



CYNTHIA HEALD

Living Wisely

BELIEVING THE TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE



Cynthia Heald has long been a trusted author of Bible studies, books, and devotionals designed to help women know and follow Jesus. In *Living Wisely*, she encourages women to experience blessed, fruitful lives through embracing the timeless wisdom of his Word. Women in every season will find this book helpful, but I am especially hopeful that younger women will take advantage of the opportunity to learn these vital truths from a wise, older woman. They will thank me one day, when they are “older women” themselves!

NANCY DEMOSS WOLGEMUTH, author, Bible teacher, and founder of Revive Our Hearts

In *Living Wisely*, Cynthia shows how God and his Word not only speak to but can deeply transform us as we face the impending realities of life. This book is for every person who wants to live a life of freedom and deep peace as they walk through any possible occurrence in life. *Living Wisely* is a book every disciple should embrace as well as pass on to those they are helping grow.

DANA YEAKLEY, author of *The Gentle Art of Discipling Women*

Cynthia Heald encourages us to travel the narrow road with Christ and shows us how to “hold on to his hand when the way [is] dark.” In her keen exploration of biblical truths, we learn that a life freed of self and abandoned to God is the true pathway to abundant life.

BEKAH DiFELICE, author of *Almost There*

Cynthia's Bible studies and writing have shaped my life for years. In *Living Wisely*, she again combines the stories of real people in real-life challenges with life-changing, true, and real words of wisdom from the Scriptures. This study invites us to new places of surrender and trust in our unchangeable and good God. Cynthia masterfully points us to the real source of love and life! As she emphasizes on every page, remember—"keep your hand in his."

LINDY BLACK, associate US director of The Navigators

Cynthia is a gentle guide, showing us how to walk the "narrow way" with her wisdom, experience, and grace. She has learned from the Master how to walk in true freedom, and I'm grateful for her heart to lead us to his feet.

JESSIE MINASSIAN, author of *Unashamed*

I love this book. Its fragrance is captivating, and it drew me in to the truths shared throughout these pages. Cynthia validates the relevance and veracity of God's truth by telling her story and the stories of others and by punctuating each with biblical truth. In our present culture, where there are no absolutes and no road map, *Living Wisely* shows us that his absolute truth is the only map we need to navigate through to real life. *Living Wisely* is timeless and has a message of wisdom and guidance for all generations. Not only will I be sharing Cynthia's book with many others, it is a keeper and will be taken from my own bookshelf many times as I seek guidance and wisdom.

DR. CYNTHIA FANTASIA, former pastor of women at Grace Chapel,
author of *In the Lingering Light*

Living Wisely



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*To my mentor, Mary Tabb, who lovingly
and patiently prepared me to walk the
narrow way and to want to live wisely.*





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Author's Note

Thank you for wanting to read this book. I am honored to be a small part of your life as you consider the truths that continue to transform my life.

You can use this book in several ways. As I have written it, I have pictured myself sitting across the table from you and sharing my heart as we have a cup of tea. I have tried to anticipate your questions and needs. Enjoy the book as a kind of conversation between the two of us.

You can also use the book in a group Bible study or book club. After each chapter, you will find reflection questions and Bible verses that can help stimulate discussion about what you have read.

I pray that, however you read and study this book, you will desire in a fresh way to grow in wisdom so you may live wisely in our perplexing world. "Wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with it."¹

Blessings as you take hold of his hand and walk in his true and right paths.

Cynthia Heald





INTRODUCTION

MY SEARCH FOR WISDOM

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

ROBERT FROST, "The Road Not Taken"

*Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do!
And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.
If you prize wisdom, she will make you great.
Embrace her, and she will honor you.*

PROVERBS 4:7-8

IT WAS SEPTEMBER 1959. The “Psychedelic Sixties” were about to explode into a countercultural movement that would have an impact on our country for decades. I was a twenty-year-old senior on a university campus, and three of my friends and I were moving into a large, off-campus house that had been remodeled for a semi-communal living project. The directors of this venture had a vision for teaching qualified students to think philosophically, to be exposed to the basic tenets of world religions, and to learn about how to live together in a true community.

This unique opportunity was a radical concept for our university campus: an atmosphere of intellectual exploration of truth with others who were committed to the same goals. And it was just what I was looking for. My teen years were spent in the conservative 1950s, but in college, I began to read and listen to the voices that called for revolutionary ideas. This new community seemed to provide a perfect, safe place to examine truth and learn how to make a difference in the world. I was in the right place at the right time.

