

HOME *Worship*



October 2026

Sunday 4th October 2026

Stephen Thomas

“He will tend his flock like a shepherd” Isaiah 40: 11

Please read Isaiah 40: 1-11 and John 10: 7-17 and Heavenly Doctrine ‘The Church’ 241

The Palestinian shepherd would walk in front of his sheep and lead them. The sheep were not herded/driven into their pens as is common in our western countries. He would lead them from the front and the sheep would trust and follow him – he would always be looking out to see that the pathway was safe so that his sheep when he called to them would follow him safely to pasture. The sheep recognised the voice of their shepherd when he called out to them from all other sheep. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd because they were liable to stray and become lost and become prey to wild animals. The sheep became his friends and loving companions, and he put them first and himself last. The shepherd guarded and protected his flock by keeping them within sheepfolds – open spaces enclosed by a stone wall. There was an opening by which the sheep were free to go out or come in – the shepherd would lie down across the opening at night but always on guard! In Isaiah’s prophecy the Lord tends his flock like a shepherd. He calls us forward into life by name and he knows our strengths and weaknesses for He has made us and we are his. His loving providence protects us, but if we choose to ignore his loving commands and teaching and live life for what we want then sadly we become lost sheep and then become helpless from our own self-seeking.

We need to look to our Lord as the joy and the life in all that we do, and the Lord in return will recognise and receive this joyful acceptance of his life with ours. A relationship that will grow even stronger. We are the Lord’s sheep and so we must choose that way of life that opens the door of the sheepfold to his love and compassion. God provides opportunities for us to reject our selfishness and every battle we win against it is another force that He can use in this world to help or restrain others. How he shepherds everyone is beyond our understanding! The Lord tends us, His flock with a sheepfold – a sheepfold of truth within God’s Word that can protect us from the thieves and robbers of our selfish desires that could harm our spiritual life and yet He does not imprison us! He gives us an entrance in which to come in or go out in freedom – to use or sadly misuse his life. We are free to choose the truth that can change our behaviour in this world by how we react to each other. The joy of trusting in the Lord and living within the flock of his pasture is a continuing awareness of being created and helped and guided by a love that seeks only to give to us the joy of helping and delighting with our fellows.

The Lord’s love for us as His flock will accept each one of us in all our foolishness, stupidity and downright selfishness. His love and mercy will work and suffer all things to save us from it! God as our loving shepherd has an eternal purpose for each one of us. He will not let our true happiness be destroyed by settling for less than our full opportunity to choose freely the joy of His giving life. This is why we flock together in church on a Sunday to worship him. We cannot save each other, but the Lord can use each one of us to clarify the call of truth to one other. Let us remember that throughout His Word His loving providence is pictured as leading, feeding and cherishing our inmost affections. He is indeed our Good Shepherd. Amen.

Prayer: Lord, You are my shepherd. I trust that You know my needs, and with You as my guide, I lack nothing important today. *Amen.*



HOME *Worship*

October 2026

Sunday 11th October 2026

Stephen Thomas

“The Lord is my light and salvation; of whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27

Please read Psalm 27 and True Christian Religion “Reformation and Regeneration” 571

This is a very beautiful and comforting Psalm. It pictures for me our trust, our hopes and our humble dependence on the Lord. And especially this first verse which we can recall to our minds for our strength and support in times of crisis and trouble. Surely this Psalm attributed to David affirms his confidence in God: “The Lord is my light, my truth, my inspiration, my guide and my life.” “The Lord is also my salvation and my deliverer.” In this Psalm the Lord is David’s stronghold where he can find safety and refuge. When David’s enemies attack, he will not focus and fix his eyes on them but on the Lord. It must be the same for us by not looking so much at our difficult circumstances but rather in the light of truth lifting our eyes up to the Lord who is our salvation and our stronghold. We may be weak, but our Lord is strong. In His loving merciful providence, he can hold us securely through every trial that we may face. He is our strength at every moment of every day. Of whom can we be afraid?

