

# Planning Through the Grid of God's Wisdom

*Becoming a Person with a Plan*

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**Bible Text:** Proverbs 16:1-20

**Preached on:** Sunday, March 3, 2013

## **Faith Church**

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A little over 25 years ago Chris and I had a decision to make that would undoubtedly affect the direction of our lives in both the short and then long term. I was just graduating with my last seminary degree and now it was time to think about where the Lord wanted us to serve him full time. I had been in school every semester since the day I entered kindergarten and Chris had worked to help me get through my last couple of seminary degrees and I could tell you. We were really looking forward to the day when we could talk about school and we could talk about school bills in a way that was decidedly past tense. So we were literally chomping at the bit to just begin trying all of these ministry ideas that had been percolating during that period of time.

What was interesting was—and it think amazing, in many ways—there were actually several options, which, in and of itself, is a testament, surely, to the grace of God. There was an opportunity to plant a church here in our state and that was attractive in many ways to us. There was also another church in southern Indiana and they needed a senior pastor, but they also had a Christian school. And we had some interest in that as well. So we considered that option. Then there was a church right here in our town that was without a senior pastor and they actually flew me in to Lafayette to meet with them and then during that visit to town I spent some time that weekend with pastor Good, the man who was the senior pastor at this church at the time.

If you are new, you may not have made that connection, but before pastor Good, pastored here, he pastored up in Gary and that is where I am from. So I was a little boy in his church. And then when I reached age 13 he and his wife Mildred moved down here to Lafayette. Apparently I was a really difficult teenager. And so pastor Good and I, though, we stayed in contact throughout high school, throughout college and some rather interesting ways. And then we were especially reacquainted when I was going to seminary up the road here in Warsaw at Grace Seminary and came down every Monday for 11 consecutive Mondays to take the biblical counseling training program here and that really helped us.

And so while I was talking to this other church in Lafayette about their senior pastor position pastor Good told me that he was actually looking for an associate pastor, someone with whom he could eventually make a leadership transition with. No time

lines, no promises, just an intent. And he asked me to strongly consider and to strongly pray about that particular option.

Well, you know the rest of the story. Eventually that is the option we believed was God's will for us and humanly speaking it was one of the most important decisions that we ever made.

But here is what motivated that choice. It was the belief that, yes, we had a lot of ideas. Yes, we had a lot of enthusiasm, but perhaps what we needed the most at that point in our life was the filter of seasoned wisdom of people like pastor and Mrs. Good and Doc and Mrs. Smith and a whole host of godly lay men and women who were part of this church family at that time.

In hindsight I am so thankful for that decision, because there is nothing quite like the filter of seasoned wisdom.

Now the reason I mentioned that this morning is because I think that is exactly where we are in the series we have been doing on Sunday mornings this year, becoming a person with a plan. And now it is time to filter our preliminary ideas through the grid of God's seasoned wisdom.

With that in mind, please open your Bible this morning to Proverbs chapter 16. And if you don't have a Bible just pull out that one from under the chair in front of you and turn to page 466 of the front section and that will bring you to Proverbs chapter 16.

If you have been attending for a period of time, you know our theme all year long is planning to grow. And we are taking that from verses like Proverbs 21:5 that:

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”<sup>1</sup>

That is a promise from God. And if you really believe that, then you would want to say, “I think, well I want to get on that. I want to be sure I am the kind of person who is planning well.”

Now hopefully by now I have said this enough, at least from the perspective of our church that when you think about that phrase, planning to grow, you start driving your brain down three specific paths, three ways we are really trying to make that happen this year as a church, one to continue to discuss and refine and implement our discipleship process. We want to be sure that we are planning to grow in that important responsibility we have as a church. And then, secondly, organizing and launching our new cluster of ministries over at Faith West. We are planning to grow in that. And then, thirdly, because this is a strategic ministry planning year for our church, working together as a church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan.

