

Life verses: Proverbs 3:5-6

(Transcript for an interview on YouTube)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Around the time that I was baptized (November 11, 2001), I received these two verses many times. Ever since the first person shared this passage with me, I think I've seen it coming back about ten times. If a verse keeps coming back, year in year out, then you know the Holy Spirit really wants to make something clear to you. To me in this case.

Before I continue my story, I want to emphasize what I consider to be the best way to understand this passage. It's about trusting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, which is the end of our tendencies of self-sufficiency and self-direction. When we trust in Him, He becomes a light unto our path (**Psalm 119:105**), in all areas of our lives.

I want to give a recent example of my experiential knowledge of these verses. My, or I should say our honeymoon. A verse that I think is related to **Proverbs 3:5-6** will come back in this story. It's **Proverbs 16:9** *"A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps."*

We came back from a cruise and disembarked in the south of Italy (Bari) on Sunday April 18, 2010. We had already heard about the volcano in Iceland and that the airports in Europe were closed and that no one could predict how long it was going to take till the airports would be opened again. There we were, in the south of Italy and we needed to go back to the Netherlands. The dilemma was: either get stuck on an airport or try to go back ourselves and see which means of transport would be available. We prayed and talked and then chose the option to head back by train.

As soon as we got from Bari to Rome that Sunday - by train, bus and train - we ran into a giant anthill of people at the train station. Of course we weren't the only ones trying to get back home. There were no train tickets to Milan available, only for the next day. We bought those of course and now the next step was finding a place to stay for the night. Take into account that it was virtually impossible to get a hotel room at that time since everyone was trying to do that. Meanwhile my wife Kara "coincidentally" ran into some Dutch people and they gave us an address and phone number of a hotel that happened to have a room left for us. It was a very nice room by the way. *A path straightened?* Here is the first example.

Yet, I kept on praying¹ about the next steps since we'd taken the first decision prayerfully. I was still not a hundred percent sure whether or not we were on the right track though God had provided us with the hotel room. I was worried we wouldn't get any further than Milan because many others were trying to find their way home via Milan as well. Were we going to get stuck just like anyone else?

In some sort of way I felt like Peter who stepped out of the boat and walked on water but was terrified as soon as he focused on the waves. The Holy Spirit challenged me not to *lean on my own understanding*. So I took my worries to God according to **Philippians 4:6** *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"*. I asked Him to help me do what I knew to be the right thing to do: to *trust Him*.

The following Monday we took off to Milan. We got on a different section of the train than we initially intended and sat down but had to change seats since they were reserved. We finally found seats elsewhere. The change of section and seats turned out to be part of God's leading. He was *directing our steps*. We sat opposite of an English couple and got along with them very well. We decided to team up. Better to suffer together than alone, right?

As soon as we arrived in Milan, my gut feeling that getting out of Milan would be a tough nut to crack, was confirmed. There were no train tickets till Friday and even then...it was unclear which city outside of Italy we could go to since Paris and other cities were congested having major problems processing the crowds of people. We tried international busses. Same story, no option either.

“Renting a car is the only option left”, the couple suggested. The first car rental company we found of course had no car left. There were only cars that had to stay inside the borders of Italy. We went to the next company and there, there it was: the spacious car with our names written on it. For some strange reason this car was not taken yet. A true miracle indeed. So we rented it and took off to Calais, France. We arrived Tuesday early in the morning. In the meantime, I had already contacted my parents telling them we were facing the volcano challenge. They picked us up from Calais and drove us, the honeymooners, straight back to The Hague.

Long story short: trusting the Lord is something He wants to teach me - and you - in and through any circumstances.

¹ Some excerpts from my prayer book:

April 17 6:20 AM

“(…) Coming home. How are we supposed to do that without an airplane? Please lead us to the right trains and the right people. We have to be back by Tuesday since we have an appointment on Wednesday. Help us come back on time. Thank You that You will lead us. Here are our worries.”

April 18 11:30 PM

“Thank You for leading us to this place (Rome). Help us to get as far as we can get. I don’t care if we have to take night trains, busses. Help us, like You did today. Help us listen to You and help us keep our minds focused. Help me sleep well and let You do the care-taking. (…)”

April 19 5:05 AM

“Maybe then it is the lesson of dependency. That, even if we plan correctly and even if we do a good job arranging, it does not depend on our endeavor. It is not wrong, not it’s even good to plan and arrange. Good to take our own responsibility. But the idea of dependency might get lost (and that’s often the case) in all of that. Without prayer, depending on You that is, and without Your support and providence, we are nowhere. I now experience that. I see it, I feel it, I understand. And how many times don’t I forget? Not all the time but many times I do not realize how dependent I am. Sometimes a bit, sometimes more (in tense or difficult situations) and sometimes I don’t. Lord, use this to change me. To change that tendency of independency into a longing for and habit of depending on You. I see that it is what You want to accomplish through all of this. Of course I want come home on time. Absolutely and without a doubt. No question about that. I beg You indeed. But besides I ask You to work a greater, deeper sense of dependency in me. Let this be of use to You. I pray depending on Your mercy, Your lovingkindness for me in Christ Jesus.”