“The Lord is the stronghold of my life.” Love and selfishness cannot exist together! The joy of one will destroy the delight in the other, and so we will find that neither the truth nor our selfish planning will be delightful. Without the joy in a way of life then there is nothing in which to make a true decision apart from our individual freedom of choice. We cannot be selfish without our Christian faith intruding and spoiling our selfish pleasure but at the same time we cannot serve in love without our selfishness intruding and spoiling our joy. We can only get a permanent basis and sure stronghold in our life if we can choose between these and so, during this dark and empty crisis of temptation we can make a choice in freedom calling on the love of the Lord or instead falling ever deeper into our selfish wanting. We must find a joy in using the truth, a joy in helping and loving our fellows and we can only make this choice during the dark and empty crisis of temptation. It is these life experiences that we can learn the true meaning of our faith. And as we progress forward and make those fundamental changes in the way we approach and view our lives we shall still feel the power of our selfishness and our false arguments again! Each time this happens we must confirm ourselves in the way that we have chosen and so reject our selfishness more firmly.

“Of whom shall I fear?”

We shall never fear if we can only recognise our Lord’s great power of His love and our total dependence on it for our newly chosen way of life. Our Lord Jesus Christ has fought all evil and selfishness and He can protect us and bring us to each battle as is necessary. If we choose to accept His way of life, his spirit can flow through us to become our way of life. We shall still know earthly anxieties and fears, but we shall eventually learn to trust that the love of God in Jesus Christ has true power in our minds, and our selfishness will be helpless against it! With every blessing to you all – Stephen

Prayer: Jesus, guide me on the right paths today. Help me make wise choices that bring honor to Your name, not my own. Amen.

HOME *Worship*



October 2026

Sunday 18th October 2026

Stephen Thomas

“Jesus said to Phillip, “How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. John 6: v 5 and 6.

Please read John 6: 1-14

Jesus recognised Phillip’s ability to calculate and reason things out and challenged him with an apparently insoluble problem, knowing all the while that His own power was the only answer. The same challenge comes to each one of us. We often find ourselves as despondent as Phillip when we look at the many things in our life which need feeding with love and affection, while we have such a restricted supply of those things. The crowd of problems may seem vast, but the only way to satisfy them is by personal action from love wherever we see the opportunity to help our fellows. The method of feeding the crowd has two parts. First, to sit them down on the grass. The people had to be settled in an orderly way to be fed by Jesus. That made good practical sense for the earthly miracle, but it portrays the way we must be prepared if we are to receive new life from Him. While we wander about from one interest to another, there is nothing to receive any changed life. To “sit down” fixes our attitude; we are willing to concentrate on what Jesus can give us and make it the settled purpose of our lives. The “grass” we sit on is the means to develop this new state. From the earth of our mind grows knowledge and intelligence from the Scriptures, the basic growth of knowledge of the Commandments and teachings which has formed in us. Hear sit the “five thousand”, that is, the innumerable emotions and thoughts that make up our human mind. As we reform our plans and purposes, the second factor must also come into play! Jesus must bless the bread. If we investigate our thoughts and feelings we shall find that we have some “bread of life” there. We have a little of the way that good and love work in life, though it may be only the remnants of childhood loving and helping and the occasional innocent experience of genuinely loving others. If the number of loaves is small, it is enough. And we have two fish as well and this should remind us that early in the gospels the disciples were fishermen who caught true ideas, though these ideas may seem far too few to feed our crowd of human problems and emotions.

We must use the “bread and fish” of the love and wisdom we have from God to decide what must be done for others. Even where we cannot explain all the factors involved, the motivation for loving service must feed our life. The power behind loving others comes from the saving love of God (not our own!) and if we accept that, there will be power in it to multiply everything we try to think and do.

And the ideas about what is true “the fish” will begin to multiply as well, because love is working in our understanding. Handling the crowd of our activities in this world is not a matter of finding out what others are accustomed to do and just copying them, it is a matter of living from the love of Jesus and loving others in every situation.

When we call on that love, there is always enough for every situation, and even more left over than what we first started with! Amen.

Prayer: Thank You for blessing me even when things are difficult around me. Fill my heart with Your grace until my cup overflows with gratitude *Amen*.

HOME *Worship*



October 2026

Sunday 25th October 2026

Stephen Thomas

A Sacramental Sermon

“I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s Kingdom.” Matthew 26: v29

Please read Matthew 26: verses 17 to 30

The Last Supper took place on the feast of unleavened bread – the Jewish feasts symbolised the work that Jesus was doing. The love of God seeks only to give the joy of His life to us. This love came into humanity’s earthly mind in Jesus, taking away all our selfish desires that obsess our human mind. In the truest sense, God’s love in Jesus was bringing innocence to all of humankind.