Now because that is our emphasis year long, we wanted to spend this first quarter of the

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 21:5.

year on Sunday mornings focusing specifically on becoming a person with a plan. And so we are challenging everybody here, everybody, to take time either formally, informally. You will have to decide how you want to apply these principles from the Word. But they actually make specific plans in your personal life for growth and to participate with our church's strategic ministry planning process and to think about the specific ministry that you are involved in, that God has called you to and to actually be doing planning and then, if you want, even using these principles in your work or your business.

Well, we are actually at the place now where we are about to land the plane on this series. We have today and next Sunday and then we will be done. But I hope by now the elements of the process are ones that you understand and that you have been applying. Remember, we started by talking about the value and the importance of planning. That is why we started in another chapter in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs six, studying the ant. And then being committed to the goal of the planning process, becoming more like Christ, living in a way that is more pleasing to God, glorifying the Lord, increasingly effective stewardship. But you have the right goal to which you are planning. And then identifying our priorities, our key effectiveness areas, our core values. What are the categories of life in which I have to be sure I am making specific plans? Then the hard part, thinking about our strength and especially our weaknesses in each one of those key areas. How do I need to get to a better place and considering the possible threats? What we can do to protect our plans and goals from being derailed. And then last week the enjoyable part of all of this, I think, in part, is seeing and seizing the many wide open doors of effective ministry that God gives us as we seek to make plans and we seek to act on them.

Now here is where I hope we are. Again, either formally you have got some sheets you can pull out. You can whip this up on you iPad because you have been working on it or maybe it is just in your brain. We are all different and that is ok. But hopefully by now we have been studying this enough that there are some planning initiatives starting to bubble up. In other words, you have thought through all of this all of this. For example, in your personal life, and so there are some things that you are... I perhaps need to do this in my relationship with Christ. We perhaps need to work on this, this year, in our family, et cetera, et cetera. But hopefully there are some specific initiatives that are starting to bubble up. I hope the same thing is true when you think about our church. Already some specific initiatives and we are going to throw out our surveys. Those will come on line in the next couple of weeks and we are going not ask everybody to participate in those. But one of the questions you are going to be asked is: What are the three to five initiatives you would especially like to see your church accomplish over the next five years? So hopefully some of those. Here is what we need to do. Our planning our bubbling up as a result of this process.

I really hope that is happening in your specific ministry plan as you think about the specific way you are serving God in your church right now. I hope there are some specific planning initiatives that are bubbling up, coming to the surface. And then, maybe, even in your work or your business plan as well.

And what I am saying is this. In some ways I think we are at a very similar place to where I was when I was graduating from seminary. See, we have got all these ideas. They are starting to bubble up. Good, good. Well, what could we use right now? Maybe it is a healthy dose of divine balance, divine wisdom, divine direction, bundling all of our ideas to the grid of Godly wisdom.

Proverbs 16 can help us there. Look at Proverbs 16 beginning in verse one.

The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.

Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established.

The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

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

Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice.

The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

A divine decision is in the lips of the king; His mouth should not err in judgment.

A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; All the weights of the bag are His concern.

It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, For a throne is established on righteousness.

Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And he who speaks right is loved.

The fury of a king is like messengers of death, But a wise man will appease it.

In the light of a king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain.

How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life.

Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

He who gives attention to the word will find good, And blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.<sup>2</sup>

What a great passage, huh? And we are talking this morning about planning through the grid of God's wisdom. And let's divide these verses into three planning principles from one of the wisest kings who ever lived. Sure, I hope everybody could stand up right now and talk about some of the initiatives that are starting to boil up. Great, great, great. Now, it is time to put them to the grid, the grid of the wisdom of our God. Three planning principles from one of the wisest kings who ever lived. Here is where it starts from verse one.

Plan well or plan conditionally. That is the point of the verse.

“The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, ultimately the Lord will determine which of our plans will come to pass and to what degree. And I hope every one of us would listen to that and say, “And that is exactly the way we want it.” Whether we are talking about personal improvement plan, whether we are talking about our church's plan, whether we are talking about your specific ministry, et cetera, et cetera, we recognize that we see in a glass darkly and so we are submitting everything we are thinking, everything that we are dreaming to the wise hand of our sovereign God.

