

## Will of God

VBC

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Series: Life 101

Proverbs 16:1-3

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### INTRO

When I graduated from college at San Diego State University – I made plans for seminary

- I knew I wanted to give my life to ministry – and like many grads – I looked into the future and sketched out a blueprint
- I determined I would avoid anything to do with theology – doctrine was for those who had nothing better to do than sit around and argue – I would just study the Bible
- I would prepare to serve God – but I would never become a pastor – Reverend would never be attached to my name – clergy was for gray haired men who drove Dodges
- And I told family and friends I would come back to San Diego, stay involved in campus ministry – and live happily ever under the California sun
  - After all – can God create a better place to live?
  
- As things turned out – I not only studied theology – it became my major – my doctoral degree is in systematic theology
- By the end of seminary – I not only was open to becoming a pastor – I begged God to give me the privilege to enter its ranks – and 25 yrs later, I am still pastoring
- I never went back to San Diego
- In what I can only gauge as God's humor – He sent me to Oregon and Holland – where the sun is so infrequent moss grows on all four sides of a tree – and where I ended up owning a Dodge – Caravan – and until recently – a Dodge Neon
  
- The best laid plans o mice and men

For most of us – life often goes contrary to the script – have you noticed?

- You make the finishing touches to upgrading your home – and the next thing you know – you're transferred overseas
- You paint the walls pink – and God gives you a baby boy
- Retirement plans are all set – and illness turns the calendar upside down

Figuring out God's will is tough stuff!

- Yet most of us are determined to discover it
- It is in Proverbs we find the skills to pursue it – and one of the great passages is found in 16:1-3

## **1 - CHART YOUR COURSE – 16:1a**

- Planning is part of humanity – dreaming, preparing, designing, shaping

A- It's our God-given possession

- To man, writes the sage, belong the arrangements of the heart – the framing of initiatives
- A military term – used in Gen 14:8 to describe an army making arrangements on the battlefield

B- More than possession – planning is our responsibility – our obedience

- It is folly to drift – foolishness to live without a map and call it trust
- The fool is pictured throughout Proverbs as aimlessly wandering
- While the wise carve out a future – the fool whittles away the time

Belasco – If you don't have a direction for your life, you may spend your whole life waiting for your ship to come in, and realize at the end you were standing at the wrong dock

- The wise aim their compass – choose a school, map out a major, consider a profession, determine aims, sort out chapters, set goals
- This is their SKILL – 14:8 – the wisdom of the prudent is to understand His way – know His course

*Illustration* – Peter Drucker, the noted writer and teacher in business leadership, remembers being asked at 13 —

- What do you want to be remembered for? The students were dumbfounded
- The teacher did not expect an answer – but he offered this – “If you still can't answer it by the time you are 50, you have wasted your life”

Proverbs warns – don't waste your life – set your course – think through what you want to be remembered for – chart your course!

Italian sailors have this proverb – “He who is not ruled by the rudder will be ruled by the rock”

## 2 - RECKON WITH THE DIVINE WINDS – 16:1b

- While charting the course is our mandate – we must respect the prevailing winds, the divine currents
- Often the course from our plans to their ultimate end is a long one, taking a number of twists and turns – which may (most likely will) end up at a completely different destination
- Between our plans and His will is a great unknown – God’s ways are incalculable
- No wonder 20:24 – Man’s steps are ordained by God – how then can man understand his way?
  
- It’s the tension we all live with
- While we are morally responsible to plan and set a course – we must RECKON WITH – but more – DEFER TO God’s sovereign will – to His divine answer
- For it is God who is the agent behind everything that occurs
- Man proposes – but God ultimately disposes – this is His role
  
- Paul to the Romans – “I planned many times to come to you, but have been prevented from doing so until now” – 1:13
- Sometimes we discover that the winds are blowing differently
- Teaching us that in the process of charting our course – we are not up to realizing its end without His sovereign hand

The sage underscores this repeatedly --

- 16:9 – The mind of man devises, purposes, plans his way – a word suggesting careful thought, strategy
- But the Lord directs, ordains, orders his steps
- We plan and prepare – yet discover in our course that God has, at a single stroke, taken the whole affair out of our hands – He always has the last word

- 19:21 – Many are the devises of man – but it is God’s will that stands – succeeds, wins out

We find ourselves with Jeremiah declaring – 10:23 – I know O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself – nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps

- And then submit to winds – giving enough space in our plans to respond as Paul to the Ephesians —
  - I will come back – if God wills” – Acts 18:21

### 3 - CHECK YOUR READINGS – 16:2

- For they serve to guide one's direction
- What are the readings God uses?