The feast of unleavened bread symbolises the other aspect of Jesus’s work. At that feast no leaven, or yeast, was allowed in the house or eaten. Yeast works to ferment, whether it is in the dough of leavened bread or in grape juice to make wine. This fermenting symbolises wisdom, a wisdom now free of any ferment of false and selfish ways. However, since in Jesus it has been through that process here at our level, it is of a kind that our minds can drink in and use to enlighten us in this world. It has been “fully fermented” in our human condition. Jesus comments that He would not now drink wine until the day he was to “drink it anew in the Kingdom of God”. Once Jesus had fought his last temptation on the cross he would have renewed totally the thinking of his earthly mind and made it Divine Wisdom. This is the “new wine” filled with the life of God in which he is present with all of us now and forever more and will be able to enlighten us if only we will allow too.

We ourselves cannot drink the fruit of the vine fully until we come to our Father’s Kingdom in heaven, but the Holy Supper, where we drink it representatively, serves as a reminder of our Lord’s love, and hope and purposes for each and everyone of us. In a more general sense, His Kingdom is wherever His truth reigns in people’s lives. Especially it is where the Lord is acknowledged and worshipped in His Divine Human, that is, where know and believe that He is the one and only God: The Creator from eternity, the Redeemer who came into this world, and the true Saviour of each one of us every day of our lives. These are the people with whom He can share the new wine.

Today the Lord is again making all things anew, both for humanity and for each of us who is willing to accept His cup.

Jesus said: “This cup that is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

May we come to our Lord’s table and receive gratefully the blood of the New Covenant, so that our Lord may form a new heart and a new spirit within each of us. Then, when we called from this world, He will always be able to drink it anew with us in His heavenly Kingdom.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Prayer: God, let your goodness and unfailing love chase after me every single day. I know I will live in Your presence forever. Amen.

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 1st November 2026

Revd Robin Wooldridge

The Quiet Work of Love

Bible Reading

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.”
(John 14:21)

From the Writings of Swedenborg

“To love the Lord is... to live according to His commandments.”
(Doctrine of Life §1–2)

Reflection

There are times when faith can feel distant, especially when we are physically separated from others. Yet this teaching reminds us that the heart of spiritual life is not found in outward gatherings alone, but in inward intention expressed through daily actions.

Love, in the Swedenborgian sense, is not simply a feeling directed toward the Lord. It is something we do. Each time we choose honesty over convenience, patience over irritation, or kindness over indifference, we are living our faith. These small, quiet choices are not insignificant—they are the very fabric of a heavenly life.

Even in isolation, life presents countless opportunities to practice this love. A gentle word, a thoughtful message, a moment of restraint or generosity—these are all forms of worship. The Lord is present in these acts, because they reflect His own nature.

Living This Teaching

Choose one simple act of kindness or integrity today and do it consciously as an expression of your faith.

Prayer

Lord, source of all goodness,
teach me to love through what I do each day.
Guide my choices, that they may reflect Your will.
Help me to see every moment as an opportunity to serve.
May my life become a quiet expression of Your love.

Amen.

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 8th November 2026

Revd Robin Wooldridge

Trusting Divine Providence

Bible Reading

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God."
(Luke 12:6)

From the Writings of Swedenborg

"Divine Providence is the government of the Lord's Divine love and wisdom."
(Divine Providence §1)

Reflection

When we feel uncertain or alone, it is easy to think that life is governed by chance. Yet both Scripture and Swedenborg teach that everything is held within the Lord's loving care. Divine Providence does not remove all difficulty. Instead, it works quietly within our lives, guiding us without taking away our freedom. Even challenges can serve a purpose—helping us grow in patience, compassion, and understanding.

Trusting Providence means living with the quiet confidence that our lives have meaning beyond what we can immediately see. It is a trust that deepens over time, especially when we reflect on how past struggles have shaped us in ways we could not have anticipated.

Living This Teaching

Reflect on a past difficulty and consider what it may have taught you or how it shaped your character.