It is like James said in James 4:13:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You

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<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 16:1-20.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 16:1.

are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."<sup>4</sup>

And, by the way, we don't say that in a grudging way, do we? It is not like, well, the Lord might thwart some of our great plans. No, it is much stronger than that. We wouldn't want it for a second if that is not what God wants for us. That is an important part of the Lord's prayer where we are taught:

Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.'<sup>5</sup>

This isn't about the coming of our kingdom, is it, on any level at all. That is also, by the way, what it means to pray in Jesus' name, that everything we have just said would be submitted to the plans and the desires of our Savior. So, yes, plan well. But plan conditionally.

Now I really believe this principle ought to bring passion and aggressiveness to our planning process. You say, "Why would you take that position?"

Well, then, about this. Our plans can eventually be approved by and directed by and therefore blessed by the Lord himself. Human responsibility and divine sovereignty are woven together, just a marvelous way in this verse.

"The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD."<sup>6</sup>

It is like Paul said in Philippians 4:13:

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."<sup>7</sup>

Or Zechariah 4:6.

"'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD."<sup>8</sup>

See, that is one of the reasons we are planning with such passion and aggressiveness believing that if they are plans that honor the Lord he will bless them. What if God said to us some day, "You know, I would have blessed your plans if you would have taken time to make some. I would have blessed your plans if you would have trusted me enough to make some. I was prepared to answer, but you never asked"?

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<sup>4</sup> James 4:13-15.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6:9-10.

<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 16:1.

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 4:13.

<sup>8</sup> Zechariah 4:6.

“The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”<sup>9</sup>

Bring on the passion if that is true. Bring on the aggressiveness if that is true.

I would also suggest to you that principle brings comfort to our planning process. See, a legitimate question to ask about all this is: Well, what if we make a plan and it is wrong, at least wrong in the sense that it is not God’s best for us. Well, here is the answer. He has a way of making that apparent, doesn’t he? For example, we saw that when we were buying land over at Faith West. I still like that little lot right across from {?}. I really do. I know you say, “Get over it.” And I will tell you why, because it would have been so easily attained. I mean the size of the lot itself would have dictated a very small facility. We could have accomplished that project very quickly, very easily, cross that initiative off our list and kept right on moving. But God used the response from some of the city officials. God used the anticipated response of some of the neighbors in that area to move us further up the road. And we could take comfort in that. God has the ability to adjust the course of our ship.

Think about that from the perspective of our church growth plan. On one of the surveys you are going to receive in the next week or so, we are going to ask you to list three to five initiatives you would especially like to see your church accomplish in the next five years. So if it is not bubbling up yet, you need to get the bubbling going on. And one of the things that we have been talking about, considering, is the construction of a senior living community on our site. And we have had some initial conversation with various focus groups from our senior saints here at our church. We are working on some specific layouts with the architectural firm that is helping us right now come up with a comprehensive facility plan, coming up with a comprehensive site plan on our 42 acres here and the 90 acres contiguous to us and so they are working with us on that. Obviously our church family is going to have to decide if that is going to make it into our next five year plan or not. But, honestly, I am pretty excited about the possibility of serving our widows better, serving our widowers and our elderly couples better. And I can think of all kinds of ways that they can be a great blessing to the various ministries that take place on our campus if they were right here with us in all sorts of ways that those who serve in those other ministries could be of great blessing to them, as well. That very well may make into our next five year plan on a particular location on our site and at a particular scope.

We call all thing of dozens of ways that the Lord could either thwart that plan or bless that plan as it is or bless that plan in ways we hadn't even dreamed of yet. See, that is the fun of all of this. And we ought to look at a verse like Proverbs 16 as an incredible source of encouragement to get busy doing our place and get busy doing our part, because we are absolutely convinced that God will do his. And that sometimes involves him overriding or adjusting ours. Make plans conditionally.

