

Good Decisions

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- [0 : 00] And take the handout that you received when you came in of the scripture reading. It'll be from Proverbs, selected passages in Proverbs.
- So I'm just going to read through them. This is God's word, his wisdom to us. The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
- The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful. The way of the fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.
- Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed. To a man belongs the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue.
- All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but the motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.
- [1 : 02] The Lord works out everything for his own ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster. In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.
- There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.
- A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way? The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty.
- Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Let's hear God's word preached. Well, Proverbs chases us back to Jesus Christ.
- And that way it's no different than any other part of the scriptures. We saw last week that righteousness is wisdom.
- [2 : 11] To live a righteous life is to live a wise life. And then I made the suggestion that you could perhaps look at the Westminster Larger Catechism and the questions and answers about the Ten Commandments.
- I don't know if you looked into that and thought it through. If you did, then I did this week. And I have to say, wow, you saw how that was almost like drinking from a fire hose.
- If you did it, it really held up a mirror to me, to what God expects in the totality of his law.
- And I took a look into the mirror and realized how far I fall short. That's what one of the things the law is designed to do.
- I didn't get past the first commandment. I didn't get past the first part of the first commandment, where it was saying, this is what this law says you should do.
- [3 : 19] Before I had to say, this searches my heart, and I need that Jesus that we just sang about. His robes from mine. Proverbs makes you stand in awe of Jesus.
- It makes you stand in awe of Jesus. I think you get so much of a picture of what he was really like. Just from a few verses in Luke, when he was a young man, it says this, he went down.
- Now, this is the Son of God in human flesh as a man. He went down to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and was obedient to them.

Why was he obedient to his parents? It seems like the law says something about that. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.

Perfect obedience, perfect wisdom. If my mind is anything, it's like a tent with maybe a single light bulb hanging down from it.

[4 : 29] It's not as dark as it used to be. Thank the Lord. The light has been turned on. But it is just a light bulb hanging from a tent compared to Jesus' heart and to Jesus' mind.

Because when I look into the book of Proverbs, I am seeing this is how Jesus thinks about things. This is how he processes things. This is how he looks at the world and looks at people.

This is his understanding. And so if my mind is this tent with maybe a single light bulb hanging down from it, then Jesus' mind is one of these great cathedrals with wide open windows and stained glass windows and the light shining through and sparkling across all those windows.

In the city of Istanbul, there is an ancient and old church called the Hagia Sophia. It would be the Holy Wisdom Church.

And if you Google that building, you can see sort of a representation of what holy wisdom looks like.

[5 : 38] It's this wide open, high arching, lots and lots of windows, lots and lots of air and space and light. And it's beautiful.

That's what Jesus' mind is like compared to my mind. And that's what the book of Proverbs makes me realize. It makes me stand in awe of who Jesus is.

If sin darkens our minds and confuses us, then Proverbs is giving us a glimpse into what a perfect mind would look like. A perfect human mind. How they think, how they process, how they understand.

It's giving us a glimpse of what Jesus himself is like presently. And you know what else it's doing? It is showing us where God is taking us. It not only helps us to live this life now, but the end product.

This is what God is doing in our lives. He is making us Christ-like in every way. He's making us into Christ-perfect likeness. Paul says to the Romans, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[6 : 42] And that's what Proverbs is all about. So wisdom is righteous living. Is that all it is? Is Proverbs no different than obeying the Ten Commandments?

No, it's certainly not less than that. It's more than that. And it's making choices well. It's making plans well. It's living well and competently.

So things like, should I let my child go to that friend's house? You'll search in vain to find a law written about that.

Should I let my child go over to this friend's house? Should I let him or her do this or that? Should I go to this college or that college? There's a lot of factors.

In some decisions, there's a lot of factors about what I should do. And then how do you weigh those factors, especially when they seem almost playing against each other? That's what wisdom is about.

[7 : 41] Should I marry this person? Was I right to not marry this person? Should we save this money or would it be better to give it?

Or would it really be better to go on vacation with it? There's no hard, fast rules about that. You need wisdom. You need to make a decision. Should I say something?

Should I talk to this person? Or should I keep silent? If I do talk to them, what should I say?

How should I say it? What words will help and what kind of words won't help? Wisdom is about making choices on the big scale and on the little scale.

