the hilt, driving two leased vehicles, and applying for a home equity line of credit, then it can't be all that bad. If everybody you know works sixty hours per week and sees their family primarily on weekends, then it must work out. Somehow. The problem, of course, is that everybody is headed for a similar destination at which no one has yet arrived. It feels safe. Everyone can't be wrong. But it's not safe. And by the time it becomes obvious that each of those three directions leads to undesirable destinations, it is usually too late to do much about it. Taking your cues from people who share your season of life is equivalent to asking for and following the directions of someone who's never been where you want to go."

- K. So, how do we get good advice along our paths? If, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed," what's the secret to good counsel, and where do you find it?

3. Application

- A. Solomon said in Proverbs 1:5, "**...let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.**" (Proverbs 1:5).
- B. Wise people listen to counsel and get wiser. Discerning people listen to guidance and get further along their path with God and in life.
- C. Let's see if we can get some application for this question today. Here's the secret to getting good counsel - good advice - for The Path:
- i. First, **Know that you will always need good counsel.**
 - a. No one gets to the place where she or he no longer needs wise counsel.
 - b. I was listening to a comedian once who said he was performing in a small lounge on the East Coast one day back in the early 2000s when President and Mrs. Bush came in. Mrs. Bush asked the President what kind of sandwich he wanted to order, and W said, "I don't know."

- c. The comedian said, “At that point, I became a presidential advisor.” He suggested the president order the pastrami on rye, hold the mayo.
 - d. Even presidents need advisors. The first secret to getting good counsel is to be **open to it**. Wise people listen and add to their learning for life.
- ii. Second, **Ask more than one person’s advice**.
- a. **“For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.”** (Proverbs 11:14).
 - b. Notice the word Solomon inserts before advisors in that Proverb? ‘Many.’ Not ‘one’, ‘many.’
 - c. Here’s something that’s going to sound really obvious to you: most of the really important decisions in your life seem really important to you. Right?
 - d. And most important decisions have a sense of urgency to them. They’re so important that they dominate your thinking. They’re with you all the time, so you want to make those decisions as quickly as possible.
 - e. Hear Solomon’s advice out loud again: “...*many advisers make victory sure.*” (Proverbs 11:14).
 - f. When we make the really big decisions in life - who to marry, what house to buy, to have children or adopt, changing jobs or making major life changes, working in a bubble is never good! Share those decisions with others who are wise to get their perspective.
 - g. “Many advisers make victory sure.” When the decision is important, ask more than one person for advice.
- iii. Third, **Don’t let pride keep you from admitting what you don’t know**.
- a. **“Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”** (Proverbs 13:10).
 - b. Pride may be the number one enemy of The Path. Successful people are open to the fact that they don’t know everything they need to know and are quick to go to people who do.
 - c. Remember what Solomon said in Proverbs 12:15: **“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.”**
 - d. See what he’s saying? “The way” of a fool. Another way to say that would be, “The Path” of a fool seems right to him.
 - i) So a friend comes and says, “I’m worried about the direction you’re headed.” And the fool says, “You don’t need to worry about me.” What does the wise person say when a friend says, “I’m worried about you?” The wise person says, “Really? I’m so grateful you care. Tell me what you’re seeing.”

- ii) A dad comes to his son and says, “I’m worried about some of the habits you’re developing.” The foolish son says, “Leave me, alone, Dad.” The wise son says, “Tell me what you’re seeing.”
 - iii) A mom comes to her daughter and says, “Honey, I think your behavior could get you into trouble someday.” The foolish daughter says, “Mom, you are so old-fashioned.” The wise daughter says, “Tell me what you’re seeing.”
 - iv) A supervisor comes to an employee and says, “I know this is none of my business, but can I give you some advice?” The foolish employee says, “If it’s none of your business, then mind your own business.” The wise employee says, “I need all the advice and counsel I can get.”
- e. Ditch the pride and listen to the advice of those who are in trusted authority in your life.
- iv. Fourth, **Take counsel from those who have been where you want to go.**
- a. Your life and mine are on paths. Paths that either lead us toward where we want to go or away from where we want to go.
 - b. The secret to getting good counsel is first knowing that you need it. Then seeking it from multiple reliable sources, and truly listening to those sources to learn what you didn’t even know you didn’t know. Most importantly, it’s **taking counsel from the right people**. From people we respect, who have arrived where we want to go with their character and reputations intact.
 - c. There’s a real difference between the right road and the easy road. The easy road is the ignorant road. It doesn’t seek counsel. Or ignores the counsel it gets. Or seeks counsel only from those who are easy to get to.
 - d. The wise woman and wise man seek counsel from wise people, listen to it, heed it, and walk a path that leads to where they want to go.
 - e. Imagine what your life would be like if you developed the habit, not of being impulsive in your decision-making - and not being indecisive either - but of consulting older, wiser, more successful people?
 - f. Parents, imagine what we could learn, and what heartaches we could save our children if we counseled with successful seasoned parents? Young parents, there are MANY seasoned parents in this room. All you need to do is ask!
 - g. Students, imagine how much better you’ll enter the work world if you link up from time-to-time with someone older, someone you admire and ask them their advice on things like how to study, how to approach homework, which classes to take, what college or school to attend?

- h. Employees, imagine the steps you could save if you sought advice from people of character and success in your field and asked for guidance.
- i. It wouldn't be that hard, would it?
- v. Some of us wonder why our plans fail. Honestly, some of our plans have failed because we sabotaged them by not seeking advice. But many of our plans failed because they weren't God's best plans for us. God's word says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22).
- vi. What will you do with this advice today? How will you take this wisdom as you leave here today?

4. Conclusion

- A. Here's my counsel for us today:
- B. Come back next week. (We're growing in wisdom every week, but we're not through yet. Solomon has a few more lessons to teach us.)
- C. Second, keep working on reading the book of Proverbs. Make a commitment today to finish the book in the next three weeks.
- D. Most importantly, ask God to show you the counselors He has for you. Seek advice this week from someone who is where you want to be. Take them out for coffee or talk on the phone to ask that question you've been waiting to ask.
- E. Finally, Follow Jesus. I think it's very interesting that while Jesus was on the earth, the phrase he used more often than any other was "Follow me." That's a directional statement, isn't it? "Follow me." Walk behind me. Walk the path I'm walking.
- F. "Come to me," he says, "all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. For the yoke I will place upon you on the road we will walk together is easy, and the burden I will give you will seem light. For I am gentle and humble of heart, and as you follow me, you will find rest for your souls."
- G. He's done the heavy lifting for you...he gave his life to offer you the forgiveness God wants to give you more than anything else. He defeated the grave to give you the life God wants to give you on the Path...His best path for you. That's what this Table is all about...it's a marker on the road...follow it!
- H. **God wants to show you what you don't know through others to live His best life for you.**
- I. Let's pray...