
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.

Deanna, I have a hunch that you already know this, but Helmut is a bit of jokester, a story teller, a delightful master of exaggeration; so I am not entirely sure how much it was true story and how much it was Helmut-sized embellishment, but it sounds like the last few days, the last few weeks, have been interesting around the Doerr household - to say the least. And really your whole story as a couple is an interesting one with twists and turns that has now brought you here today. Both of you have experienced plenty of joys, sorrows, ups and downs in your life, and now God has brought the two of you together and today your separate paths become one. Now as the two of you stand at the Lord's altar you also stand before the threshold of a new home, a new adventure, a new life together. And standing in this moment these words of Proverbs 3:5,6 are words of welcome encouragement. *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.*

Only God knows for sure what your path together will look like. This is a new and exciting moment in your life. A new and rather unique challenge lays in front of you and that certainly includes some anxieties, some uncertainties. It's not every day that a man in his eighties gets married around here. It's not every day that a person established in a home, in a community, is so willing to make the adjustments needed to adapt to a new house, a new life. There's a unique set of challenges for both of you. But united with each other and connected to Christ there is a peace in knowing that you can trust in the LORD as your foundation, come what may. Your faithful God who will be with you and guide you.

In coming to God's house to bless this marriage you have acknowledged the LORD, his importance in your life, and your life together. He who sent his Son to take away your sins and give you peace with God gives you the peace of knowing that with He is with you as you embark on this new adventure together. The LORD gives you this encouragement from his Word: *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.*

In faith, we trust in the Lord and in all our ways we strive to acknowledge him. Your dedication to God's command to honor marriage comes from your faith and that faith is on display, today. While some may have dismissed such a ceremony at this stage in your life as unnecessary, your desire to be in God's house and to bless this union is a sign of the faith that God has given to you. God's presence in your life is important to you and it will be important for you and your marriage. That's why we are gathered here today in the presence of God and these witnesses, we are gathered in God's house sitting at the feet of God's Word, because you love him who loved you first.

And as we met last week to review what Scripture passages that we would make use of for this special day, you gave me the list, and Helmut, I think you said something to the effect that, "these passages say it all". It is true that each verse that you have chosen is loaded with comfort and assurance and instruction that are all welcome on a day like today and will be a useful means of continuing encouragement in your life together. As Nahum 1:7, says, *The LORD is good, he is refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.* As that has been true in the past, it will be true for your life together. The LORD is good, he is faithful. The Lord who gave his own Son for you will certainly give all that you need for body and life. Through the gift of his Word you have found

assurance and refuge in your times of trouble past, through his gift of prayer you have been able to find help and encouragement in your time of need. Hurting hearts have been made joyful again through his care, through the comfort and encouragement of his Word. And by his loving direction, the LORD in his goodness has seen fit to bring you together, he has blessed you with this newfound joy and excitement. But, of course, that doesn't mean that you are now immune to hurt and pain and difficulty, that may very well touch your lives together, and your marriage. But God in his care for you God has given you to each other, to help and support each other, and he reminds both of you that he remains your refuge, your help in time of any trouble.

And as the one who has cared for you and served as a refuge in times past, he promises to go with you as you head into your life together. In Psalm 121:8 reminds us of God's precious promise that holds no expiration date, ***The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*** The LORD will be with you always. That promise doesn't end, no matter your age, no matter your circumstance in life, the LORD promises his believers that he will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. For our God is love and he deals with us in love. And that brings us to the final section of Scripture that we look at today.

Throughout his Word, God describes love as an action word. More than mere emotion, Christian love and therefore love within a Christian marriage includes a commitment to action. It is more than mere words, more than mere promises, love takes action. ***Love is being patient, love is being kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*** Love within a marriage is a gracious and selfless commitment to work. Marriage is a labor of love. No bosses, no subordinates, (no vice president of operations and a secretary) but two people committed to showing love, expressing love through service for one another. Two people walking together through life fulfilling the roles into which God has called them to serve. A husband loving his wife and caring for her as Christ loved the Church. A wife respecting her husband and showing love to her husband as the suitable helper that he needs. Yes, marriage could be described as a labor of love and a Christian marriage reflects the type of selfless love that God has shown to us in Christ.

For in perfect love Christ came. In humility he came not seeking glory for himself, but he came to spare us from the punishment that our sins deserved. Christ loved his church and he put our needs first. In his selfless love for us he laid down his life for us, he suffered in our place, he endured our punishment to bring us peace. And now our Lord daily comes to us in love. He comes through his Word and he is patient with us. Daily we are reminded of his forgiveness that comforts, his care that protects us, his truth that guides us. He comes with his faithful love, and that love of Christ serves as the basis as our life as Christians and your love for one another. Let that love of Christ be the foundation of your life together for the love of Christ endures and never fails.

All these new adjustments, all these new challenges, may be somewhat exciting, they may be somewhat difficult or even at times they may seem overwhelming, but God's faithful love swells up through his Word and it is there to guide you, to hold you up, and strengthen you. Look to the love that your Savior has for you as you grow in your love for one another. Be in God's Word together. Be faithful in prayer and meditation together as now you two become one.

Deanna and Helmut, I wish you all the best. And as I pray for you I ask that God and his love would be your refuge and strength. May his assurance to watch over you and direct your path together be a blessing to you. And may his unfailing love be an unmovable cornerstone for your life together and for your eternity. Amen.