And it's doing it well. Well, we all, we have all these choices before us. And we want to do and make these choices well.

[8 : 42] And we all want guidance, don't we? We all want to know the Lord showing us the way to go. What decision to make?

Who to marry? What college to go to? To talk to this person? To not talk to this person? To take this job? To move here? Whatever the question is, we all want guidance. And I think we wish it was other than what it is sometimes.

I think we wish that we could be like the Israelites who, you know, after they left Egypt, I don't know, one morning they woke up or one night, I don't know which it was, but all of a sudden there was a theophany.

There was an appearance of God. And he was there. It was a cloud, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And the Lord was guiding them, leading them.

So he stopped, they stopped. He moved, they moved. And I think we can all say, I wish it was like that for us. Sometimes we do wish it was like that for us.

[9 : 46] Making it super plain. You know, how many ever years ago, I was sitting across the table from a young lady named Stephanie Hopkins.

And there was no light bulb or no arrow pointing saying, this is the one. Here she is. There was none of that. And I almost wish there was. It would have saved me a lot of trouble.

Um, it would have saved me from falling for this other girl and then having my heart broken when she dumped me. That would have been nice. That's not how it happened though. Why doesn't God do it that way?

Because I don't think God is first and foremost interested in giving us the easiest way forward, the easiest kind of guidance. Because how would that have made me wise?

How would have that grown my faith? How would have that grown my hope? How would have that grown my maturity? We lead toddlers by taking them by the hand and then guiding them wherever they need to go.

[10 : 50] Um, so, if you have, you know, an eight-year-old and they say, can I go over to this friend's house? Well, that's a decision that you need to make and you need to help them think through that.

But if your college student called and said, you know, um, I'm wondering, mom, should I go over to this person's house or not? You would probably say, what are you doing?

I don't know. What's your workload? What's in front of you? Why are you calling me? This is time for you to make a grown-up decision. God is interested in making us into grown-up Christians who use wisdom, our own minds, our own hearts.

He's making us into Jesus. So God doesn't guide us by that, uh, making it obvious. And he has good reasons for it because he's actually trying to turn us into something.

The emphasis is not getting us just this perfect path and making sure we don't miss it. God doesn't guide like that. He doesn't guide us by our feelings of peace either.

[11 : 55] That's a common misconception. Uh, we say, I just don't have peace about this. I don't know what I should do. Uh, you'll search in the scriptures in vain for that method.

I know of one place where Paul said he didn't feel any peace. And so he decided to do something. But that certainly wasn't the go-to method.

You see that in one place. And there's probably other places that contradict it. Uh, so it's not the go-to method. And I'm not saying you totally ignore your feelings about, do you have peace about this?

You know, sometimes we don't have peace about something because we do know it's wrong for some reason. We just don't know exactly why. We're not able to articulate it yet. And so it is totally, it's unwise to totally ignore your feelings.

Uh, maybe later you're going to recognize why you shouldn't have done that. It might be good to hold off. But your feelings of peace, or not having peace, can come from a misinformed conscience.

[13 : 03] Where your conscience doesn't have the right information. And so it's giving the wrong judgment. Fools have peace. Did you know that? Fools have peace about their decisions. There's a way that seems right to a man. You see that on your paper, 1215. But, there's a way that seems right to a man.

It's not 1215. It's 1625. But the end, it leads to death. It seems right. In other words, this fool has the feelings of this is a good decision.

This is a, and he has peace about it. But it's death. So we need, we need guidance. We have choices. So how does the book of Proverbs help us?

How does the book of Proverbs, how does God use the book of Proverbs to make us wise? The answer is not found in any one particular proverb. The answer is found when we take them all together and we sort of begin to understand how they all hang together.

[14 : 09] And so it takes some meditation, some deep thinking. How does, how does Proverbs help us? It gives us a worldview. It gives us something before we actually have to make a decision.

It gives us the right framework to think about our decisions. And how to feel about them and what to, how to put them into a big picture. And so that's what we want to talk about tonight.

We want to take that big picture. We want to understand that. And then we, we want to do some applying it on a smaller scale. So we have these decisions.

We, we need guidance. I don't know what's facing you, but we all from time to time have bigger decisions and we're always constantly making smaller decisions.

