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Confirmation  
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## **“Lean on Me” - the LORD Proverbs 3:5, 6**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus is Proverbs 3:

*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. (Proverbs 3:5, 6 NIV84)*

This is the Word of our Lord.

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

What a wonderful passage you've picked for your confirmation verse, Peyton. As a proverb, it expresses truth with a few, direct words. But as you begin to think about what it means there is so much more here, not only for today but for the rest of your life as you follow Jesus. In our time today we can just touch on a few of the things, but after today continue to take this proverb to heart, to think about it regularly, and to practice what it says.

Maybe you've seen those billboards that have a short statement and then it's signed by God like “I love you ... I love you ... I love you, – God.” One way to summarize your confirmation verse would be: “Lean on me – the LORD.” Let's use that as the theme.

### **A. Let go of your own understanding**

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5 NIV84). When we lean on the Lord, we let go of our own understanding. One way to picture trust is to picture leaning your full weight against a cane. If the cane is strong and sturdy, you won't fall. If the cane is brittle and weak, it will snap and you will hit the ground hard. “Lean on me – the LORD.”

How reliable and strong is the LORD? That very name LORD with all capital letters tells us that he is the I AM. He does not change. He is faithful to his word, completely dependable. For he is independent of all, free to do whatever he please. Nothing can stop him. Only the LORD is totally trustworthy. That's why instead of simply “Lean on me – God,” the theme is “Lean on me – the LORD,” even as your verse says, “Trust in the LORD.”

What's more, the name “Lord” points us to our risen Lord, namely Jesus Christ. His resurrection from the dead is God's signature, his guarantee. He keeps his word. His promises are unbreakable. Our Lord's resurrection proves that. He won't fail you. “Lean on me – the LORD.”

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5 NIV84). Lean your full weight on him—all your heart. That's why the passage goes on and says, “and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5 NIV84). Sometimes people think they can have it both ways. They can trust the Lord and trust their own understanding. But what happens if I have a sturdy cane in one hand and a brittle cane in the other? As soon as I put any weight on the brittle cane, it will break and my momentum will make me fall. Even though I was holding on to a sturdy cane in one hand, I still fall because I leaned on the brittle one in the other hand. Let go of your own understanding so that you're trusting the Lord with all your heart.

Now letting go of our own understanding doesn't mean becoming stupid. God has blessed you, Peyton, with a mind and reasoning ability, and he wants you to use them in their proper place. But when it comes to what God has told us in his word, then the proper use of our mind and understanding is not to say, “That doesn't make sense, so it can't be true.” Let go of your understanding and trust that what God says is true, even when it doesn't seem so. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5 NIV84). “Lean on me – the LORD.”

Trust in the Lord with all your heart even when he appears to contradict himself. In Exodus 34 he proclaimed to Moses what his name the LORD (with all capital letters) reveals about himself. “He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation’” (Exodus 34:6, 7 NIV84).

Do you see what strikes our understanding as an outright contradiction? On the one hand, the LORD is love; he forgives sinners. On the other hand, the LORD punishes all who do wrong. This conflict between our own understanding and what the Lord says goes to the very heart of salvation. Why would he forgive a sinner like me?

Human understanding looks at this and tries to explain it in many different ways. For example, some will say, “Maybe God only punishes the really bad people, so as long as I try hard and do good, then God will love me.” But the Bible makes it clear that even one sin makes us guilty, and he clearly says that “he does not leave the guilty unpunished” (Exodus 34:7 NIV84), no exceptions. Others try to make it fit our understanding by saying, “God loves the sinner, but hates the sin.” Yet God says he not only punishes the sin but the person who does it as well. Others try to reason that after we've suffered enough then God's love will forgive us. But the Bible says the wages of sins is death and hell. We could never suffer enough to pay for even one sin.

Still others imagine that there must be something about me that attracted

God to me in the first place. Maybe it was only some potential he saw or some small spark, but something in me that got him to love me instead of punish me. But notice how the LORD does not connect his love to anything in else. His punishing is connected to our guilt. But his love is totally about who he is, not about who we are. He is the LORD. He is the compassionate and gracious God. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in love and faithfulness. He is maintaining love to thousands. He is forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Human understanding cannot comprehend such love, that loves not because there's anything lovable in us but because that is who he is.

Let go of your understanding. Rather confess what the Bible says about each of us. You heard Peyton summarize that earlier. By nature we are lost and condemned creatures. We cannot by our own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to him. Psalm 5 speaks to God. "You hate all who do wrong" (Psalm 5:5 NIV84), it says. And those who do wrong includes you and me and everyone. Psalm 14 declares, "There is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3 NIV84). Let go of your understanding and confess that there is no reason in us for God to love us but rather that our sin has rightly earned his hatred.

Then be astounding at his love. Oh, the greatness of his love, so wide and broad and deep and high! How far beyond our understanding! For while we were still his enemies in rebellion against him, he gave his Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son" (John 3:16). While we were still his enemies, he died for you and me. He died for a world of sinners. How lavish his love! God punished Jesus instead of you. He has not left the guilty unpunished, but rather counted your guilt against Jesus. His holy, precious blood washes you clean. In Jesus you are fully and freely forgiven. Believe this Good News. Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Let go of your understanding. "Lean on me – the LORD."

## **B. Know him as your Shepherd**

Your passage continues, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:6 NIV84). "Acknowledge" is sort of a big, vague kind of word. The original Hebrew puts it very simply, "In all your ways know him." The Hebrew word "know" is very broad covering everything from knowing a fact to knowing someone in the closet of all relationships. So when it tells us to acknowledge the Lord that means so much more than simply giving him a little nod now and then acknowledging that he's out there somewhere.

Think of what Jesus said when he called himself the Good Shepherd. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14 NIV84). Know Jesus as your Shepherd, Peyton. Know him as the Shepherd who laid down his life for you and took it up again. Trust him as a sheep following. Lean on him. In all you ways, no matter what may come, know that your Shepherd is with you. He is there during the joys and celebrations. He is the One who blesses you with that

happiness. He is there during the accomplishments, successes, and victories. He is the One who gave you the gifts and abilities. He is there when the world entices you with its riches and pleasures or when your sinful flesh longs for what God forbids. He's the One who strengthens you to stand firm and say, "No!" to all that is sinful as he feeds you with his word and sacraments. Lean on him! He is there during the times of lose and failure, the days of sickness and struggle. He is there when you suffer for doing right and when world seems to be crushing you. Your Shepherd is there carrying you in his arms. He is there in all your ways. So "in all your ways acknowledge him" (Proverbs 3:6 NIV84). Lean on him.

"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:6 NIV84). He leads you on the best path. It's not be the easiest path. At times our human understanding will call out, "Why, God? Why this path? Why this way?" But trust him. Lean on him. Follow your Shepherd, for you know him. You know his love that the surpasses all understanding. You know him as your Lord, who says to you, "Lean on me." Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.