Now verse two adds additional wisdom to this entire discussion. When we learn we ought to carefully evaluate the motives of our plans. Proverbs 16:2 says:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.”<sup>10</sup>

Now why is that such an important aspect of everything we have been talking about this quarter either personally as a church, whatever? Why is that so important? Well, this is going to hurt a little bit, maybe. But the Bible tells us we tend to view ourselves more positively than we should. You realize when God says in Proverbs 16:2:

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight...”<sup>11</sup>

That is not a compliment. That means we tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. In fact, I didn't get this far in the text, but Proverbs 16:25 says:

“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”<sup>12</sup>

Think about that. There could be a plan bubbling up in one of our hearts right now that makes perfect sense to us, but if we actually acted on that plan it would lead to the death of a friendship. If we acted on that plan it would lead to the death of a ministry opportunity. If we acted on that plan, it would actually result in distance in our relationship with the Lord.

“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”<sup>13</sup>

That is why the text says the Lord weighs the motives, because his standard of measurement is just.

Back in the olden days we used to accuse butchers of weighing out our meat, but also having their thumb on the scale to make the purchase appear heavier than it really was. Anybody old enough to even remember that or is it just me? Jay Adams referred to that metaphor in his commentary on Proverbs when he said of this verse, “Our scales are off the mark. Sometimes we weigh the thumb along with the time and distort the weight of what it is that we are up to.”

So I hope that as we think about all of these plans that are bubbling up from this process at this point that we are also asking the Lord to help us carefully evaluate the motivation of our hearts that would lead us to want to accomplish that particular initiative.

Now when you think about it this is a marvelous opportunity, then, to do battle with our pride. What did verse five say in this planning context? And it is true of an individual and it is true of a church.

“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 16:2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 16:25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Ok, you want to stay out of that condition, right?

“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”<sup>15</sup>

Peter said it this way from the perspective of New Testament theology.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.<sup>16</sup>

...as a result of his pride.

See, the juxtaposition of those ideas would suggest that many times the way our adversary devours us is through our pride. So this proverb can be of great help to us right now, right now.

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.”<sup>17</sup>

Now here is the other side of that. They will say, “Well, that is a negative verse.” No, it is not. Not if your motivation is right. If your motivation meets the test of our God, then you can assume that he is going to bless our efforts in marvelous ways.

I really appreciate the team of people who serve together at our counseling site. Pastor Green who leads that endeavor said several times during a recent biblical counseling training conference here he said, “We want Jesus to be the hero of this conference.” Well said. We don’t want people walking away talking about a particular teacher. We don’t want people walking away talking about a particular entity or organization or church. We want Jesus to be the hero of this conference, exactly. And I think there is a lot of evidence, by the way, of that among the men and women who serve in that particular ministry and some for a long period of time with a significant amount of success, but if we plan humbly, asking God to weigh our motives at every step along the way and those motives are deemed to be right, well, marvelous things can be accomplished in his name.

You saw other emphases of that in the overall proverb. We can either destroy pride as we plan or it will destroy us.

“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 16:5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Peter 5:6-8.

<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 16:2.

Now think about that, because now put this together in your mind. Think about this verse that we have been using at the introduction many Sundays. This one, Proverbs 21:5.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”<sup>19</sup>

What does that mean? Well, that means diligent planning often results in success, right? That is a principle in God’s Word. That is a principle in God’s world. So many times if you plan well, it is going to result in success, but that success can either cause us to give God praise and give God glory for his blessing or put us in a position where we would actually rob God of the glory due his name in our pride.

What an incredible challenge. You do it and it is going to result in success, but don’t let the success end up with you being proud. What a challenge. This set of proverbs can really help us at this point in the process.

Here is another reason to check our motivation. It is because some advancement isn’t worth the price.

Did you see that emphasis in this text, like in verse 19?

“It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud.”<sup>20</sup>

That goes along with verse eight.

“Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice.”<sup>21</sup>

Is that right? And the principle is: Proud planning, motivated by a desire to bring glory to self is often willing to make wrongful compromise and cut ethical corners. That is why it is good to make plans that keep us on the highway of the up right as verse 17 says.

“The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life.”<sup>22</sup>

And I hope we would be praying all this year, day after day after day, Lord, if this plan takes me or takes us off the highway of the upright, please thwart it right away. I would only want to have that. I would only want to achieve that, I would only want to gain that if it results in a closer walk with you. See, carefully evaluate the motives of you plan.