Each week, the members of our community attended two night classes. We read numerous authors, such as: Jean-Paul Sartre, Charles Darwin, Søren Kierkegaard, and Rudolf Bultmann. We were intent on exploring a wide spectrum of viewpoints about the significance of life and how we should live in a world of uncertainty.

As part of our community lifestyle, we ate evening meals together and then launched into lively discussions about

current issues and world problems, from the Cold War with Russia to the coming free-love revolution. One of the members of our group was in a continual state of distress because he believed that an atomic war with Russia was imminent. Our group was passionate about race relations, and our fervor led us to insist on a meeting with the president of our university. He graciously invited a few of us to lunch and listened to our pleas for racial integration on our campus and in our country. Our group fiercely debated questions about how religion should affect our lives, what the purpose of life is, and our right to challenge the status quo.

Little did I know that we, along with countless other students, were planting the seeds for the coming civil rights movement and the Vietnam War protests. We were the forerunners and future leaders of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on our campus. This community was in every way a challenge to “the establishment,” and I felt that I was on the cutting edge of our culture, poised to change the world.

But within this community, I had a more personal goal: I was searching for foundational truth to live by. I wanted truth that would anchor my life and give it meaning—truth that would enable me to really live, not just exist. I wanted my life to count; I wanted to make a contribution to the world. I didn’t want just to blend in with everyone else and settle into a mundane routine for the rest of my life. I was searching for spiritual truths that would give my life purpose and passion. I wanted to take the road less traveled.

Initially, my involvement in this group of students was

exhilarating. I had never really wrestled with differing philosophies about life, and our studies stretched my mind and challenged my thinking. But as the months wore on, I became discouraged. Nearly all of our study centered on *existentialism*, a twentieth-century philosophical movement “embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad.”¹ At first, I found freedom in existentialism and its focus on individualism and self-determination. But as I explored the worldview more closely, I saw lots of ambiguity. I felt increasingly isolated as I thought about my inability to be certain about what was right and wrong. Was it all truly up to me?

The more I encountered ambiguity, the more helpless I felt. Even the great philosophers had no relevant answers for me—and yet I still had to make my way in a world seemingly filled with futility. I remember reading Sartre’s play *No Exit*. That title summed up all I was learning. I was adrift in a world without meaning, and what I was studying gave me no signposts to guide me to truth.

I had entered the program to find pivotal truths to live by, but the far-reaching ideas presented in our discussions and seminars all seemed to come to the same conclusion: There are no absolutes, and you have to make your own way in an uncertain world. This pursuit became even more lonely because most of the people in our group were so concerned

with their own issues that mutual support was rare. I was disheartened, to say the least.

Was this all the great thinkers had to offer? Were these the definitive answers to life? Where else could I go to find truth? Was anyone else seeking to live like this? Could I find people who were willing to help and serve others, not just a cause? Without realizing it, I breathed a silent prayer: *I want to walk to the beat of a different drummer, but I'd like the drumbeats to communicate hope and a sense of what is true and right.*

I finished out my college years feeling somewhat unfulfilled. Marriage to Jack and teaching quickly followed my graduation and brought contentment, yet I eventually settled into the mundane routine I had so wanted to avoid. I began to think that perhaps life did consist in just making my own way and doing the best I could in the circumstances I was in.

In my more honest moments, however, I still yearned for truth and wisdom, for something I could count on. When Jack and I had moved to a new city, I was still searching when Mary, a newfound friend, invited me to a luncheon, which I was somewhat surprised to discover had a Christian emphasis. As I listened to the speaker, I was captivated by her gentle spirit and her apparent personal relationship with God. I had never heard anyone talk about reading the Bible, understanding it, and applying it to life. So when Mary invited me to a Bible study, I was curious and liked the idea of including this bestseller on my list of study books.

I had a fleeting familiarity with the Bible. I had grown up in a middle-class, churchgoing family. When I was twelve

years old, I was marched down to the front of our church and asked if I believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I answered “Yes” and was baptized that night. I was as sincere as a twelve-year-old can be, but the roots of my seedling faith were not cultivated or nurtured. As a result, my faith never grew.

In preparation for Mary’s Bible study, I bought a Bible and painstakingly looked up the Scripture verses and recorded the passages’ page numbers by each question so I could quickly find the reference when we met as a group. As I began to study the Scriptures and listen to the other women talk about “the Lord” and how the verses helped them in their everyday lives, I was deeply touched.

