

My Plans, God's Purposes  
Proverbs 16:1-9  
September 22, 2019

I want to begin our study today with a SHORT PERSONAL STORY - I gave my life to the Lord when I was 13 years old - From that day on there was a RADICAL CHANGE in my life - God changed my BEHAVIOR, my STUDY HABITS at school, my FRIENDSHIPS, and even parts of my PERSONALITY began to change and grow!

About 3 years later, as a 16 year old, I began to feel God CALLING ME to ministry - I felt strongly the CALL TO BE A PASTOR - So, I put that in the back of my mind and BEGAN TO MAKE PLANS - moving in that direction.

I finished HS and went to GT - I majored in MANAGEMENT thinking that would put me on the RIGHT PATH to then go TO SEMINARY - I ALSO went and visited SOUTHERN SEMINARY in Louisville, KY - I had a friend there and it seemed like the NEXT LOGICAL STEP in my plan.

On MY WAY HOME from that weekend trip, I FELT THE LORD SAYING to me, "**James, seminary is NOT THE PLAN I have for you.**" - I was shocked - As a Southern Baptist kid, this was THE ONLY PATH I KNEW to becoming a Pastor! - But, I was certain I had HEARD FROM GOD.

To make a LONG STORY SHORT, I graduated from GT in May 1981 - Through a SERIES OF "GOD ENCOUNTERS", Donna and I began attending CCSM in August - WE WERE MARRIED in September - As a matter of fact, we CELEBRATED OUR 38TH wedding anniversary this past Thursday! - Congratulations to Donna on SURVIVING 38 years with me!

I then spent the next 10 years WORKING IN THE RETAIL WORLD - We had 4 children - I SERVED AS AN ELDER and led worship at CCSM - BUT, many, many nights I would come home from work WONDERING IF I had SOMEHOW MISSED God's plan - I still FELT THE CALL TO BE A PASTOR, but by this point I SAW NO PATHWAY for this ever to happen - I had NO PLAN AT THIS POINT!

I went through MANY DISCOURAGING TIMES - I would do everything I could do as A VOLUNTEER AT CHURCH - but I had a demanding job that often REQUIRED LONG HOURS - especially from THANKSGIVING TO CHRISTMAS!

Just when I had ABOUT GIVEN UP THIS CALLING, out of the blue one day Pastor Sandy calls me and OFFERS ME A JOB at the church - I was so CAUGHT OFF GUARD, I replied, **“Doing what?”** - He said, **“Come on staff as a Pastor”**

Without much thought, I said, **“OK”** - Then it dawned on me that I had better RUN THIS ONE by Donna! - She gave me HER APPROVAL and 2 WEEKS LATER, May 13, 1991, I WAS ORDAINED as a pastor and am on staff at CC.

After 10 years, and losing ALL HOPE OR UNDERSTANDING of how it might happen, God HAD ACCOMPLISHED HIS PURPOSES in my life - **I had made a plan, but to accomplish God's greater purposes in my life, He had a different plan. God used my planning, but He had much more in mind for me than I could see!**

I think this is so often THE CASE FOR ALL of us - WE KNOW God has SPOKEN TO OUR HEARTS - We feel certain He has CALLED US to a particular PLACE OR POSITION - Yet, we find HIS PURPOSE AND OUR PLAN DON'T ALWAYS MATCH - Often our reaction to this is FRUSTRATION & DISAPPOINTMENT.

HOW SHOULD we handle this DIFFERENCE IN PATHWAYS? - Should we MAKE NO PLANS? - Should we JUST SIT BACK, do nothing and hope God works it all out? - Should we SIMPLY FOLLOW OUR PLAN and hope God eventually comes on board?

Let's look at an IMPORTANT PASSAGE in the Book of Proverbs this morning that deals with THIS VERY ISSUE - Let's see what God has to say about **OUR PLANS AND HIS PURPOSES!**

In Proverbs 16:1-9 the writer is going to give us EIGHT BIG THOUGHTS related to KEEPING MYSELF in the will of God - Eight TRUTHS that help insure that MY PLANS AND GOD'S PURPOSES for my life stay in HARMONY!

**Pro 16:1 The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.**

King Solomon opens the discussion by STATING A TRUTH that we need to embrace - God gives to each of us a FREE WILL TO PLAN our lives - The PREPARATIONS of the heart (or the plans of the heart) come from WITHIN EACH OF US - We have CHOICES - God does not TAKE AWAY from us the RIGHT TO CHOOSE our path.

