

The End That Never Ends
Ephesians 4:3-6 and Proverbs 3:5-6

From the moment you heard about God, until you take your last breath, God's love will surround you. You know this to be true because of Jesus' death on the cross, but that end didn't end. In the Ephesians passage you chose for your confirmation Sunday, you are reminded that you are "one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all who is over all, through all, and in all." The God you have come to know through confirmation and your Sunday School/youth group experiences will still be with you, but in a different fashion. Now, it will be up to you to decide what God's role will be for you in life. Therefore, I have a special gift to you. (For those of you who are reading this message, I have a velvety pouch with a palm cross made of olive wood from the Holy Land and a card that says "Trust the Lord"- Proverbs 3:5-6).

Today, I share with you a piece of my journey with God. On the card you will find a scripture verse Proverbs 3:5-6. When I left home to attend seminary, a dear friend of mine wrote a letter of encouragement to me. At the bottom of the letter was simply Proverbs 3:5-6. I didn't think much about the scripture until after I moved to Kansas City. In my first few weeks, I realize that life was very different than in my small town of

Cincinnati, Iowa. I was homesick. However, for me, I couldn't just call home and hear familiar voices. The day I left for school, my parents also left for a two week travel adventure with my Aunt and Uncle to Arizona. Cell phones, computers, nor internet hadn't become available yet so, therefore, once I got my phone hooked up there wasn't anyone to call. It was then I pick up the letter from my friend and found the scripture, Proverbs 3:5-6. "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 straight your paths." These words helped me find my compass, courage, and direction for ministry. Here's what these words mean to me.

Trust in the Lord: God is the end that never ends because God is the constant in my life that can always be trusted. When I was alone, anxious, and wondering what I wanted to do with my life, I could feel God's presence encouraging me to keep going. When I want to run from the new and challenging experience of seminary, God gave me the courage to not give up and return to the familiar. We think we are ready to take on the world, but the world can sometimes hand us situations we aren't ready to face. We, then, have a choice to end what we are doing or let God help us become the end that never ends. Wherever you are in life, God can be trusted to help you make the best decisions possible for you.

My own understandings: I love this phrase, “do not rely on your own understandings.” When I rely only on what I know about a situation, I am quick to be reminded there is always more to the story. God is the only one who really knows everything about every situation. God has ways of helping understand there is more to the story. I like to call this my “Jiminy Cricket” voice. I believe God is that voice inside me that helps me make decisions. You know when that voice says, “Do you really want to do that?” But it is also the voice that helps you get out of situations or helps you through consequences of not so good choices. God really does understand more than we do, but doesn’t abandon us when we stray away.

Acknowledge Him: God needs to know that you recognize God as a part of your life. It’s difficult going through life, being unnoticed or not recognized for the work you have done. It’s the same for God. I believe that humans have great needs and wants from God, but God doesn’t get enough public credit. When you become members of a congregation, one of your promises is to use your witness as a way of being in mission in the world. This witness is acknowledging God is active in your life. There are simple ways of acknowledging God. Pausing to give a “Thank you God for this food” or even “Bless this food, Amen” when you sit down to eat, whether you are alone or with friends. It could even be a “God bless you

on your finals” instead of “Good Luck.” The key is to remember that God is the end that never ends and that needs to be claimed in every aspect of your life for as long as you can.

He will make straight your paths: This is my favorite part. I have traveled different paths, made mistakes, and even stepped away from church, but God has help me find a straight path back to my faith and trust in God. When you step away from the “high school” you, you discover the world is full of choices that can take you in a multitude of directions. Where you dream to be in ten years, may end up being a very different path in reality, but I pray the constant in these adventures will be your faith and trust in God. God is full of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. God loves you no matter what path, or paths, you decide to take in life. God will never leave your side.

These are a few lessons I have learned from God in my faith journey. I share them with you to take as a spiritual staple of your life. In addition to the food, shelter, and love we all crave, Christians have a spiritual food that keep us connected with God. In addition to this verse, you will also find in your pouch a wooden cross. This is called a palm cross. It fits in the palm of your hand as a reminder you are not alone. This cross is made of olive wood from the Holy Lands. It is in its natural unfinished state. This cross is

to be stained by you and those with whom you share it. The oils from your hands will do the staining, therefore, the more you use it the darker it will be stained. This is my gift to you. It comes wrapped in my prayers as you adventure into your own life. The time has arrived for you to explore what kind of an adult you want to be in this world. I invite you to remember those who have helped you in your Christian journey and remember, along with God, we are also with you forever. Amen.