Prayer

Heavenly Lord,
You who guide all things with wisdom and love,
help me to trust in Your care.
When I cannot see the way forward, give me patience.
When I feel uncertain, give me peace.
Lead me gently toward what is good and true.

Amen.

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 15th November 2026

Revd Robin Wooldridge

The Living Word

Bible Reading

“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)

From the Writings of Swedenborg

“The Word in its bosom is spiritual, and in its inmost is Divine.”
(Sacred Scripture §6)

Reflection

The Bible is not only a book of teachings—it is a living source of spiritual guidance. Swedenborg teaches that beneath its literal meaning lies a deeper, spiritual sense that speaks directly to our inner life.

When we read Scripture with openness and reflection, it begins to illuminate our own experiences. Stories of journeys can mirror our own spiritual path. Struggles and victories in the text can reflect the inner challenges we face between what is good and what is selfish. In times of solitude, we are given a special opportunity to engage with the Word more deeply. Without distraction, we can read slowly, reflect, and listen inwardly for meaning. In this way, the Word becomes not just something we read, but something that shapes how we live.

Living This Teaching

Read a short passage of Scripture slowly, and ask: “What does this mean for my life today?”

Prayer

Lord of Truth,
Your Word is filled with life and meaning.
Open my understanding as I read,
and help me to see the deeper truths within it.
Guide me to live according to what I learn,
so that Your Word may become part of my life.

Amen.

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 22nd November 2026

Revd Robin Wooldridge

A Church in the Least Form

Bible Reading

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)

From the Writings of Swedenborg

“Each angel is a heaven in the least form.”
(Heaven and Hell §57)

Reflection

We often think of the church as a place or a gathering of people. While this is true, Swedenborg also offers a deeper insight: heaven itself is reflected in each individual who lives in love and faith.

When the Lord’s love and truth are active in our lives, we begin to reflect something of heaven within us. In this sense, even when we are physically alone, we are not spiritually isolated. We are connected to a greater community—a living fellowship of all who seek what is good and true. This does not replace the joy of shared worship, but it offers comfort and reassurance. The Lord is present wherever love and truth are lived. Every sincere prayer, every act of kindness, and every effort to live rightly brings us into that presence.

Living This Teaching

Take a few quiet moments to reflect on your connection with others who are also seeking a life of love and faith.

Prayer

Loving Lord,
You are present wherever love and truth are lived.
Make my heart a place where You may dwell.
Help me to live in such a way
that I reflect something of heaven within me.
Unite me in spirit with all who seek You,
and keep me in Your peace.

Amen.

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 29th November 2026

Revd Robin Wooldridge

Living the New Life

Bible Reading

“Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
— Colossians 3:17 (NIV)

Opening & Centring

Take a few quiet breaths and bring to mind one ordinary part of your day—a conversation, a task, a responsibility, or a moment of rest. Pray: “Lord, help me bring new life into the ordinary things I do today.”

Lesson

A new beginning becomes real when the new life we receive begins to shape ordinary actions. Swedenborg teaches that regeneration is not only an inner change of thought or feeling; it is expressed in the way we live. Love and truth become meaningful when they are put into practice in our relationships, our responsibilities, and our service to others.

We can easily imagine spiritual renewal as something dramatic. Yet much of spiritual life is formed through simple choices: speaking kindly when it would be easier to criticise, doing our work faithfully, listening before responding, forgiving a small offence, or helping someone without seeking recognition. These ordinary actions become opportunities to let a new will and a new understanding take root.

Ask yourself: Where could I bring more love and wisdom into an ordinary part of my life? Which small action could express the new life I hope the Lord is forming within me?

Reflection

Spiritual renewal is lived out in everyday things. Notice how a small act of patience, honesty, kindness, or service can become an expression of a deeper inner change.

Teachings

Swedenborg teaches that regeneration is shown in a person's life: the new will seeks what is good, and the new understanding seeks what is true. Spiritual growth therefore becomes visible through the way we love and serve.

As Swedenborg puts it:
“Charity consists in doing—in being useful, in other words.”
— Emanuel Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven* §997

HOME *Worship*



November 2026

Sunday 29th November 2026

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Living the New Life

Bible Reading

"Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
— Colossians 3:17 (NIV)

He continues by describing the life of charity as "a life of usefulness," because genuine love for the neighbour expresses itself in active service and good. For Swedenborg, therefore, spiritual renewal is not simply something we believe or feel inwardly; it gradually becomes a way of living.