Look at the INTERESTING TRUTH that is revealed in this statement - My plans come from MY HEART - in other words, I SET MY COURSE based on what my HEART WANTS TO DO!

The question then becomes **“WHO IS IN CONTROL of my heart”?** - Is it me or is it Jesus? - Is He the Lord of my life, or am I STILL RULING? - Make NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, the course of my life is set by the DESIRES OF MY HEART!

But then he says, **“but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord”** - This is the authors way of saying, **“Man makes his plans, but God is still in ultimate control”** - He can TRUMP OUR PLANS any time He so desires!

That doesn't mean that HE ALWAYS WILL - Only that HE CAN! - This PHRASE could be a reference back to the STORY OF BALAAM - Remember, it was IN HIS HEART to curse the Children of Israel - He could make a FAST BUCK IF he would curse them - but each time he tried, GOD WOULD INTERVENE and only words of blessing would come out!

The ANSWER OF BALAAM'S TONGUE came from the Lord - And He can do the same in our lives ANY TIME HE SO DESIRES - Again, it doesn't mean HE WILL - only that HE CAN - God is SOVEREIGN! - He can do WHATEVER He wants to do - WHENEVER He wants to do it!

So, our FIRST TRUTH IS this: **I must always be open to God's purposes overriding my plans!** - Or as Pastor Chuck used to say, **“Blessed are the flexible, for they will not be broken!”**

When we GET TO RIDGID with our plans, the HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT FREE TO LEAD us as He desires - He will then have TO BREAK US in order to CHANGE OUR PATH - and trust me this is NEVER FUN!

We NEED TO PLAN, but then we must REMAIN OPEN to the guiding of the Spirit in our lives - Never get SO COMMITTED to any plan, that God CANNOT REDIRECT you as He desires!

Our second BIG THOUGHT is found in verse 2 - **All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits.**

The reason I need to REMAIN OPEN to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is because MY HEART is prone to be SELFISH AND SELF-CENTERED! - Did I say that CLEARLY ENOUGH? - My heart is WIRED TO WANT THINGS that please me - not necessarily things that PLEASE GOD!

The DECISIONS & CHOICES I make ALWAYS LOOK WHOLESOME & FAIR to me - But many times they are SELF-SERVING & GREEDY - And the scary part is that many time I am BLINDED TO MY OWN MOTIVES!

IT ALL LOOKS GOOD to me! - My choice APPEARS TO ME to be equitable to all - When in reality, THEY FAVORS ME - Yes, it may NOT HARM OTHERS, but does it really BENEFIT THEM - or does my choice PRIMARILY BENEFIT ME?

God sees RIGHT THROUGH ME - He KNOWS MY MOTIVES better than I do - My problem is that I don't ALWAYS APPRECIATE GOD'S READING of my motives! - I prefer to KEEP MY BLINDERS ON and do what I had planned! - I ignore the CONVICTING WHISPER of the Holy Spirit - I don't really what to hear what HE HAS TO SAY!

So, Truth #2 says this, **My plans are often clouded by my selfish desires. I must allow God to weigh them!**

This is where a SPOUSE OR A FRIEND can be very helpful - Sometimes it is good to ASK FOR THEIR HONEST OPINION of the decisions and plans you have made - But, you can't GET ANGRY if they tell you they believe you are acting in YOUR OWN BEST INTEREST!

### **3 Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.**

The STARTING POINT of any planning SHOULD BE TO COMMIT THOSE PLANS to the Lord - At the outset, SEEK GOD'S WILL when you are SETTING A COURSE - This will insure that GOD CAN ESTABLISH them - This will help you ALIGN YOUR WILL with His will.

Our 3rd Truth states, **Maintain an attitude of submission to the will of God from the beginning of our planning.**

How often do we MAKE OUR PLANS and then after we are done, WE ASK GOD to bless them? - I am always intrigued by an episode in the LIFE OF ABRAHAM that perfectly illustrates this Truth.

God had come to Abraham and promised him A SON through his wife Sarah - but for many, many years she HAD FAILED TO CONCEIVE - So, Sarah comes of with a PLAN OF HER OWN - She will allow Abraham a NIGHT OR TWO WITH HAGAR, her maidservant.

Hagar would CONCEIVE & BEAR a child that Sarah and Abraham would RAISE AS THEIR OWN - She thought this was the PERFECT PLAN to accomplish the PURPOSES OF GOD - and it was perfect right up until HAGAR GOT PREGNANT - then Sarah was LOST IT.