#### A- The north star – Jesus

- This will guard us from lots of grief
  - For if we don't – if we take our eyes off Jesus – like Peter, will sink

#### B- Our compass – the Bible

- For without this – we tend to get lost – Ps 119:105 – Thy Word is a lamp
- Sweet – “It gets us through, when darkness sets in, and those times when the North Star is hidden”

- And God uses other significant readings

- 1) The counsel of significant others – Pro 11:14
- 2) What our gifts, abilities tell us
- 3) Circumstances
- 4) What does wisdom tell us – one of the very best readings
- 5) Our passions, desires, inner peace, intuition, gut

- But there is a caution here – especially with the last reading
  - For often – our intentions, our “ways” seem good – innocent, even honorable, pure
    - I'm moving back to San Diego to be close to family
    - I'm buying this car because it maintains its value
    - Pursuing this promotion so that I can excel in my strengths

- We're generally pretty good at this
  - 21:2 – Every man's way is right in his eyes

- But what may appear to be quite genuine can be quite different in God's sight
- Human judgment is fallible – our readings fail to see it all
- Only God sees straight
- As Bellah puts it – we never get to the bottom of ourselves on our own
- Only before God is the heart laid bare – 15:11 – He sees every motive, intention
- He alone can weigh, measure the motives, the internal spirit
- Asking —
  - a - Does it serve God – or is it more about serving us?
  - b - Will it bear fruit – or leave us less fruitful?
  - c - Will it bring God glory – or is there a better way to enhance His name?
  - d - Does it serve others – or does it basically center around me?
  - e - Will it lead to – “Well done good and faithful servant” or “Nice try”?

- So check the heart
  - Are my desires consistent with Scripture?
  - Do they call for faith?
  - Do they come as a result of deep prayers?

#### **4 - LET GO AND SET SAIL – 16:3**

- There is something liberating in the verb – roll...roll your plans to God!!
- Chart the course, submit to the currents, check the internal readings – and then entrust, give over – and commit
- Commit it all to God – set sail

Some of us process to death the course of our lives

- We spend most of our time planning – and little of our lives living

There are times we just need to set out from shore

- There are times we have to put God in the captain's seat, give up control of the journey, release the sail – get moving
- The will of God ultimately involves a leap of some kind
- As Ortberg put it – if you want to walk on water – you have to get out of the boat
- Inertia can sometimes be nothing less than sin

Some never take it – thinking that if they wait long enough, God will make clear His will

- He seldom does
- He gives us just enough signals to step out – commit it all to Him – and trust Him for the journey

- Just enough preparation to be prepared for the unexpected

I like how FB Meyer once put it —

“Be not afraid to trust God completely. As you go down the long corridor, you may find that he has preceded you and locked many doors that you would have entered in vain.

But be sure that beyond these there is one that he has left unlocked.

Open it and enter, and you will find yourself face to face with a bend of the river of opportunity, broader and deeper than anything you had dared to imagine in your sunniest dreams.

Launch forth from it, for it leads to the open sea.”

- As verse 3 puts it --
- The thoughts – the plans – the aims of life will be established, made ready, secured

- Something of significance, consequence occurs in the risk and in the surrender
- We get in step with God's timing – and realize our plans are the better for it
- We get in step with plans that now become God's – and we discover in the end that He has graciously protected us from ourselves

One thinks of David —

- Who had great plans – he would build God's house – he had the blueprints all ready
- But God had other plans – better plans in fact

Peter had great plans for Jesus

- But Jesus had a cross to die on – and His plans were far better than Peter's

Paul had great plans for Asia – but God had better plans

- And through him reached the Hellenistic world in a powerful way

He alone sees clearly – He is not limited by the tunnel vision that limits us

So trust Him – our plans are no less our own by giving over to Him – only less burdensome and better made