This connects closely with the idea of regeneration as the formation of a new will. As we repeatedly choose what is good and loving, the new life becomes increasingly established in our thoughts, intentions, and actions.

Reflection

A new life is not separate from everyday life. The things we do repeatedly help form our character. When we choose what is good and true in ordinary situations, we make room for the Lord's renewing work to become more deeply established within us.

Closing Thought

This week, choose one ordinary activity and turn it into an opportunity for love and wisdom. Before you begin, pause and ask: "How can I do this in a way that brings new life?"

Prayer

Lord, help me to carry new life into the ordinary moments of this day. Let my thoughts become wiser, my words kinder, and my actions more useful to others. Teach me to recognise that even small choices can become part of Your work of regeneration within me.

Amen.

HOME *Worship*



December 2026

Sunday 6th December 2026

Rev'd D Gaffney

"For God so loved the world..." ([John 3:16](#))

Reading (World English Bible): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." ([John 3:16](#))

At its plainest, this verse tells us something breathtakingly simple: God's love for humanity is not distant or conditional — it is so great that He gave us His only Son. In the surrounding verses Jesus explains that He did not come to condemn the world but to save it, and that whoever believes in Him receives everlasting life rather than perishing ([John 3:17-18](#)). This is the literal Gospel in a single sentence — good news for every person, of any age, in any circumstance.

But New Christian teaching invites us deeper. The "only begotten Son" is not a separate divine being sent from a distant Father; rather, the Son is the Lord's own humanity, taken on so that the infinite, invisible God could come close enough for us to see, love, and follow. The Writings explain that the Lord "from eternity is Jehovah" himself, who assumed a human nature and gradually made it fully Divine through the trials He endured, so that "the Father and the Son are one" — as soul and body are one person, not two ([The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem Regarding the Lord 29-32](#)). So when we read that God "gave" His Son, the deeper sense is that the infinite God gave Himself, in a form we could actually receive — take hold of, believe in, and be joined to. This is why the Lord says that "he who has seen Me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#), cited in [The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem Regarding the Lord 32](#)).

"The world" in its inner sense is every person in it — no one excluded. To "believe" is not mere intellectual assent, but a life turned toward Him, trusting and following His truth. "Everlasting life" is not simply a future reward, but a quality of life — heaven itself — that begins to grow in a person the moment they turn toward the Lord in genuine faith and love.

So this single verse holds the whole of the Gospel: an infinitely loving God, drawing so near to us in Jesus Christ that we can know Him, trust Him, and live forever in His care.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for loving the world — for loving me — enough to come to us in a form we could see and follow. Help me to truly believe in You, not with words alone but with my whole life, so that I may walk each day toward the eternal life You freely offer. *Amen*

HOME *Worship*



December 2026

Sunday 13th December 2026

Revd D Gaffney

"The LORD is my shepherd..." (Psalms 23:1, 4)

Reading (World English Bible): "Yahweh is my shepherd: I shall lack nothing... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:1, 4)

On the surface, David paints a picture every generation understands: a shepherd who provides food, rest, and safety for his flock, and who stays close even when the path runs through danger. The comfort of this psalm has carried countless people through illness, grief, and fear, because it promises that God's presence, not our own strength, is what gets us through.

The Writings show that this psalm, from beginning to end, is about the Lord Himself: He "teaches and leads to the truths and goods of heaven and the church," and because of this "there will be no fear of the hells, for He guards, and imparts good and truth in abundance" until we dwell "in heaven with the Lord to eternity" (The Inner Meaning of the Prophets and Psalms 273). Throughout the Word, a "shepherd" represents one who leads people to what is good by teaching them what is true, and the "flock" represents those who are willing to be led and taught (Arcana Coelestia 343). So when we say "the Lord is my shepherd," we are saying that it is the Lord's own truth and goodness — flowing into our minds and hearts — that feeds, guides, and protects us, not simply in a future heaven, but daily, right now.