This was the first time since college that I had met other people who were searching for truth. These women were sincere and convinced that God’s Word spoke specifically to their lives for their good. I realized that they were studying not to gain knowledge but to learn truth that would change their lives.

As I observed the interactions and dynamics of this group of women, I was amazed to see that they were really seeking to live in a different kind of way. They wanted their relationship with God to be evident to others. They wanted to be honest and to be held accountable for what they were learning from the Bible. They truly cared about each other, and soon, they cared about me, too. For me, this was a taste of true community.

After a few months of study, I discovered an amazing,

revolutionary truth—the Jesus Christ I met in the Bible was everything I'd been searching for. Jesus modeled radical, wholehearted living as he slipped silently into our world and then boldly proceeded to step on the toes of the religious leaders and philosophers of the time. He taught that true religion—true faith—was based not on rules or philosophical ideas but on a vital, life-changing relationship with the living God. Jesus embodied not only truth and wisdom but also grace and love.

His teaching was unconventional: Love your enemies. Be reconciled to others. Don't call attention to your acts of charity. Forgive those who hurt you. Your treasure is where your heart is. Don't worry about everyday life. Stop judging others. Give, and it will be given to you. Humble yourself, and you will be exalted. Those who cling to life in this world will lose it, but those who surrender their lives will keep them for eternity.²

Jesus not only taught profound truth but also sacrificed himself in the ultimate radical act: He voluntarily gave his life so that all who believe in him could know eternal, unerring truth that transforms lives and offers authentic freedom.

I could not help but come to the overwhelming conclusion that Jesus is the Truth. He is the only one who lived, taught, and embodied truth that made sense and felt right. With a heart grateful to God, I realized that I had found the truth for which my heart had been longing—truth that empowered me to live wisely.

I had a burning desire to grow and learn all that I could.

My faith was finally starting to mature. Whenever I visited Mary, I was so eager to learn as much as I could that I would forget the time. She would often be forced to ask me, “Cynthia, would you like to stay for lunch?” Mary and her husband, Don, invited Jack and me to a Bible study for couples. As we experienced the fellowship of these dedicated believers, Jack met Christ personally for the first time.

My search for the truth had ended. I learned that those who believe in Christ and follow him are commissioned to make a difference in the world by living like him. As I learned more about Christ’s life, my own life took on meaning and purpose. I found new passion and hope. God’s ways are revolutionary, but they are right and wise and good. A life lived with him provides a community that exists to love one another and to give, serve, and minister to those in need.

Over the years, my love for the Scriptures has deepened so much that I now write Bible studies and books about Christian living. I never prayed about or intended to have a writing and speaking ministry, but God’s ways are not always our ways. After being challenged by a verse of Scripture found in the book of Ruth, I wrote a Bible-study course entitled “Becoming a Woman of Excellence” and taught it to the women in our church. A friend heard about it and made an appointment for me to talk about the study with an editor. Before long, I began writing Bible studies for publication.

My husband also had a course correction in his life. Jack enjoyed his practice of veterinary medicine for many years, but he gradually felt that God was asking him to trade pets

for people, and we now serve on the staff of a worldwide discipleship ministry.

Today, as I look back on several decades of living the life Christ offers, I see that he has revealed several relevant truths that have offered me guidance and wisdom on my journey. These are the rock-bottom truths I return to in life's difficult times or when I find myself at a crossroad and need to make a critical decision.

As I meet with people all across the country, I find that they are searching too. They have questions about the important issues in life. They want their lives to count for something larger than themselves. They want to know how to discern what is right and what is wrong. They want to live wisely—and I find that my responses usually include one or two of ten truths that have become foundational in my life.

I share these truths in the following pages. This is a book that I wish I had found my senior year in college, for these truths were the fundamental ideas I was searching for, and they have proven invaluable in my life. After several decades of standing on these foundational truths, they have never failed to guide me in living wisely.

For those of you who are somewhat new to the Christian life, I pray that the truths will give you something to hang on to, something to anchor you when you face difficulties or hard decisions. I hope that the stories you read will flesh out for you what these truths look like in real life.

For those of you who know and love Christ, may these

truths serve as powerful reminders that although we live in a temporary world that tries to lure us into thinking that truth is determined by personal preference, God’s truth and wisdom are eternal and worthy of our obedience.

When I was younger, I wanted to travel the road that would make “all the difference.” I knew that I was on the right path when I meditated on this transformative truth: “Go in by the narrow gate. For the wide gate has a broad road which leads to disaster and there are many people going that way. The narrow gate and the hard road lead out into life and only a few are finding it.”³

As a young woman, I wanted the road less traveled. I just didn’t realize that it had a narrow gate and that the gate was Jesus. He is the gate that leads to life—God’s life.