Suddenly Sarah had to face that fact THAT SHE HAD BEEN THE PROBLEM all along - I think secretly she hoped to PROVE ABRAHAM was the reason they had not conceived a child.

With each PASSING DAY and with the WIDENING OF HAGAR'S WAISTLINE, Sarah got ANGRIER AND MORE BITTER towards her maidservant - The relationship was DAMAGED FOREVER - finally she RUNS Hagar and Ismael OUT OF THE CAMP!

Of course GOD PROTECTS Hagar and Ismael - He even BLESSES THEM for Abraham's sake - but Ismael would not be the CHILD OF PROMISE.

Well, many more years PASS BY and still NO BABY for Sarah and Abraham - then in Genesis 17, God comes ONCE AGAIN TO Abraham and renews HIS PROMISE - by this point the OLD MAN IS 99 years old - He listens PATIENTLY TO GOD, but Abraham is done!

After God RENEWS THE PROMISE to the OLD MAN, Abraham responds - In chapter 17:17-19 we read, **Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.**

Abraham HAD MADE HIS PLANS with Sarah - Now they want God to BLESS THIER PLANS - but that NOT HOW IT WORKS! - God has to be A PART OF THE PLANNING from the beginning for the plans to be blessed and established - We can't MAKE OUR PLANS and then try to get God on board AFTER THE FACT!

WE MUST SUBMIT to His will in making OUR PLANS - These are the plans God will ESTABLISH - Learn to SEEK GOD'S WILL from the outset - ACKNOWLEDGE HIM before you reach conclusions on what you should do!

If our plans are GOING TO BE ESTABLISHED, we submit our will to God - He DOESN'T SUBMIT to us!

**4 The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.**

Our 4th Truth is this: **God has a purpose in all that He does!**

First, let's understand what this verse IS NOT TEACHING - It is not saying that God has created certain people for Heaven and certain PEOPLE FOR HELL - He is not saying that SOME PEOPLE WERE CREATED to be destroyed by God and spend ETERNITY IN HELL.

That interpretation IN NO WAY SQUARES with the rest of Scripture - The Bible is clear that SALVATION IS OPEN to anyone who will call upon the name of the Lord - If you are NOT A BELIEVER this morning, it is because YOU HAVE CHOSEN NOT to believe - **Don't blame your unbelief on God!**

He has done ALL HE CAN DO to save you! - He sent HIS SON TO DIE for you - He has BROUGHT THE MESSAGE to you through HIS WORD - He has brought you TO A CHURCH that is declaring that GOOD NEWS - What more do you need? - The ONLY REASON you are not a Christian today is that you DON'T WANT TO BE! - You have REJECTED God's free gift!

What this verse is teaching is that GOD HAS A PURPOSE in everything - He has made ALL THINGS FOR HIMSELF - In other words, God will accomplish HIS PURPOSES THROUGH EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS in His Creation - And in that since, EVEN THE WICKED will have a destination ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN - BUT, they will have chosen THAT DESTINY.

They decided to REJECT GOD'S LOVE and avoid any FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM - God will HONOR that decision and one day ACCOMMODATE THEM - If ALL PEOPLE embraced that Savior, there would be NO REASON for a Day of Doom & Destruction!

But the POSITIVE SIDE of this verse teaches us that GOD HAS A PLAN for all things the TRANSPIRE IN OUR LIVES - Understand, He does NOT ALWAYS CAUSE THEM - but He will USE EVER EVENT to accomplish HIS PURPOSES!

Many HORRIBLE THINGS happen in this life because of THE SINFUL ACTIONS of people - Innocent people (men, women, and even children) are HURT BY THIER REBELLION - God is NOT THE CAUSE of these horrific tragedies.

But, HE CAN REDEEM THEM - God can take what MEN MEANT FOR EVIL and accomplish good through them - Yes, they are STILL PAINFUL & DESTRUCTIVE in the moment - But in time God can work good THROUGH ALL THINGS.

**Time does not heal all things. God does! It just sometimes takes time for God to do His HEALING WORK!**

If you are in the MIDST OF A STORM caused by sin, yours or someone else's, BE PATIENT - **Give God time** - He will ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES! - You just REMAIN FAITHFUL and committed to His Purposes - Let HIM WORK.

God has a PURPOSE IN ALL THAT HE DOES!

