



Proverbs 16

God's Sovereignty over Human Plans

Proverbs 16 focuses on God's sovereignty over human plans, the importance of humility, and the contrast between righteousness and folly. Key Themes include trusting God to direct steps, the danger of pride, the value of wisdom over wealth, and the importance of integrity in speech and actions.

- **Sovereignty and Plans:** While humans make preparations and plans, the final outcome—the “answer of the tongue” and the establishing of steps—belongs to the Lord. Man proposes, but God disposes. (16:1 and 9)
- **Heart Evaluation:** Humans often view their actions as pure, but the Lord evaluates the motives (“weighs the spirits”). (16:2 and 9)
- **Commitment to God:** Committing works to the Lord involves trusting Him with the outcome, allowing Him to establish plans. (16:3)
- **Pride and Ruin :** Pride is “an abomination to the Lord” and a precursor to destruction, (16:5 and 18)

- **Righteousness and Wisdom:** A small income with integrity is better than great wealth obtained unjustly. Wisdom is better than gold. (16:8 and 16)
- **Speech and Conduct:** Wise hearts produce gracious and persuasive words, which are healing and constructive. (16:21-24)
- **Self-Control:** Controlling one's spirit is described as superior to physical strength or conquering a city. (16:32)
- **Divine Control:** Even random events, such as casting lots, are under the Lord's control. (16:33)

Key verses ESV

1. Proverbs 16:3: "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."
2. Proverbs 16:9: "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."
3. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Common Interpretations

- Matthew Henry's commentary emphasizes that we are insufficient in our selves to plan wisely and that God uses even the wicked to fulfill his purposes.
- Enduring word Commentary notes that the "preparation of the heart" is a human responsibility, but the final outcome is divine.

The Chapter warns against self-reliance and encourages a life in which plans are made prayerfully, and the outcome is trusted to God's providence.

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| <p>The preparation of the heart belongs to man:</p> | <p>God plans and prepares, and because man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), it is in the nature of man to make preparations of the heart.</p> |
| <p>But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord:</p> | <p>When wisdom is given voice (the answer of the tongue). It is from the Lord beyond the preparations of man's heart.</p> |
| <p>All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes:</p> | <p>By instinct, men and women justify themselves and see their own ways as pure. Some of the most criminal and violent people have thought themselves pure in their own eyes.</p> |
| <p>But the Lord weighs the spirits:</p> | <p>Despite the constant self-justification of men and women, God fairly and accurately weighs the spirits of all. God knows and God measures.</p> |
| <p>Commit your works to the Lord: Our activities and plans thoughts will be no less our own for being his: only less burdensome (Commit is as in Psalm 37:5) and better made."</p> | <p>Every man and woman should commit their works to the Lord. They should depend on God in their works, and they should do those works as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23).</p> |
| <p>The Lord has made all for Himself:</p> | <p>God, as creator of all things, has the right to claim all things for Himself.</p> |

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| <p>Even the wicked for the day of doom:</p> | <p>God's plan and providence include the destiny of the wicked. He has appointed them for the day of doom. There are no loose ends in God's world: everything will be put to some use and matched with its proper fate. It does not mean that God is the author of evil.</p> <p>He does not make the wicked or ungodly man; but when man has made himself such, even then God bears with him. But if he repents not, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, he shall fall under the wrath of God his Maker.</p> |
| <p>Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.</p> | <p>God resists the proud (James 4:5 and I Peter 5:5) and regards them as an abomination. The proud man or woman imitates Satan in his proud rebellion against God (Isaiah 24:12-15).</p> |
| <p>Though they join forces, none will go unpunished:</p> | <p>One proud man or woman cannot succeed against God, but neither can many proud men or women. Even if they join forces against God as they did at Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), they will not go unpunished, even as at Babel.</p> |
| <p>In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.</p> | <p>God in His mercy and truth has provided atonement for iniquity. God's mercy prompted the great sacrifice of Jesus Messiah on the cross, and His truth made it necessary to make atonement in a way that honored the righteousness of God. He God by his mercy is sending his Son Jesus into the world</p> |

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| | shall make an atonement for inequity according to his truth—the word which he declared by his holy prophets since the world began. |
| By the fear of the Lord, one departs from evil: | The great principle of the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 9, 10), it is also the foundation of a God honoring life. To live in fear of the Lord is to depart from evil. |
| He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. One of God blessings on the man or woman who pleases Him is to give them peace with others, even extending to their enemies. | God is the guardian and defense of all that fear and love him; and it is truly astonishing to see how wondrously God works in their behalf, raising them up friends, and turning their enemies into friends. |
| Better is a little with righteousness: | Sometimes those who are righteous in this world have little of the material comforts of this world. Someone who has great wealth, but little righteousness is worse off than the righteous man or woman who has little materially in this world. Vast revenues without justice can never give a peaceful conscience, freedom from guilt and sin, the love and joy of God, and a hundred other things this righteous enjoy. |
| A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps. | This is not a bad thing. We, as the God in whose image we are made, think about and plan our way. Many people would do well to more carefully plan their way. But the Lord directs his steps. We plan as we can and should, but we should never think that our ability to plan makes us lord over our lives. It is the Lord |