Proverbs 9:10 tells us, “The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning (the chief and choice part) of Wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight and understanding.”⁴ Acknowledging that Jesus is the gate to true life and wanting to know God more intimately is foundational in learning to live wisely.



A Prayer for Wisdom

O Lord, your way is the wise way. Thank you for being my heavenly Father who loves me for who I am, who wants to

strengthen me, and who wants to teach me to live wisely for eternal purposes.

I know there is no guarantee that if I do begin to live your way, my life will become easier, but I'd rather go through the trials here on earth *with* you than without you. So, Lord, here I am—I enter by the narrow gate. In Jesus' name, amen.



Reflections on the Truth

1. Before you read the next chapter, reflect on your own life. Where are you in your spiritual journey and your search for truth?
2. In this book, I share ten truths from Scripture that help us pursue living wisely. These truths keep me on the right path. If someone asked what your bottom-line truths are, the truths you live by, what would you say? What truths do you fall back on when you go through challenging times?
3. As you begin to read *Living Wisely*, compose a brief prayer asking God to guide you and bless you as you study his truths.



Scripture to Believe

As the Scriptures say,

“I will destroy human wisdom
and discard their most brilliant ideas.”

So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense.

I CORINTHIANS 1:19-20, NLT-1996





ONE

MAYBE GOD IS RIGHT
AFTER ALL



*Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and
wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.*

WILLIAM PENN

For the LORD grants wisdom!

*From his mouth come knowledge and
understanding.*

PROVERBS 2:6

AS I ENTERED THE NARROW GATE and began my journey on the less-traveled road, I discovered key signposts on the path I had chosen. The more I studied, the more I realized how God's wisdom runs counter to the wisdom of the world. God asks us to trust him, to be holy, to deny ourselves, and to be generous. Our culture says: "Believe in yourself," "If it feels good, do it," "You deserve to be happy," and "The one with the most toys wins."

It's not always easy to live God's way. In fact, it's easier to go with the flow of our culture. But often, we know in our heart of hearts what is right. Sometimes we even sense the inner prompting of God's Spirit guiding us to the right path, but for any number of reasons, we tend to choose the path that is more appealing.

Such was the case with a dear woman I will call Suzanne, a married Christian who had three children. She worked as a secretary for a man who attended their family's church. Things went well for a while; then one day, Suzanne's employer took her to lunch. In subsequent months, Suzanne and her boss met more frequently, allowing themselves to be drawn into conversations that went beyond their professional association. Each of them ignored the internal voices that warned them against their growing intimacy. Suzanne and her boss followed their feelings instead of believing the truths of Scripture. Their relationship soon developed into a full-fledged affair.

After some time, Suzanne divorced her husband, hoping

to start a new life with her employer. But her boss had second thoughts about the relationship and decided not to leave his family. In the end, Suzanne was left with shattered dreams and three children to raise alone.

When I met Suzanne, three years after her divorce, it was evident that she still felt keenly the consequences of her infidelity. Now repentant and reconciled to God, she was making wise choices concerning her work and children. With tears in her eyes, she said that she still loved her husband, but the pain and betrayal were too much for him, and he was not willing to be reconciled. Suzanne lived in an “if only” world. If only she had not followed her feelings. If only she had stayed on the path God wanted her to follow. If only she had trusted that God knew what was right for her.

Suzanne is typical of so many of us who begin to believe the billboards posted on the world’s broad road: “You are number one. You are the one to decide what is right for you.” Our culture mocks the narrow way, chiding that it is restrictive and joyless—a dead end.

Certainly the road is narrow, but the air on this path is fresher. God’s way offers a sense of freedom and peace that our world cannot duplicate. In the past, I had searched for wisdom in a secular setting, believing that other people would provide the answers to living a fulfilling, satisfying life. But the wisdom of the world failed to address my need for eternal truth that gave hope, security, and purpose. Once I encountered Christ and devoted myself to studying his Word, the wisdom of God invaded my life and opened my

eyes to the thought that maybe God is right—maybe he knows what is best.

Early in my journey, I was captured by a verse in the Gospels: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”¹ I had been searching for a belief system that would guide me in making a difference in my world. Here it was. If I continued to stay closely connected to Jesus, I would be fruitful. I would grow, becoming someone who could have an impact on those around me.