In verse 5 we read, **5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.**

Nothing will DIVERT YOU from the will and purposes of God QUICKER THAN PRIDE - Pride is the ENEMY OF DEPENDENCE on our Heavenly Father - A PROUD HEART is the one determined to do things ITS OWN WAY!

This was the heart OF KING SAUL - This was the heart of King Ahab and his evil wife, JEZEBEL - This was the heart of SAUL OF TARSUS before the Damascus Road experience - I could go on and on - For the Bible is FILLED WITH EXAMPLES of men and women WHO STIFFEN THEIR NECKS towards God and screamed, **"I will live life my way!"**

In 1 Samuel 13, King Saul was PREPARING TO BATTLE the Philistines - But, before going into battle, he knew THE PROPHET SAMUEL needed to come and MAKE A SACRIFICE - He waited for 7 days, but Samuel was delayed.

The LAW OF MOSES strictly prohibited the king from MAKING A SACRIFICE - The king was never to TAKE ON THE ROLE of the PRIEST OR PROPHET - But, Saul, IN HIS PRIDE, didn't think that RULE APPLIED to him!

So, he OFFERED THE SACRIFICE - and just about the time he had done so, GUESS WHO ARRIVES? - Yes, Samuel comes walking up JUST AS SAUL HAD COMPLETED the sacrifice.

In 1 Samuel 13:11 we read, **And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, "then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."** And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Saul FELT COMPELLED to offer the sacrifice! - Why? - Because his PROUD HEART decided that he was THE EXCEPTION to God's Law - He was the King - He was BIGGER THAN some old rule - His will was MORE IMPORTANT than God's will.

Thus, his pride DISQUALIFIED HIM from the PURPOSES OF GOD - His pride DIVERTED HIM down a path away from the WILL OF GOD - His pride LED HIM DOWN A PATH that was SO FAR from the PURPOSES OF GOD that the two could NOT BE RECONCILED! - Thus, he was REJECTED AS KING of Israel.

Our 5th BIG THOUGHT is simply this, **Pride is the enemy of God's plans for you life!** - Be careful when you start thinking THE RULES DON'T APPLY to you - Be careful when you start believing YOU ARE THE EXCEPTION to the Biblical Truths you hear EACH SUNDAY!

Proverbs 16:25 says, **There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death** - This is the DANGER OF the proud heart - It DECEIVES US! - It DESTROYS US!

Verse 6 says, **In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.**

Truth #6 is this, **A proper reverence for God is the first step in knowing and joining His plans and purposes.**

Atonement or SALVATION, comes through the COMBINATION of 2 channels - First is the CHANNEL OF MERCY - Second is the CHANNEL OF TRUTH.

God initiated salvation in His Mercy by REACHING DOWN to mankind - Saving man from his sin was GOD'S IDEA - God originated the PLAN OF SALVATION - and He did so because of HIS MERCY - God created us and HE LOVES US.

HIS MERCY motivated HIS HEART to ACT TO SAVE us - But TRUTH caused Him to SEND HIS SON to that old cross - The Father could not OVERLOOK OUR SIN - A penalty had to BE PAID - and Jesus paid that PRICE FOR YOU & ME!

Our salvation WAS ACCOMPLISHED on that Cross - But it must be ACCEPTED & EMBRACED by each of us in order for our lives TO BE CHANGED FOR ETERNITY.

IT ALL BEGINS with us developing a HEALTHY FEAR & REVERENCE of God - Today most people DON'T REALLY FEAR God - In their unbelief, they SHAKE OUR FIST at the heavens and MOCK GOD - They even ENTERTAIN THEMSELVES with movies & TV shows that make the ETERNAL GOD the butt of jokes and one-liners.

And then they USE THE PATIENCE & LONG-SUFFERING of God as proof that He does not exist - But one day soon God WILL BRING JUSTICE to this fallen world - One day He will respond with VENGEANCE - Mankind won't be LAUGHING THEN.

I hope you FEAR GOD - I hope you understand that though He is MERCIFUL & KIND, He is also JUST - One day JUDGEMENT WILL COME - one day we will all have to ANSWER FOR OUR LIVES - And that day will be a FRIGHTENING DAY for all who are not STANDING WITH CHRIST JESUS! - Hell is no JOKING MATTER!

**The Fear of the Lord is the STARTING POINT for finding God's PLAN & PURPOSE for my life** - Do you have a REVERENCE FOR the Almighty God? - Do you understand the SERIOUSNESS OF OUR rejecting His Love? - God will ONE DAY JUDGE all men? - Are you on the RIGHT SIDE of that Judgement?