So how does the book of Proverbs help us? Well, first of all, we have to see the big picture and the big picture I'm calling the Proverbs paradox. So if you're taking notes, this is the, going to be the first point, the Proverbs paradox.

[15 : 11] What's a paradox? A paradox are two facts that seem to contradict each other. That they, it just doesn't seem like they both could be true at the same time.

And yet they are. That's what a paradox is. So you want wisdom for that decision in front of you. You need to begin with the Proverbs paradox.

What is that? Well, you see it right there on your sheet and some of these Proverbs number 16, nine in his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Or 16, one to a man belongs the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. So to a man belongs the plans of the heart.

You make plans. They're yours. You thought about them. You've considered them. You've pondered them. They're yours.

[16 : 14] They belong to you. You've made them. You act on them. They're yours. And planning is good. Planning is good. 12, five.

You see it there on your sheet. The plans of the righteous are just. The plans of the righteous are just. Planning is good. 21, five. The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

Again, plans. They're good. They're ours. They're our parts. And so wise men make good plans. Wise men make good plans.

They make good decisions. They make good choices. And so your decisions matter. That's what Proverbs is teaching. Your choices matter.

I know that is not particularly profound, but you do need to take it to heart. And it needs to settle with its full weight upon you. What you are deciding, it really does count.

[17 : 12] It does matter. It's going to matter in your life. It's going to matter how you're the quality of your life. What happens? Wise men make good plans.

We already talked about this some weeks ago. When we were talking about marriage and romance and that sermon. One of the bits of wisdom that we talked about was, young people, whatever you do, Proverbs would tell you, don't marry a contentious, argumentative spouse.

Don't do it if you have any power within you. Now, back in the day when there was arranged marriages, that proverb was more just an observation of a fact.

So your dad married you off to a girl and she's contentious or vice versa. How painful that is. But in our culture, it's more than just an observation of a fact.

No one is going to force you to marry anyone here. Your parents can't force you to marry this person or that person. But you have this choice.

[18 : 27] You make this choice. And Proverbs would say, and you're going to live with the consequences of that choice. So marry well.

Marry well. Make a good decision there. Because it's going to set the whole course of your life for good or for bad.

Your choices are yours. And they count. They matter. And they matter more and more as you make more and more of them.

So you have plans. They're yours. You're going to be held accountable. Now that's one half of this paradox that you need to really get a hold of. You need to take this seriously.

That I am responsible for what I do. And for how I live. And the choices and the plans that I make. Now here's the other half of the paradox. God is totally sovereign over your choices.

[19 : 27] And again, I don't know how that goes together. But you see it there in Proverbs 16 verse 4. So it would be the fourth proverb under that list there. The Lord works out everything for his own ends.

Even the wicked for a day of disaster. Now we're going to get back to that. The wicked for the day of disaster. We're going to come to that at the end. Or sometime later here.

But what is God doing right now? He is working out everything for his own ends. Your choices, my choices.

Your plans, my plans. He's working out everything for his own ends. He has plans. And he's working them out. So 16.1. To a man belongs the plans of the heart.

But from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. So we go back and we talked about what should I say? Should I say this thing to that person? And what happens in that circumstance?

[20 : 23] And I want to say the right words. And you plan it all out. And what this proverb says is. The thing that you end up actually saying. That ultimately comes from the Lord.

It came from your heart. You're responsible for it. But God has so controls things. So that you're not forced. But what is actually said.

It comes from the Lord. It fits into his ultimate plan. So what you end up saying. Is what he has planned for you. 1633.

The lot is cast into the lap. But it's every decision is from the Lord. God is sovereign over all these plans. And he's sovereign over what we would call random chance.

So who gets to kick off the football in the football game. Or who gets to decide if they want to kick off or receive. Well. God decides.

[21 : 27] I've heard of elections. In small towns and things. Where it was so close. Or it was such a tie. That they actually put the two names in a hat. And someone picked out the name of who was going to be the next mayor.

Or whatever it was. That decision. Came from the Lord. So. 169.

Here's this. Here's this paradox. Right there. In a heart. A man. In his heart. A man plans his course. But the Lord determines his steps. So our plans matter.

Our choices count. And yet the Lord determines our steps. We end up in places. That our plans would have never have taken us.