The Lord’s words were clear: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” I thought, *Maybe God is right. Maybe he knows what he is talking about when he says that any life lived apart from him will not have any eternal significance.* It was this truth that helped me to believe that God has the authentic road map to life. Maybe the world, even with all its bravado, is wrong. The great statesman William Penn was right: “Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.”

I was beginning to wholeheartedly agree with Penn, especially by thinking that right is right even if everyone is against it. I was encouraged when I read what the Old Testament prophet Hosea says about God being right: “Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those who are discerning listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But sinners stumble and fall along the way.”² Yes, the Lord’s paths are true and right—because *God* is right.

Jeremiah's words amplify this truth:

This is what the LORD says:

“Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom,
or the powerful boast in their power,
or the rich boast in their riches.

But those who wish to boast
should boast in this alone:

that they truly know me and understand that
I am the LORD
who demonstrates unfailing love
and who brings justice and righteousness to
the earth,
and that I delight in these things.

I, the LORD, have spoken!”³

I have learned over the years that true wisdom comes not from our culture and its many voices but from knowing who God is. God, above all, is righteous—good, trustworthy, blameless. If I can ever boast about anything, it is that I believe God is who he says he is. He is right. He is absolute. He is fair and just, and his love never fails. For me, discovering that God is righteous—right—in all his ways was at once humbling and reassuring. I knew that I could trust him in the midst of a frantic, mixed-up world.

When Suzanne first felt attracted to her boss, when she initially became involved in the affair, God's ways seemed restrictive and narrow to her. The command to be holy,

to be faithful, to run from sexual immorality conflicted with her desires, but she didn't want to deny herself the pleasures that went with this man's attention. Any pleasure she experienced was short-lived, however. When Suzanne finally realized that her wrong choices had caused such devastating pain, she acknowledged with regret that indeed God is right after all.

One of the reasons we can trust that God is right is because we are his idea; he created us. We belong to him. The psalmist tells us, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him."⁴ It is logical to believe that since everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God, then he knows what is right for us. He has every right to tell us how to live. Who better to know the paths we should take than the one who made us?

The Bible is filled with people who learn, often too late, that God's way is the right way. Take Adam and Eve. God provided abundantly for them in the lush Garden. He gave them everything—with one restriction: He told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's instruction was for their good. He wanted to protect them and keep them on the right path.

But in one fatal moment, Adam and Eve chose to believe a voice other than God's. First, they succumbed to Satan's deception, to his play on their self-centeredness: "Don't take God's instructions too seriously," he enticed. "Take what you want. Live life on your own terms." Adam and Eve believed him. Second, they yielded to their own rationalizations:

“Why would God deny us something that is ‘good’ for us? We can make our own choices.”

We are still living with the consequences of Adam and Eve’s refusal to follow God’s instructions. After they ate the forbidden fruit, they realized they had sinned.⁵ As they hid from God, I can imagine that they said to one another, “Maybe God was right after all.”

Adam and Eve weren’t the only people who suffered the consequences of thinking God can’t possibly know what’s best. When God directed Moses to take the Israelites into Canaan, a land the Lord had prepared for his children, they rebelled and did not enter the land. They relied on their own insight and refused the path God had for them. I cannot help but think that as the Israelites trudged through the wilderness for forty years, many of them whispered to one another, “Maybe God was right after all.”

Jesus reiterated this truth in a story he told about a young Jewish man who demanded his inheritance from his father and left to live life on his own terms.⁶ Again in this story, the father provided everything the son needed, but the son thought he knew better. He took his inheritance and spent it on wild living. We can only imagine the parties, the women, the food the young man indulged in, hoping to find satisfaction. When his inheritance was spent, however, the young man was reduced to a pitiful life of feeding pigs. It was then that he concluded, *Maybe my father was right after all*. He turned from his sinful ways, returned home, and asked for his father’s forgiveness.

Jesus used the story to teach his listeners that God, our Father, knows what is best for his children. When we trust that he is right and follow his ways, we experience God's protection and provision and can avoid unnecessary consequences.

When I consider the revolutionary life Jesus led, I realize that even though he was God in the flesh, he modeled for us the truth that his Father is right. Jesus shared this thought with his disciples: "I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want."⁷ That truth was as extraordinary in Jesus' day as it is today.

Jesus perfectly exemplifies for us the truth that wanting to live God's way brings joy. God said to his beloved Son, "You love what is right and hate what is wrong. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else."⁸

After speaking at a conference, I was able to share this truth with "Lillian," who was driving me to the airport. She shared her concern about a broken relationship. A woman at her church had hurt her with an unkind, offhand remark at a group meeting. Lillian struggled with what to do. She wanted to hide whenever she saw this woman, and she knew that wasn't right. As I listened, I asked Lillian if she had gone to the person in order to seek reconciliation.

