

you...but now, you're working 70 hours a week and they never see you. Where do you think that path leads?

- o **College students...I want to be a brain surgeon with 2 doctorates and a law degree...**but you skip class and are, in general, an all-around slacker?
- o **Men...**
- o **Parent:** You want your kids to grow up and love God, but you have them involved in 10 different sports leagues..they are always going here, going there...they have no time for church, for student ministries...they don't go with us to camp in the summer, they go to sports camp...and then when they get to college they want nothing to do with God...and you're left scratching your head thinking, "How did he get there? We didn't raise him to be that way." *Yes you did. You put him on a path that led him there. "But I intended him to grow up and love God."* It doesn't matter. You taught him at every turn that a little round ball matters more than the God of the universe. ("But I thought my kid had the chance to be a pro athlete." Get real. He's not going to be a pro athlete... Just statistically speaking, there is no chance. Plus, he's *your* kid...'s got your genes. He's not going to be a pro athlete.)

I could do this all day. *You getting the point?* **Direction, not intention, determines destination.** If you want to know where you are going to end up, just look at the direction of the path that the decisions you are making are putting you on.

So here was the piece of uber important advice Solomon gave his son: **4:26, "Ponder the path of your feet, then all your ways will be sure."** That's a very important principle that is going to undergird what we talk about today.

SUBJECT FOR TODAY: What are you supposed to do when you find yourself at a place in life and you wish you were at a different one? We've all been there, haven't we? You had anticipated, dreamed, that your life would go one way and some part of it goes completely off the plan.

- Maybe your marriage went bad after 20 years and suddenly you find yourself single again.. spouse died a long time before you thought they would..
- Maybe you're 30 and you don't have kids and you really thought at this point in your life you'd be married, and a mother, but you're working in a cubicle...
- Maybe you're in your 40's and you just lost your job; or maybe you're just not in a job you're really excited about; your career doesn't seem to have gone to the places you'd thought it would.

Or maybe you'd just like to be doing something else right now

- "I just really want to be married"
- Or, how about this one...you're sick of being a student and you're ready to have a real job with influence and power...
- I really felt this in seminary...When can I get out there?

How do you deal with those feelings of confusion, dissatisfaction, and impatience?

We're going to answer that question by looking at Proverbs 16...and teach you an important Biblical principle I'm going to call, "The principle of 'this day' and 'that day.'" I take that from Martin Luther who said, **Martin Luther**, "There are only two days on my calendar that make any difference to me: this day, and that day." That means that the wise man does not spend his time looking backwards into things he can't change, he lives in the present (this day); he doesn't look forward into things he can't control (he trust God with those); He lives in this day. The other day he thinks about *isthat* day, or judgment day, when he will give an account for how he lived. So, he lives *this day* in a way that he won't be filled with regret on *that* day.

Let's unpack that a little. This principle has **3 components to it**:

A. We must recognize that God has sovereignly brought us to "this day" (16:1, 4, 9, 33)

This is going to be hard for some of you to understand, and I'm not even really sure I understand it, but it's really important... but God exercises a certain amount of control over lives, so that we can in whatever situation we are in, in one sense God intends us to be here.

- **16:1** *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord;* He's saying, "You make plans...but ultimately God determines the outcome." He says it again in vs. 9...**16:9** *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.* You make plans...

16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.* God exercises a certain amount of control even over what looks like dumb luck.

16:4 *The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.* Even over bad things, even

when people are rebelling against God's will and doing precisely what He told them not to do...God incorporates even that stuff as a part of his plan.

No matter where you are, or how you got there, God exercised His sovereignty in getting you there.

You see, the word "sovereignty" means control...To say "God is sovereign" is saying "ultimately, God is in control."

- You say, I didn't plan to be here. Maybe not, but God saw to it that you ended up there.
- You say, "I was unlucky." Not really. God was in control of the dice.
- You say, "I was wronged." And you might have been. But God was in control even in that.

- **21:1:** The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will. "King" in those days was the most powerful ruler.
- A lot of things can really affect where you go...but God's plan, because nothing is more sovereign than God.
- I know if you think about this, I'm telling you, it will blow your mind...just our God. You may not want to think about all this too much, because I promise you, if you do, you'll feel your head slowly start to implode.....

But what that means is this...wherever you are, however you got there: bad luck, stupid decisions, or the injustices of others, you don't have to carry around a load of regret, or second guessing, or bitterness about how you got there.

- I know that some of you have made bad decisions that really messed up your life; and I know that some of you feel unlucky, and some of you feel like you've really suffered at the hands of someone else, but I'm telling you the Bible is clear that NOTHING is more sovereign than God.

Now, I know this really brings up a troubling question for some of you...been behind the person who wronged me...How can you say it was God's will? Abandoned, abused...