I'm looking at broken all here. Who would have thunk it? Who would have thought it? But the Lord had plans. Our plans matter.

[22 : 30] Our choices count. The Lord determines our steps. That's a mystery. That's a mystery. And that's a reason for humility.

Even humility in your own life. There is more going on in your life. Than just you and your choices.

God's mysterious. Sovereign. Omnipotent hand. Is at work. Proverbs says that. A man's steps. Are directed by the Lord.

How then can anyone understand. Their own way. There's something mysterious. And deeply. Beyond our understanding.

The Lord is taking me someplace. The Lord is doing something in my life. Remember all the way back at the beginning.

[23 : 34] When we talked about this definition of Proverbs. It's about seeing and understanding. The fabric of reality. And living in harmony with it. But it doesn't stop there.

There's a very important thing. That I put on the end. And that's. But you never fully. But you also know. That you'll never fully understand it.

There are things about God's wisdom. That are beyond our understanding. And this is one of those areas. So. We don't know. How can this be?

My choices count. They matter. I'm held responsible. But. The Lord determines my steps. The full answer is. I don't know. I don't know how you put those two things together.

The Bible isn't interested in. Teasing out the philosophical. Conundrum. And giving us an answer for that. The Bible just teaches both. Now.

[24 : 33] Does that mean the Bible is contradicting itself. And saying one thing in one place? No. There are places in the Bible. Where one verse. Says one thing. And then the second verse. Right after it.

Says the. The very. Opposite side of that paradox. The Bible knows. The Lord knows. What he's writing. I think it means. That this is God's.

Book. We're getting. Something of God's mind. When he talks about it. Talks about things. If we were to fully understand. Everything that is written here.

Then. We would know it wasn't from God. Because surely God. Has things. That are past. Are finding out. God's mind. So.

It means that. God's mind is bigger than ours. So. We can't make these two lines.

- [25 : 31] Cross. And meet. And intersect. In. In the box of our mind. These two lines. Don't ever seem to be able to cross. And come together. There. But.
- If. If you had. God's box. Which is. Much bigger. Than our box. You could see. Oh. They cross. Way out here. They don't cross. Inside my box. Inside the box.
- Of my mind. And my understanding. And my ability. To comprehend. But they. Out here. In God's box. In God's mind. No. Contradiction. Whatsoever.
- Now. My concern tonight. Isn't so much. How do I reconcile them. I'm really more interested. In the practical wisdom. That this is giving us. That's what Proverbs is.
- This is not just to give you. This philosophical conundrum. In this problem. It's practical. To have. And to hold. This paradox. In both. With both of your hands.
- [26 : 27] To. To humbly. Accept it. Is so practical. And to have it. Is to have. The beginning. Of real. Wisdom. Real. Practical.
- Wisdom. What do I mean? What do I mean? Let me show you. So. Here you are. You have some sort of. Big choice. In front of you. What college.
- Should I go to? Or something like that. If all there was. Was God's plan. So. It's just one half. Of this paradox.
- If all there was. Was God's plan. My plans. My choices. Had nothing to do with it. Everything is determined. Everything is just. All decided. And that's all. That there is.
- That's it. My choices. Don't matter. Then. I would sit around. And do nothing. Wouldn't I? I would have this. Such temptation. To be passive. And then.
- [27 : 21] When things don't turn out. You know. I would. I would automatically. And always. Just blame God. He is doing this. Or. On the other side. I could. Instead of being passive. I could just be totally.
- Reckless. And. Thoughtless. What does it matter? You know. What. My choices. Don't matter. God's going to overrule it all. He is going to make it all better. If it's his plan.
- It's his will. He'll do it. And so. I'm just reckless. With my decision. In other words. If we just have this. One half of this. Paradox. You know what that makes us? It would make us into fools.
- We'd make reckless decisions. Or we'd make no decision at all. When. We need to make a wise decision. We would be.
- Cynical maybe. Presumptuous. Indifferent. Lazy. Fools. If we just have one half of that paradox. On the other side.
- [28 : 18] If it's all us. If it's only me. If I'm the only one. That really matters. And it's all my choices. I want you to think. Who can.
- Who could really bear that load? Some people are trying to carry that load. The weight of the decisions.
- That you would have to make. Would weigh you down with anxiety. Completely. All the time. If you're an anxious person.
- Maybe. Just maybe. That's part of it. If you have a hard time. Making a decision. And you just go over it. And go over it. And go over it. And go over it. Because you're deathly afraid. Of making the wrong decision.
- Maybe you just have one half. Of the paradox. And you're weighed down. With anxiety. And then when you make a bad decision. What then? You make a bad choice.
- [29 : 17] You went to this college. And that was a really dumb idea. Looking back on it. Or you did this major. And that wasn't a smart idea. Maybe even. You married this person.