Lillian answered, "No. I sought counsel from our group leader, and she offered to handle it for me. So far nothing has been resolved."

I then said, "You know, maybe God is right when he

taught that if someone sins against *you*, then you are the one to go to that person.” I read her the passage in Matthew: “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.”⁹ We discussed how she might pray and ask God to show her the path to reconciliation.

A week later, I received a letter from Lillian. “I was encouraged to go to the person who hurt me because of the Scripture you shared with me. I am praying that God will use it for good. It was not easy for me, but the person was humbled and receptive. I am praising God.”

As I read her letter, I thought once more, *Maybe God is right after all.*

Carolyn lived next door to a cantankerous neighbor who had a pit bull. If the dog had been fenced in, it would not have been such a problem, but there was nothing separating her yard from her neighbor’s. The pit bull was a continual annoyance to both Carolyn and her dog.

One day, when she was discussing the problem with her neighbor—who had a personality similar to his dog’s—he became belligerent and said some harsh things. Feeling hurt and angry, Carolyn went back into her house. As she stewed, a verse from Scripture came to her mind: “Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”¹⁰ Praying for that man was the last thing Carolyn wanted to do, but she was receptive to God’s instructions. Pray she did, and her anger subsided.

A few days later when she was out walking her dog, the

neighbor came out and apologized: “You know, I shouldn’t have spoken to you the way I did. I was wrong.”

As Carolyn told me this story, I found myself remarking, “Isn’t it great to know that God is right after all?”

In my own life, I continually have to acknowledge that God’s truths are right. I once visited a good friend who had just remodeled her home. It was beautiful and had everything I think a home should have, including a paneled library and a huge walk-in closet with built-in shelves and drawers. When I left her home, I was somewhat depressed. Actually, I was envious. I thought, *Lord, I would really enjoy living in a home like that. I wish I had one that nice.* Then a verse I had memorized marched to the forefront of my mind and demanded my attention: Love “does not envy.”¹¹ I was lovingly and justly rebuked. God was teaching me that if I truly love, I will not envy.

God amazingly restores and redeems us even when we choose to believe that maybe we are right. I am astounded by God’s grace to his children when we do not live his way. He takes our sinful self-absorption and patiently waits to redirect our lives. Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden, but God continued to lead them and bless them. The Israelites had to wander in the wilderness, but God continued to guide them and provide for their needs. The young Jewish man returned home and continued to live as his father’s beloved son. God’s grace restored Suzanne to the true and right path, and his care for me tenderly teaches me not to envy. Because God created us and redeemed us by Christ’s death on the cross,

he wants us to understand that he is committed to leading us to live wisely.

Look, God is all-powerful.

Who is a teacher like him?

*No one can tell him what to do,
or say to him, "You have done wrong."*

JOB 36:22-23



A Prayer for Wisdom

Heavenly Father, while I am here on this earth, I want to stay on the paths you have marked out for me because I know that I would not be content anywhere else. I want to boast that I know and understand that you alone are just and righteous. Keep me from presuming that I know the best way. Please show me your ways, and prompt me to choose your true and right paths. I don't want to go through life tripping and stumbling.

Thank you for your unfailing love and grace when I question the path I'm on. Keep me on this less-traveled road—for my life is yours, and I want what is right in your Kingdom, even if everyone else is against it. In Jesus' name, amen.



Reflections on the Truth

1. As you think back over your life, you probably can remember times when you thought your way was better than God's way. Explain one of these times and the consequences of your actions.
2. You probably can also remember a time when following God's way ultimately worked for your good. Describe this experience.
3. God's ways are not your ways—and therefore your trust must be grounded in confidence that his ways are best. What do the following passages teach you about God's ways?
 - a. Deuteronomy 32:4
 - b. Psalm 18:30
 - c. Psalm 33:4-5
4. God wants to be intimately involved in your life. What do these verses say to encourage you to walk the Lord's paths?
 - a. Psalm 25:8-10
 - b. Psalm 23:1-3
 - c. Proverbs 28:26

5. "The LORD is good and does what is right."¹² What situation in your life needs direction at the moment? Write out a prayer asking God to lead you on the right path.



Scripture to Believe

But for those who are righteous,
the way is not steep and rough.
You are a God who does what is right,
and you smooth out the path ahead of them.

ISAIAH 26:7