The "valley of the shadow of death" speaks to every dark passage of life: doubt, temptation, loss, fear. The promise is not that the valley will be avoided, but that within it we are not alone — "for you are with me." His "rod and staff," the shepherd's tools, correspond to the truths and supports He provides precisely when we feel most exposed. This is why the psalm can move so easily from quiet green pastures to the darkest valley and back to a table prepared "in the presence of my enemies" (Psalms 23:5) — because the Lord's care does not depend on our circumstances, but on His unchanging nearness.

Prayer: Lord, my Shepherd, when I walk through dark valleys, remind me that You are with me still. Guide me by Your truth, restore my soul, and let me trust that whatever I face, I lack nothing that Your care cannot supply. *Amen*

HOME *Worship*



December 2026

Sunday 20th December 2026

Revd D Gaffney

"I can do all things through Christ..." (Philippians 4:13)

Reading (World English Bible): "I know how to be humbled, and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in need. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:12-13)

Read in context, Paul is not boasting about personal willpower. He has just described learning contentment in both plenty and poverty. His confidence is not "I can achieve anything I set my mind to," but rather "whatever comes, I can bear it, because it is Christ's strength working in me, not my own."

This fits directly with a central New Christian teaching: that no one, left to themselves, can do what is truly good or think what is true — this ability comes only from the Lord flowing into us (Arcana Coelestia 9445). The Lord Himself said, "Apart from Me you cannot do anything" (John 15:5, quoted in Arcana Coelestia 10773). It can feel like our own strength and cleverness accomplish things, but the deeper truth is that all real wisdom, patience, and capacity to endure hardship or use blessing well come from the Lord working through us, the way a vine gives life to its branches. Paul is not denying his own effort — he still acts, chooses, and labours — but he attributes the actual power behind that effort to Christ.

This has a very practical, everyday spiritual sense: whenever we face a difficult exam, a hard conversation, an illness, a temptation to be unkind or dishonest, the strength to do the right thing is never something we manufacture alone. It is offered to us continually by the Lord, and we are invited to acknowledge this — to look to Him in the moment of difficulty, and receive what we need rather than straining under our own resources. This is not passivity; it is a partnership in which we act as if from ourselves, while trusting that everything good in the outcome is truly the Lord's (Arcana Coelestia 2883; True Christian Religion 506).

Prayer: Lord, when I feel overwhelmed by what is asked of me, remind me that the strength I need is not mine to manufacture but Yours to give. Teach me to lean on You in both hardship and plenty, and let Your power work through whatever I do today. *Amen*



HOME *Worship*

December 2026

Sunday 27th December 2026

Revd D Gaffney

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart..." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Reading (World English Bible): "Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."
(Proverbs 3:5-6)

Read plainly, this is timeless practical wisdom: when we rely completely on our own judgment, we are prone to being led astray by pride, short-sightedness, or self-interest. Trusting God, and consulting Him in every decision — not just the "religious" ones — leads to a straighter, more honest path through life.

The Heavenly Doctrines deepen this by explaining what happens spiritually when a person relies purely on their own understanding rather than the Lord. Our own sense that we are wise and capable "on our own" is called self-love's own prudence, and it constantly draws us away from any acknowledgment of Divine providence, even when we still use religious words (Divine Providence 191, 197). Left to itself, this self-trust convinces us that everything good and true comes from us — but the truth is the reverse: everything genuinely good and true, all real wisdom, flows into us from the Lord, even though it is given to us in such a way that we can rightly feel we are thinking and acting as if from ourselves (Arcana Coelestia 2883, 124).

This does not mean we should stop thinking, planning, or exercising our own reason — Proverbs is not calling for a shutting-off of the mind. It is calling for humility: recognizing, in everything we plan and choose, that our own understanding is limited, and inviting the Lord's guidance into it. "In all your ways acknowledge Him" means bringing every part of life — work, relationships, choices small and large — into conscious connection with the Lord, rather than reserving Him for Sunday or crisis moments. When this acknowledgment becomes real and habitual, the Lord "makes our paths straight" — not necessarily easy, but aligned with what is genuinely good for us and for others, because we have made room for His wisdom rather than insisting on our own.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from leaning only on my own understanding. Let me acknowledge You in every part of my life — the ordinary and the difficult — and trust that You will straighten the path before me, even when I cannot see it myself. *Amen*