And now you shouldn't have. And you regret it. Things like that. Your bad choices. Would just weigh you down. With bitter regret. So. On the one hand.

You'd be. A certain kind of fool. And on the other hand. You'd be. A different kind of fool. Maybe you've seen. I'm sure you at least. Know about them.

The Back to the Future movies. And they're doing all this time travel. And things like that. And there's three of them. And at the very end. Of the third one. Doc Brown. Christopher Lloyd's. White haired scientist character.

He says something like. Your future. Your future. Is whatever. You make it. Your future. Is whatever. You make it. Your future.

[30 : 13] Is ultimately. Completely. In your hands. And it's going to be. Whatever you. Make it. If you really believe that. You would probably.

Never really get out of bed. Because who. Because. Every moment. You would be on the verge. Of making some sort of. Devastating. Decision.

In your life. If I choose to go here. Then who knows. What's going to happen. To me. You never risk anything. You never be able. To try anything. You never be able. To rest.

And relax. If you thought. It was all. On. You. So if I go to this school. To know. Then who knows. What that. Where that's going to lead. It might be the worst. Life.

Destroying. Decision. I've ever made. And if that's what you think. If it's only. Your future. Is whatever you make it. God's not in it. You're going to be.

[31 : 06] Constantly. Feeling. Like you're on the brink. Of making. Some terrible decision. And maybe. The good decisions. That you do make. Are good. They're going to fill you. With pride. And then you're going to be.

That kind of fool. So. Constant fear. Constant regret. Either way. If you believe one. Without the other. You're not going to live. A wise life.

You need both. And so you see. How practical. Proverbs. Is. Being. It's giving you. The truth. To do.

These two things. One. You make. A good decision. You need. To make. A good. Decision. And two. At the same time. Even as you're.

Making. These decisions. To the best. Of your ability. Getting advice. And making. As wise. Of a decision. As you can. You don't know. How your life's. Going to turn out. And so you have. To trust the Lord.

[32 : 03] Trust him. He's at work. And he cares for you. So your decisions. Count. So make good ones. But God. Loves you. He's working out.

All things. For your good. And so. Trust him. And if you're. Holding on. To both sides. Of this. Then. You know what you can do. You can be wise. And be calm.

You can be diligent. And you can also relax. Trust the Lord. So which. College. Should you go to.

Well. Make a good decision. And then trust the Lord. Because you don't know. How it's going to turn out. But he does. You don't know. All the. The details.

Of the agenda. But he does. He knows. So that's the Proverbs. Paradox. These two things. That the. By.

[32 : 57] The book of Proverbs. Shows us. And wants us to hold together. And we need to take both on board. And believe them. A hundred percent. Now. Let's apply it.

How do you make a good decision? So this is the world view. That I'm giving you. This. Paradox. Of your decisions count. And yet. You can trust the Lord. He's working. How do you apply this?

How do you make a good decision? And there's just a few things. I want you to think about. And then we'll be. We'll be done. Your decisions count. They matter. Your life.

And to a great degree. Is going to be determined. By your decisions. So. Start where you want to. End up. At least. As far as you can tell.

Start where you want. To be. In the future. And work backwards. From there. Start from where you want to be. And work backwards. From there. Now this is basic. But it needs to be said.

[33 : 58] Especially for. Younger people. But. Frankly. It needs to be said. For. A lot of people. So many people. Are living. Just for right.

Now. They're doing what is fun. And feels good. And is nice. Right. This. Moment. But wisdom sees. You know what?

I'm going to live today. But more than likely. I'm going to also have to live tomorrow. And I'm going to have to live with the decisions that I made. Today. And so.