- God does not delight in or cause evil...it just means that God's plan is so all-encompassing that He even the rebellion and wickedness of men will in the end be made to serve His purposes. I know that is mind-blowing, but that's just God.
- 2 OT example of this:
 - Pharaoh... Really bad guy who wronged the children of Israel. But God said all that was part of His plan to work good in Israel's life by teaching them more about Him.
 - OT: Joseph...Everything went wrong. Sold into slavery. But he ends up in a guy named Potiphar's house and he serves

faithfully there and soon becomes a ruler there. But then Potiphar's wife, a lady named Hottiphar, lies about him. Goes to prison. But in prison he interprets a dream...because of that God was able to put him in a place where he would rule all of Egypt and be able to save the chosen family of Abraham one day. Here's the thing: ***It was not in spite of the bad things that happened to him, but because of them, that God did His work.***

- But I'm different..."I really screwed up my life...I'd be at a different place." Perhaps But you are here and you can't go back. *And the incredible truth is that God can weave even that into his plan.*
- Think about the cross. God took our sin and made it our salvation. He can do the same for your life.
- ***Illus. Veronica and UVA***...You and I would never have met; you would have never known the Summit Church, we would have never had our awesome kids. All the greatest things in your life came because of a bad attitude!
- Paul would say in Romans 8:28. I recognize that God is working all things together for His good purpose in my life...so my responsibility is not to spend my time regretting, or second guessing, or being angry at how I got here, because I recognize that through all of the bad actions of others, bad luck, and even my own bad decisions, a sovereign God is weaving a plan...today, this day!

Before I move off of this, one more objection: *"But I just can't understand why God would have done it this way or how He could possibly intend that painful chapter for my good."*

- A lot of people get to this point and they start to question whether or not God is really good or if He's even there.
- I understand...I can't explain everything...I can't explain God's wisdom. If God is all powerful and all loving, He's also all wise, and if His wisdom is above my wisdom as His power is above my power, than I expect that there will be a lot of things in life I won't understand for now.
- You look out at the universe and think about how big it is...*if the distance between the sun and the earth were the thickness of one piece of paper; then the distance between earth and the closest star would be a stack of paper 70 feet high; the distance across our galaxy would be a stack of paper 310 miles high; our galaxy is but a speck of dust.* The Bible says God upholds the universe by the word of His power...I can't explain how big God is, and how small I am, does it not make sense that the He may have some purposes I don't grasp yet?
- Guy like Bart Ehrman says..."..." ***Extraordinary faith in his abilities***
- One of my favorite conversations on this is in Job...undergoes completely purposeless evil. Why? Why? 64 seemingly irrelevant questions
- Can you explain to me the mating patterns of the ostrich? How about how weather works? And he asks all these questions that Job cannot answer, but in all these questions never gives Job the answer to why he is suffering.. And the meaning of the book of Job is, *"Your suffering is one of thousands of mysteries in the universe you are not*

big enough or smart enough to comprehend yet.”

- Well, we’ve figured out a lot scientifically. A scientist with the slightest touch of humility and honesty will tell you that for every one thing we figure out, another 10 questions come up. How does the atom hold together? In quantum physics, why can’t we observe a particle’s speed and mass at the same time? How do sea turtles know how to find their way back to the same place they were born to lay their eggs?
- Sometimes, you just have to trust...
- How? The cross...“I know that my Redeemer lives.”

So, we must recognize that “this day” is here by the plan of God.

B. We must commit to obeying Him in this day (16:3)

- **16:3** *Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*
- There is one thing He tells you to focus on, and that is the day in front of us.
- This verse recognizes that often we find ourselves in a place where we’d like to be somewhere else. We’ve made “plans” to be somewhere else—we’ve got dreams, maybe we even feel “called” to be somewhere else. God says, “Commit those desires to me” and let me establish that in my way and in my time.

- **You see, many of us get so focused on where we’d rather be that we fail to experience what God has for us in this moment.**
- I’ve noticed a pattern in Scripture...God will call someone to something...a lot of times he’d send them somewhere else.
- **Joseph was given a vision from God about where he was supposed to be**, but then he was taken somewhere else. Now, what if Joseph had said...“God has told me I’ll be a ruler, so I’ll just wait around until that opportunity.” He would have missed the very things God was using to get him to the place!
- **David**, anointed to be king! Then God sends him to the pasture for the next 10 years. What did he do? Made a little crown, bossed his sheep around? (What if he had said.. I’m a king, I don’t do sheep poop.). He would have missed the very things God would use to prepare him to be king.
 - When he met Goliath, remember what he said? I know God can kill this giant. I’ve seen him deliver me from a lion and bear. Where did he learn that?
- It is the pattern of Scripture that God will put us in places for a time to work on some dimension of our character. And if we miss that we’ll miss the very thing God is intending to use in our lives. ***Character greatness is forged in the***

pasture.

- Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*. He points out that people who become great didn't suddenly just become great, they developed a pattern of greatness in their lives. 10,000 hours. **You may be doing something inconsequential now, but you are forming a character habit that is very consequential.** That's the path principle.
- Billy Graham...

2 ways you can mess this up:

Do nothing, and miss out what God is doing in your life in this season:

- 20:4 The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.
- There is a time to plant, and a time to reap. But if you don't plant, you won't reap.
- Some of you, God has put a chapter in your life where He is sowing into you..I'm afraid you're going to mess that up because you're not sowing in the field that is in front of you! When harvest time comes, you'll have nothing!
- Don't waste your pain! Don't waste your singleness, or whatever time God has given you to sow!
- Story of my life is never being satisfied with where I am, but always looking ahead..I'm 36 and I'm already thinking about retiring.
- A friend of mine in CA has a great take on this...says that for a lot of people the greatest challenge to experiencing God's work in their lives is thinking about their **potential**. As Americans, we love to talk about our potential. Being all we can be. The problem, however, is that keeps us thinking about where we could be, rather than where we are..We're never focused on where we are, because we think we were created for greater.
- I'm like that, but I have realized this...All of me; my talents, my potential...And God can do with it what He wants. And here's a sobering newsflash: **God doesn't need me...** He's allowed guys a lot more talented than me to die—His kingdom can go on without me. So if he puts me in a situation where I don't feel I'm being maximally used, that is His deal, not mine. My gifts are His. I belong to Him.

The other way we mess that up is "taking a hasty detour."

- **19:2** Desire without wisdom is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.
- You have this desire, and it's not being fulfilled, so you...do something hasty...
- You can't stand to be single, so you starting dating a guy
- You drop out of school.
- **Me and Bruce in seminary.** God develops people in the desert. So be faithful where you are.**It is in the pasture that**

God forges character.

So, you can do nothing, take a detour; or, you can commit to God and let Him do His work in you during your “autumn” season.

- **We have some ladies who are immensely talented, but for a time you have kids...you struggle with that...** on one side you have your kids; Commit that to God and be fully faithful with what is in front of you.
- If you’re in seminary or college, plunge yourself into your studies. Be faithful.
- If you work at Chic-Fil-A, be the best dang chic-fil-a employee...*there’s nothing impressive about a guy who is always telling you he’ll do great things; there’s something very impressive about someone who is great even when they do inconsequential things.*

III. Give Great Consideration to Whom you must answer (v. 2)

- **2** *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.*
- “Pure”
- What if everyone speaks well of you, you are a success in everyone’s eyes, but God does not?
- All through Proverbs, most important thing to remember...You have to give an account to God for the way you lived your life.
 - The question of eternity is the most important question you will ever consider. Luther: only two days..
 - If you died today, what would it be like for you to stand before God?”
 - “Ponder the path of your feet.” What path are you on *right now*? Broad is the path, and wide is the way, that leads to destruction...
- **Gospel:** God created us to live and serve and love Him. But we have chosen to live our own way. Right now, someone ultimately calls the shots in your life. You may think of yourself as a fairly good person, but that’s not the point. Is God fully in charge of your life?
- If not, that is called sin. And there is a punishment for our sin. We are separated from God and under His righteous judgment.
 - That’s where Jesus comes in. Jesus came as the Savior, to live the life we were supposed to live and died the death we had been condemned to die, in our place.
 - This is available to all who will repent of their sin, turn over complete control of their lives to Jesus, and receive His free offer of forgiveness and salvation. Have you done that? Have you ever fully received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

- If not, you can do that today...

Prayer:

Jesus, I don't want to be in control of my life anymore, I want you to be. Right now I surrender myself to you. I receive Jesus as my savior, and I want Him to forgive and save me. In Jesus' name...

"God, I'll depend on you to bring this about in your way and your time; I'll be faithful to do, with all the strength you give me, what is front of me. Help me not to be restless.