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<sup>18</sup> Proverbs 16:18.

<sup>19</sup> Proverbs 21:5.

<sup>20</sup> Proverbs 16:19.

<sup>21</sup> Proverbs 16:8.

<sup>22</sup> Proverbs 16:17.

And, again, when that is done well incredible effectiveness is at the end of that path. Please don't take this message from a negative perspective, because either side can be true. If you carefully deal with your motivation and God's {?} and it is right, he is going to bless in some incredible ways. But let's think about that from the perspective of your personal growth plan. Let's say that you or you and your spouse, if you are married, have been working through a personal growth plan and one of the things that has bubbled up in your life is you have decided that you believe God wants you to plan to get to a better place in your finances. That is an important topic and many individuals and families would say that I need to work on that. I am planning to do that, which is why we have this financial peace class as part of our faith community institute.

So let's just say that someone has included that in their personal financial plan, either paying off debt or saving more for your child's college or for your retirement or whatever, but the headline is getting your finances to a better place.

Here is what I would ask you. Is that a good plan? Yeah, you are kind of... he is tricking me. I am. I am. The answer to that is maybe, maybe not, depending on what? Yeah, depending on the motivation. See, some people want to get their finances to a better place so they can buy more stuff in the future. Pay this off so we can take out even larger debts. Or they want to get to a better place financially so that they can then sit around and be useless or get to a better place financially so I can draw attention to myself because of my superior financial management. Well, if that is the motivation, obviously when God weighs the heart, we would be in trouble, right?

But I will tell you what a number of people in this church have done over the years when it comes to finances. They have capped their lifestyle and they have gotten their finances well under control, but here is the motivation—here is exactly why—so they can use their later years for special opportunities to serve and give. That is exactly why. So they are all about making a financial plan for the motivation of being in a better position to be able to serve God more effectively in the days ahead.

We had a great example of that this past week. As you know, Cathy Wilson passed away a week before last of cancer at 52 years old. Cathy and Mike have been members of our church for several years and Mike encouraged me to tell their story at the memorial service this past Monday up in Brook. It was an absolutely packed house, a marvelous opportunity to present the good news of Jesus Christ. But the story is this, that Mike and Cathy had come to a rough spot in their marriage. And Cathy had coworker, Jodi Miller—does that name ring a bell for many of us?—who encouraged Cathy to consider coming down here for biblical counseling. And Cathy did that. it was hard, but she did. And over a period of time, her counselor had the opportunity of leading her to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And Cathy's life began changing and softening to the point that she actually asked Mike if he would consider coming to biblical counseling as well and Mike did that. And his counselor then had the opportunity to lead Mike to Christ.

And Mike told me last week, "The last seven years of our married lives have been fantastic. I truly believe it is because we placed Christ at the center of our lives."

Now, friends, we are going to miss Cathy terribly and so will each one of her family members and each one of her coworkers. She had a tremendous impact up in the public school system in that part of our state. But if you know Christ, we can say with assurance that we will see Cathy again. Why, humanly speaking? Because there was a biblical counselor here who was able to use that context of their marriage challenges as an opportunity to lead Mike and Cathy to Christ.

Now you might say, “Well, which pastor worked with them in counseling?”

Who said anything about any of our pastors? Mike and Cathy met with one of the lay persons from our church who serves here on Mondays in our counseling center, in this case Dan Carmody. And Dan encouraged me not to use his name and I said, “I am using it anyway,” because I think that point needs to be made. What we are seeing is a number of men and women in our church who are saying that as they get their kids raised and as they have some margin in their lives from the perspective of schedule and finances, I want to receive counseling training. I want to be available to anybody who might want to sit down and talk about answers to every day life problems found in the Word of God. And, see, we are going to need more persons just like that when we launch Faith West. That is also why we are considering a new ministry center on our side for our seminary and our counseling ministry to have places for people just like that to serve. But the overall point is if we let God weigh our financial motives, if our real heart’s desire is to be freed up to be involved in more meaningful ministry, do you realize what that means? The day could come when you attend the funeral of someone that you were used by God to draw to Christ. And if that is not the plans of the diligent leading certainly to abundance, I am not sure what is.