Do you want to be. Broke. And in debt. And married to someone you regret. Well you just do. Whatever. Whatever feels good right now. Right today. Make the best. Feeling decision.

But don't think about tomorrow. And that's what I'm trying to say. Wisdom is always thinking about the results. Where is this taking me? And so you start where. Your choices are going to take you.

[34 : 54] And work backwards. Words. So many people. Just do. What feels good now. They have that expression.

YOLO. You only live once. And they just YOLO their life away. And they wonder why. Their lives are such a mess. So your decisions matter. So think about.

Where you want to go with these decisions. Second. Get advice. Get as much advice as you can. If your decisions matter. If your choices count. If your plans really do matter. Then get advice. As much as you can.

The way of a fool seems right to him. He doesn't need advice. He's all self-contained. He's as smart as he needs to be. But. This says. A wise man.

Listens to advice. 1215. So you get advice. You get advice that challenges you. Advice that. Maybe. Says. Hey. I think there might be a problem here.

[35 : 50] With the way you're thinking. I hope. That. I hope you're learning to be suspicious. When. At least suspicious.

No. It's not an automatic thing. But at least suspicious. I get really suspicious. When someone totally agrees with me. On my position. If someone totally agrees. With everything I'm saying.

That kind of. I mean. They're just telling me back. What I already think. There's a real danger in that. There's a real danger. In group. Think. Now. The smallest group.

Think. That we get into. The smallest echo chamber. That you get into. Is where. Three people. Me. And myself. And I. We get together. And we talk. And we decide something. And we're just mutually.

Reaffirming. Our decision. And there we go. That's a danger. But. Young people. I'm thinking of you. It could just be your friends. Telling you exactly. What they think.

[36 : 46] And you think. Already. That's not the kind of advice. You want. That kind of advice. Is dangerous. It's not going to do you any good. So. You want to get advice.

From experienced. People. Now. Third. About making wise decisions. This is going to kind of sound. Like. What? But. This is really the heart of it all.

What is the beginning of wisdom? What is it? It's the fear of the Lord. I hope you're starting to see. Why that verse is. Is central.

To the book of Proverbs. It is the hub. And everything else. Is the spokes. So this is. What we have here. It's.

16. 3. Commit to the Lord. Whatever you do. And your plans.

[37 : 42] Will succeed. That's a lot like. Proverbs chapter 3. In all your ways. Acknowledge him. And he will make your paths straight.

There is. I think Elizabeth Elliot. So there's a price. For guidance. There's a price for. Taking the Lord.

To be your guide. Do you want the Lord. To guide you. There's an admission fee. So to speak. It's.

You honor him. In everything. You dedicate yourself. To him. Completely. 11. 3. There.

The integrity. The integrity. That's the whole character. Of a man. He's whole character. Dedicated. Serving the Lord. The integrity.

[38 : 37] Of. The upright. Guides them. And then. 16. 3. Commit to the Lord. Whatever you do. And your plans. Will succeed. I want you to look again.

At that verse. And. It might. Not say. What you actually. Think it says. What are you. To commit to him. It doesn't say.

Commit your plans. To him. It says. Commit. Whatever you. Do. All of your works. All of your actions. To him. Now. Of course. That means. Your plans.

It says. All that you do. Though. This is more. This verse. This proverb. Is much more. Akin to. Proverbs 3. Where it's. In all your ways. Acknowledge him.

It's not. So much. Saying. Lord. Bless this plan. And he'll. Bless it. And he'll. Make it succeed. That's not how it actually.

[39 : 35] Works out in real life. Even. That's not exactly. What this proverb. Is saying. Tremper Longman. In his commentary. In Proverbs. Says this.

The thought. Is not that we. Simply. Pray for God. To honor our plans. And to establish them. It. I mean. Of course. It means that. But. He's saying.

It's not. Simply that. Rather. It is the idea. That we submit. Our entire. Life. Action. To God. So that. Even. If our. Human plans.

Are subverted. We can recognize. On an even. Deeper plane. Plan. Or an even. Deeper plan. At work. In our lives. This.

So this is. Deeper than. Just asking. Lord. Please bless. This plan. And make it. Succeed. There's nothing. At all. Don't get me wrong. There's nothing. At all. Wrong. About that. And that's. Certainly. A clear.