Bullpen:

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- **Malcolm Gladwell** had an interesting take on this in a book I read recently called *Outliers*...He points out that people who become great didn't suddenly just become great, they developed a pattern of greatness in their lives.
 - He talks specifically about some Asians that have suddenly become very successful in the accounting and computing business, and he says that one of the reasons for this stems to the culture they come out of. One of the main industries in Asian countries had been the keeping of rice patties...—you have to work very hard, and keep very organized and accurate accounting. What some older Asians find really depressing, Gladwell says, is that keeping a rice patty is considered useless work...
You may be doing something inconsequential now, but you are forming a character habit that is very consequential.
 - Remember the path principle? This is it. You're on a path right now that is taking you somewhere in the future and part of that path is developing the character God wants for you.
 - **2nd thought is for you that are older: Beware of thinking God may not just change the direction of your life unexpectedly.** Heard a guy approaching retirement age...“I'll abruptly stop and start another one. You never know when one will end and when another begins.” The most important thing is that you respond with faithfulness to every chapter.
 - ***Are you being faithful to what is in front of you?***
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 - Nothing impressive who talks about the things he is going to do...
I won't even depend on myself to bring it about.” (Sheep prayer...“all the way my Savior leads me.” God has been committed to my life and salvation than I have!)
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 - (most of our college students just got back... and pretty soon some of you are going to be saying, “I don't like being a student. Have trouble staying focused in your classes...
Same thing with our decisions in life. At every point each of our decisions are putting us on a path that is leading us somewhere. It doesn't matter if we want to go to that destination, or intend to, if we're on that path, that's where we're

going! Because,

- **Another example:** I get lost a lot... for whatever reason when God was passing out a sense of direction I got totally overlooked...I'm driving around and I pull up to a stop sign, and I kind of sit there not knowing which way to go..I'm "We're in our neighborhood. Seriously." God did not endow any part of this brain with a sense of direction. Now, here's the thing.....I don't matter...I'm a sincere driver. I always intend to get to my destination. But the paths I get on take me somewhere.
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- ((A friend this week: "Show me your glory"...I don't understand, but let's us see His back so we know that He was there..

III. Entrust your dreams to Him

- **16:3** *Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*
- "established": word for creation.
- "make plans" (battle terminology)
- "commit" Trust God rather than yourself! (sheep prayer)
- It is not for you to control outcomes, it is for you to be faithful in all things. Prov 3:5-6

(Proceed with humility

- 27:1: Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring
- You may not know best
- All the way, my Savior leads me)
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- David. Anointed but sent to a pasture.
- It was not despite those things, but because of those things..
- And if they had not been faithful in the present, they would have gotten to that place God intended for them in the future.
- At no point does God's sovereignty remove our responsibility to make plans!
- These things are honestly beyond us.
- French mathematician.
- **Wherever you are, you are right where God intends for you to be.** You may not understand how this is working for God's purpose, but it is.

- Not a statement that God authors evil, but that God is in control, and God can use the free choices of men, even acts of human rebellion for His purposes.

16:1–4, 9 1 *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. 2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. 3 Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. 4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. 9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

Be careful how you interpret these verses... Analyze our motives

1 *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*

- Plan (battle terminology), but trust God (Kitchen)

16:9 *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

19:21: *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*

4 *The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

- God asserts here, in simple terms, that His plan is so all encompassing that even the rebellion of man will in the end be made to serve His purposes
 - Pharoah
 - Joseph
 - The cross (Acts 2:22–24)
 - Romans 8:28
 - Not a statement that God authors evil, but that God is in control, and God can use the very act of human rebellion and autonomy for His purposes. (Longman)
- But I don't understand
 - "Show me your glory"
 - Job...

2 *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.*

- Prov 4:26

3 *Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*

- Commit: literally, “to roll”...(Gol-el) roll your plans onto God
- Established: word used to describe God’s work in creation. We are given the privilege of seeing our plans become a part of His-story!

We are on a path. In everything character is developing.

- **16:1** *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord;*
- You make plans...???
- He’ll repeat himself in vs. 9, **16:9** *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*
- **16:4** *The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

○ Even bad things God uses...

I. Recognize God’s sovereignty over our lives (16:1, 4)

- **16:9** *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*
- **16:33** *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.*

In all things, Solomon is saying, God has exercised a sovereign control over your life. (This is going to be hard to get your mind around, and I don’t understand all of it.) According to Proverbs, **wherever you are, and however you got there, if you are surrendered to God, you are right where God wants you to be.**

- “I don’t want to be here; I never intended or planned to be here..”
- “If I’d just made better decisions I wouldn’t be here...”
- Maybe you say, “It’s not my fault I’m here. I was wronged, overlooked. My husband left me.’ Or, ‘I got passed over for promotion’ or ‘denied entry into a program.’

But the breadth of these verses is immense...??...

- **16:1** *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord;*

- **16:9** *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

Dumb luck...

- **16:33** *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.*

They even cover when someone does what God didn't want them to do...

- **16:4** *The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

Here's another one on that one...

21:1: The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will. There is no

- "king" in those days was the most powerful sovereign. No other sovereign.

God's plan is so all-encompassing that even the rebellion and wickedness of men will in the end be made to serve His purposes.

- OT: Pharaoh...
- OT: Joseph
- NT: The cross: Acts 2:23, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."
- Paul, thinking on this, would say...

That means that our responsibility is not to second guess how we got here, but to serve God at the place where we are..

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