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| | <p>who directs our steps. Every plan we make should be held in humility before God and in surrender to His ultimate will. A man can plan his road to the last detail, but he cannot implement his planning, unless it coincides with Yahweh's plan for him." A man can and does devise his own way under the direction of his heart. If desire is evil, the way devised is evil. If desire is good, , the way devised is good. But that is not all the truth about life. This is also true: Jehovah directed his steps. . . That is to say that no man can step outside the government of God, no man can devise a way that enables him to escape from God." The point is the contrast between what we actually plan and what actually happens—God determines that.</p> |
| <p>Divination is on the lips of the King:</p> | <p>The word divination is used here not in the sense of seeking occult or demonic guidance. It is used simply in the sense of wise guidance, the wisdom that should be on the lips of the king. His mouth must not transgress in judgment. The same lips that must speak wisdom and discernment should not also be used to go beyond God's wisely appointed boundaries of judgment.</p> |

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| <p>Honest weights and scales are the Lord's:</p> | <p>Fair business and measures are so pleasing to God that it can be said that honest measures belong to Him. All of God's measurements and assessments are fair and true. The proper measure does not come from the King, nor does it belong to the King. The right measure comes from God and belongs to Him. Balance (weights) refers to a stationary balance with beams and bolts, and scale (Proverbs 11:1) possibly refers to the hand-held balance."</p> |
| <p>All the weights in the bag are His work:</p> | <p>This assumes that the weights in the bag are those mentioned in the previous line—honest weights and scales. Fair and honest business is God's business, His work. Proverbs 16:11 does not mention the King and is theologically important in that, using the concrete image of scales and measures, it teaches that the principle of justice is derived from God. Equity is not a human invention, and thus kings do not have the authority to suspend or violate the laws of fairness."</p> |
| <p>It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established by righteousness. (v. 12)</p> | <p>Solomon admitted that it was possible for Kings to commit wickedness. Some think that because someone is a King or leader all they do is justified. Sadly, Solomon became a king who committed wickedness (1 Kings 11:1-10).</p> |

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| | <p>A throne is established by righteousness: The righteous life of a king invites God’s blessing upon his life and reign. Because of this great potential and influence, it is an even greater sin for kings to commit wickedness.</p> |
| <p>Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And they love him who speaks what is right. (13)</p> | <p>Righteous lips are the delight of kings: In their positions of authority, it is important for kings to hear from those who speak honestly and wisely. Therefore, they find delight in righteous lips.</p> <p>It is always important for kings and leaders to hear the truth from others and not mere flattery. Most princes are held by their parasites, who soothe them up in their sins, and smooth them up with fair words, which soak into them as oil doth into earthen vessels.</p> |
| <p>They love him who speaks what is right:</p> | <p>Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts because strife and contention are difficult to control and cause great damage, wisdom sees that it is much better to stop contention before it ever starts.</p> |
| <p>He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.</p> | <p>This is the same kind of upset of God’s moral order as mentioned previously in Proverbs 17:13. Justice requires the opposite outcome—that the wicked are condemned and that the just are justified. God sees the violation of justice on both sides. God never thinks that all should be equally condemned or justified: but</p> |

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| | that the appropriate answer be given to both the wicked and the just. |
| Why is there in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom, since he has no heart for it? | Wisdom has a price, and Solomon imagined a fool who was ready to pay that price. We might say that the price of wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. The price of wisdom also involves humility and willingness to receive correction. Since he has no heart for it: it would be strange to find the price of wisdom in the hand of a fool because then that person would no longer be a fool. The nature of the fool requires that they have no heart to pay the price of wisdom. |
| A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. The Son of God taking on our nature so that he might be our friend and brother (Hebrews 2:14). The mystery of this friendship is beyond our imagination. | A true friend will not only love when it is easy, but at all times. What used to be called fair-weather friends—those who are friends only when the weather is pleasant and fair—are not true friends at all. |
| A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge and becomes surety for his friend. | Wisdom guards us against foolish partnerships. It is responsibility enough to honor our own debts. Wisdom warns us against taking responsibility for the debts of others. |
| He who loves transgression loves strife. And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction. | There are those who love both transgression and strife. They love it when God's laws are sinfully transgressed and when there is conflict. Those who exalt the leadership of those who love transgression and strife are promoting destruction. Such people |

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| | <p>should never sit in the gate of respect, leadership, and authority. The man who builds a high gate exalts himself above his neighbor and assumes a lifestyle beyond his rank. Possibly gate is taken for the mouth, and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife. And this interpretation seems to agree better with the scope of the context.</p> |
| <p>He who has a deceitful heart finds no good. And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil. (20)</p> | <p>The one filled with deceit will only find corruption and deceit in others. Wicked and foolish words not only display the evil of someone's heart, they also lead them into greater evil.</p> |
| <p>He who begets a scoffer does so to his sorrow. And the father of a fool has no joy. V. 21</p> | <p>To be the parent of a foolish scoffer (one who foolishly doubts and rejects the truth) is to have sorrow. Parents should do all they can to not raise scoffers, beginning with believing and living out the truth themselves. There is no pleasure in seeing that your child is a fool. There is both the pain of the consequences of the child's folly and the regret of wondering if one parented effectively.</p> |

Enduring word Commentary