[40 : 32] Application. Of this. Proverb. But it is. Saying something. A little bit. Deeper. It is. Talking about. Wholehearted. Dedication. To. Whatever. Whatever.

You are doing. To the Lord. And that's. When you become. The kind of person. That does make. Wise. Successful. Plans. When you're living.

In the fear. Of the Lord. That's what the fear. Of the Lord is. When you're. Your whole heart. Is with him. All the time. And you're acting. Out of that fear. And then. What happens. Is you become.

The kind of person. That makes good plans. And then. Even when you're. Human plans. God. X's them out. Crosses them out. And puts them. Off to the side. You start to see. Oh.

- There's a better plan. In place. God is doing. Something better. And so. Your plans. Your plans. Are not succeeding. So much. But a better plan.
- [41 : 26] Is succeeding. And it's good for you. Now. How much of it. Then. How much. Are you giving. To God. God. How much.
- Are you giving. To God. How much. Are you committing. To the Lord. That's a fair question. For all of us. Are you giving him. Just the scraps.
- He gets the fringes. Of your life. The edges. And then. You say a little prayer. Bless this plan. The fear of the Lord.
- Is the beginning. Of wisdom. Giving God. The fringes. Of your life. And then. Expecting him. To bless. All of your plans. Is anything. But wise.
- But you say. So. What do you do then? You more. And more. In all your ways. Acknowledge him. You more. And more. In all your ways.
- [42 : 26] Submit to him. And commit your way. To him. And do what he says. And obey him. And then trust him. For whatever. Is happening. In your life. And that makes you.
- Fear him. And you grow in the fear. Of the Lord. And you grow in the trust. Of the Lord. And you. And his mind. Is more and more. Poured into you. So that you do. Make good decisions.
- So that's what you do. But maybe you say. My problem is not the choices. I have to make now. My problem is the choices.
- That I have made. There is no going back. There's no time travel. There's no hitting the rewind button. And that's what I can't get over.
- I have made choices in the past. And my past choices. I have such regret. So what then? Well if that's you. Let me give you some encouragement.
- [43 : 28] We already looked at 16.4. We're going to look at it again. The Lord works out everything. For his own ends. Even the wicked. For a day of disaster. The very simple truth here.
- Is that. Even bad things. Bad people. Bad things. Are under his control.
- Bad people. And he knows how to use. Even wrong. And foolish. And evil. Deeds. To further.
- His plan. To do. His people. Good. You know. Here's the frustration. Of being the devil. We saw this.
- Last week. But this is the frustration. Of being the devil. That no matter what you do. It always backfires on you. You throw Paul into jail. And he starts preaching.
- [44 : 24] To all these people. Who never would have heard it. You give people prosperity. And then they use it. To send missionaries. To the ends of the earth. What are you going to do. If you're the devil. No matter what. You're in a no-win situation.
- Because God knows how to use. Wicked ends. Wicked evil things. For his own ends. Now here's the comfort for you. That's not just true.
- Of other things. Other things besides you. That's not just true. Of other things. That's true of you. And your sin.
- And your bad choices. He subjugates it all. To your salvation. Everything. Must serve. Your salvation. Everything. Everything. Must bow its knee. To getting you. To heaven. Happy. And whole. And safe. And sound.
- [45 : 20] So God. Is a skillful. Captain. So you have a sailboat. And I imagine. Pretty much anyone. Can sail a sailboat.

When the wind is straight behind you. And there's no problems. But God is such a skillful captain. That he knows how to use. Contrary winds. To blow you. In.

To port. And so. What I'm saying is. Don't. Bar. Yourself. From that truth.

Don't exclude. Yourself. From. God's grace. He hasn't barred you from it. He hasn't said. I'm going to work out. All these other things. But not your bad things.

Your bad choices. I'm going to work out. Everything. He says. And so. He uses them for his good purposes. And so. Don't sit around. And beat yourself up. For every bad decision.

[46 : 18] Learn from it. Learn from it. Because your decisions matter. And if you don't learn. From your bad decisions. Then. I wonder.

I wonder if you're going to learn. From anything. So learn from your bad decisions. Say. I could have done this. I should have done this. And it would have worked out differently. You learn from it. And then you don't repeat it. But.