**7 When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.**

No Proverb is ALWAYS TRUE - Proverbs are statements of GENERAL TRUTHS - Generally speaking they are CORRECT - and this statement is an EXCELLENT EXAMPLE of that.

Generally speaking, when we PLEASE THE LORD in our behavior and actions, MOST PEOPLE will live at peace with us - they will APPRECIATE OUR LOVE & CARE for others - According to this Proverb, this could even MEAN THOSE WHO HATE what we stand for, will VALUE OUR KINDNESS.

Obviously this is NOT ALWAYS TRUE - If it were, the church would NEVER SUFFER PERSECUTION - but, as Paul told Timothy, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”**

The Truth that we get from this verse, BIG THOUGHT #7 is this: **God’s plans and purposes are generally the safest paths for us to travel!** - When we are IN THE CENTER of God’s Will, we are usually in a SAFE PLACE - It is the PATHWAY OUTSIDE God’s plan that is UNSTABLE, ROCKY & DANGEROUS!

A SINFUL LIFESTYLE is fraught with all kinds of PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES - We see all through Scripture that **Sin destroys relationships! Sin complicates life!** - Think of the LIFE OF DAVID after his night with Bathsheba - remember the PAINFUL EXPERIENCE of Lot after his MOVE TO SODOM.

The SAFEST PLACE to be is right smack in the CENTER OF GOD’S WILL - Seek to keep yourself there - and maybe EVEN THOSE WHO HATE YOU will allow you to live in peace.

Our final Truth is found in verse 8 - **Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice** - Many of us will be challenged by this Proverb because we hold to THE OLD TESTAMENT THINKING that God’s blessing ALWAYS MEANS MORE!

Yet, this verse reminds us WHAT MATTERS MOST in life - It is NOT THE QUANTITY of our net worth - it is the QUALITY OF OUR CHARACTER that aligns our life with God's Will - Our PRIORITIES must be God's priorities if we are going to FOLLOW HIS PURPOSES for our lives.

Righteousness and Justice are God's priorities - Not BANK ACCOUNTS and BOTTOM LINES - Are these also MY PRIORITIES? - I'm I more concerned with DOING THINGS RIGHT, even if it cost me a sell - or if it cost me SOME PROFITS? - or if I have to pay EXTRA TAXES?

This is where LOT'S LIFE went sideways - He looked at the FERTILE PLAINS of Sodom and saw AFFLUENCE & PROSPERITY - The financial gains caused him to OVERLOOK THE DEMONIC WORLDLY influences that would later WREAK HAVOC on his family.

Trust me when I say, Lot is NOT THE LAST HUSBAND to endanger the spiritual well-being of his family in exchange for a CHANCE TO GET AHEAD financially - Unfortunately, I have seen it happen ALL TO OFTEN.

Truth #8 - **We must keep the right priorities in our life if we are going to stay on God's path and follow His purposes.**

Guys, we learn GOD'S PRIORITIES each week when we come in here and STUDY HIS WORD - The question is this: **How do you respond when THERE IS A CONFLICT between what you hear on Sunday morning and what you are prioritizing during the week?** - Which is SACRIFICED? - Which WINS OUT?

If you want to stay ANCHORED TO GOD'S WILL, you have to be willing to change - God will NOT COMPROMISE His priorities - We must CHANGE OURS!

Finally in verse 9, the writer REAFFIRMS HIS OPENING thought - **A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.**

We need to MAKE OUR PLANS - God wants us to PRAY & PLAN - He doesn't want us to LIVE LIFE WITH NO GOALS OR DIRECTION - He just wants us to MAKE SURE WE CONSIDER HIM - and CONSULT HIM - and PRIORITIZE HIM when we make our plans.

James 4:13-15 **Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."**

Let's make our plans, but let's always keep the attitude "If the Lord wills!"

Remember these 8 BIG THOUGHTS:

**I must always be open to God's purposes overriding my plans!**

**My plans are often clouded by my selfish desires. I must allow God to weigh them!**

**Maintain an attitude of submission to the will of God from the beginning of our planning.**

**God has a purpose in all that He does!**

**Pride is the enemy of God's plans for you life!**

**A proper reverence for God is the first step in knowing and joining His plans and purposes.**

**God's plans and purposes are generally the safest paths for us to travel!**

**We must keep the right priorities in our life if we are going to stay on God's path and follow His purposes.**