Well, what does verse three contribute to all of this? I think we could say it simply like this. Plan to win.

“Commit your works to the LORD.”<sup>23</sup>

And here it is. If you do everything we have been talking about this morning, everything we have been talking about in this series, your plans will be established. What I mean by that is, if you have submitted your plans and your motivations to the Lord, you can and you should expect great things and will stand the test of time. Your plans will be established in the context of everything we have been saying this morning. That is a promise of God himself. And the beautiful thing is that word established in Hebrew it really has to do with the issue of being enduring, something that will make a difference, life long. That is what we mean by planning to win.

If you work all the way through this process we have been studying this year, applying the various truths from the Word of God, you can expect the God of heaven and earth to bless your efforts and not in puny ways like Paul said in Ephesians 3:20-21.

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<sup>23</sup> Proverbs 16:3.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.<sup>24</sup>

See, sometimes, in fact, perhaps many times, God will bless you more than you would have ever dreamed. Do you believe that? If you are committing your works to the Lord, your plans will be established.

Just a simple example of that maybe, but one that impacted me powerfully at the funeral and then the grave side service and then there was a large meal for all of the dear folks from Cathy's family and her friends. In fact the cancelled school up there that day so her coworkers could come. And so it was just packed. And then there was a large meal. And so the ladies from our church offered to be involved in providing that and the decision was made that, well, the Baptist will provide the desserts.

There is a plan from God, ok? Can I tell you that right now? That was straight from the throne of heaven and I was standing there in that church fellowship hall and just looked over that sea of deserts that were planned and provided by the ladies of our church. And what I liked about it was when people from our church do things, frequently they do it with great excellence. I mean, incredible excellence. And it wasn't just, well, we have got to do something so we are going not do it in a perfunctory way. This is an opportunity for us to serve God. This is an opportunity for us to serve a grieving family and we are going to do it all out. And that impacted me in a lot of ways. But here was one of them. I looked at that sea of desserts and said, "Lord, I cannot believe that I have the privilege of serving in a church with people who love to serve you like this."

See, think back. When I was in seminary I never dreamed, ever that I would have the privilege of being involved in a church family like this, of people who love God the way you do, who serve God with that level of excellence and passion to do well. And so even this passage has come true for me in that I would not have dreamed ever that I would have had the privilege to be involved in something like this. But it is exactly what the Bible says.

"Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established."<sup>25</sup>

Plan to win. Don't be surprised when he blesses us in ways that are absolutely unbelievable. I believe, therefore, small plans offend the Lord. I do.

"The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance."<sup>26</sup>

In fact, that is one of the reasons I want to encourage you to be back tonight. We have our church family night tonight. We have about 40 persons that God is bringing to join our

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<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 3:20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 16:3.

<sup>26</sup> Proverbs 21:5.

church tonight, about 20 of them by baptism in one month. It is almost like the Bible might be true. Surprise, surprise.

“Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established.”<sup>27</sup>

Small plans offend the Lord. Maybe we should say it like this. Your planning process should clearly communicate as long as God is on the throne, as long as he is who he says she is, then we will be fine, but the day that stops being true is the day we are in trouble. And, see, listen. When your plans are so puny, so conservative that they can be accomplished whether God shows up or not, that is the definition of a plan that offends him.

This text even says it impacts those who may not love Jesus yet.

“When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”<sup>28</sup>

Well, friends, I would encourage you to think about the initiatives that have been bubbling up. And I would encourage you to run it though that grid of God’s wisdom. And if you have never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, the first step in the plan is to acknowledge your need and trust him. And I would encourage you do that today. But if you have trusted the Lord, make no little plans. I want to encourage you to evaluate your motives. I would encourage you to plan conditionally. But I also want you to plan expectantly for all of us. Planning expectantly, believing that if we allow God to weigh our hearts he will bless our plans. He will bless them in some amazing ways.

Dustin, please come and close our service, would you, please?

[ Voice ] Let’s pray.

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<sup>27</sup> Proverbs 16:3.

<sup>28</sup> Proverbs 16:7.