You lose hope. And you lose joy. Because you're putting too much emphasis. On your choices. And your decisions. And too little. On God's plans.

And so. Don't say. Well. If you say. There's no recovery. And I just made all these bad decisions. Well. There's no way going forward that way.

And if you don't. Roll it onto God. And just say. That was dumb. But here it is. If you don't do that.

[47 : 18] If you just keep it all on yourself. There's no going that way either. So. If you don't learn from your bad decisions. And if you don't hand them over to the Lord. You're not going to make forward progress. But.

You know what you do. You say. Lord. I don't remember what. Puritan was. Said it. But. He talked about. The Lord knows how to draw a straight line. With a crooked stick.

And you say. Lord. I made a crooked stick. Of my life. Maybe it's not even sinful. Maybe it was just a bad idea. Well. Lord.

Write a straight line with it. Then look for what God is doing. So you made these bad choices. Somewhere along the lines.

And you're filled with regret. I want to say. Stop dwelling on the regret. And the bad things. And start looking for what God is doing. You're not going to find out everything.

[48 : 12] I understand that. But that's not. What I'm saying. Start looking. To see what God is up to. And. Here's a clue. Here's. Here's a field.

To investigate. And I don't know what you're going to find there. Here. But here's a field to investigate. Something to explore. You know.

We just don't learn very well. By being told something sometimes. What I mean by this is. You know. I can tell someone. You're a sinner. You're a big sinner.

I can say that. But. People don't learn. About their sinfulness. Just by hearing someone say it. And we don't learn about God's love.

By someone just telling us. By someone telling us. You know. We talk about. And we say. Probably every week. We. Talk about God's love.

[49 : 10] We hear that. And. You know. Just hearing it is good. I'm not saying. There's anything wrong with that. But. If we. If we really took it to heart. And we.

It really. We felt the full weight of it. We'd probably live a lot different lives. Than what we do. And we know that. But. It doesn't really work that way. Generally.

We. We need to hear it. We need the truth. But. We need experience. We need experience. If you want.

If we want experience. Or if we want wisdom. And need wisdom. Then we need experience. And so. Sometimes the Lord. Let's us have what we want.

And what we want. It turns out to be a big mistake. And what happens. What happens then. Well. I learn a little bit more.

[50 : 07] About my weakness. I learn a little bit more. About my foolishness. And I learn some humility. And so. What happens from my.

About my plans from there. From that point forward. Well. My plans become a little more careful. And considered. Don't they? I'm not trusting myself so much. Because I've.

Learned. I can make some really bad decisions. And. You also learn about his love. So you made this big mess. Of your life.

And yet. He's for you. He's with you. He helps you. And so your plans. With this. Greater sense of God's love.

For you. Your plans can also become more bold. And confident. That's what Proverbs is doing. It's making us humble. And bold. At the same time.

[51 : 03] That's not something the world produces. That's something that God does. And so what's. What is God doing. In all of this experience. Well. He's making you like Christ.

He's taking. That dark little tent. That we talked about. With just the single light bulb. And he's making it bigger. And he's stretching it out. And he's putting in windows. And he's putting in arches.

And he's starting to shine. More and more light into it. In other words. He's making you like. His son. He's at work. So if you're regretting things.

You can't get over your past. Well. Think about some of those things. Take those to heart. What's the takeaway?

It's this. God is guiding us. God is guiding us. And he has plans for us. And so we need to trust him. And our choices matter. And so get advice. And most importantly.

[52 : 02] Dedicate all that you do. To him. Commit it all to him. And. And as you do. And even when our plans don't turn out.

The way we thought. God has a wonderful way. Of doing much more than we could ever. Hope or imagine. That's what he's up to. And so his ways are higher than our ways.

And his ways are better than our ways. And we can trust him. Well let's pray. Heavenly Father. Thank you that these things are true.

I pray that you would help us to hold on. To both of these truths. To believe them. To believe them with. More settled conviction.

That we would be both. Confident. And calm. That we would be humble. And. Bold.

[53 : 03] That. We would be more like Christ. In all of our. Choices. And all of our decisions. And. That we would learn to trust you. As Christ trusted you.

That you are a good father. And that you lead us. In the best way. Draw us close to Christ. And.

Please help us. To make decisions. That are according to your glory. And. That are for our good. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.