

Proverbs 16:1 ¶ The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

This proverb only makes sense in light of one who is seeking to honor the LORD with their life. Such a person has the mental disposition (from Hebrew for “preparations”) of heart to give an answer that is from the LORD.

Proverbs 16:2 ¶ All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

I think the NLT explains it: *“People may be pure in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their motives.”* We all know from experience that it is much easier to judge someone else than it is to judge self. I have found that to judge self gets easier as I have matured spiritually. God, however, knows us intimately; we can hide nothing from Him. He knows our very thoughts and motives.

1 Samuel 16:7 “for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Psalm 139:1–2 “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

This truth is a comfort to this child of God. Knowing everything there is to know about me, He loves me unconditionally. In Jesus, I am accounted righteous before the Father.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

I liked MacDonald’s comment: *“A man’s ways are his outward acts; he judges himself by them and pronounces himself pure. But God sees the motives and intentions of the heart.”*

Proverbs 16:3 ¶ Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Solomon tells us the key to success that everyone seeks. One who commits (entrusts, submits) all he does to the LORD will find that his plans prosper. To submit to the LORD is to desire His will to be accomplished in and through us. One who commits himself to the LORD in all he does will consider himself successful when he is part of accomplishing God's purposes—in whatever way that may become manifest.

Proverbs 16:4 ¶ The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Key truth—The LORD, YHWH, is our Creator. He made everything according to His good pleasure.

Revelation 4:11 "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

God knew everything about every being in His creation before making each one. Those that He knew would choose to do evil, He positioned to use for His own purposes in judgment of peoples and nations as a consequence of sin. He also used/uses them in the spiritual refinement of people of faith—e.g., Job.

Proverbs 16:5 ¶ Every one *that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.*

This is just one of the many times in scripture that we are told that the LORD hates pride. A proud person is disgusting to the LORD, and he can in no way avoid punishment for it.

Henry: "The power of sinners cannot secure them against God....Though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment."

Proverbs 16:6 ¶ By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men depart from evil.*

In Solomon's day, they lived under the dispensation of the law. Acting in reverence and faithful obedience to the LORD reconciled one to the LORD. This was maintained by following the commandments He gave for making sacrifices and offerings. Those who feared the LORD made a conscious choice to obey His commands. One can't be obedient to the LORD and choose to do evil. To choose obedience is to choose to depart from evil.

Evil is anything that goes against God's commands. We like to categorize everything—including our sins. There are big sins and little sins, so we conclude. The truth is that every sin is evil. The more we accept that truth, the more likely we are as Christians to live a more obedient life before the LORD.

We are blessed as believers today to be able to rest in the salvation that is ours through the willing sacrifice of Jesus. We don't have to maintain the law to maintain our relationship to God; that is secured by our faith. We obey Him to show our love and gratitude for the amazing sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. Our obedience gives evidence to our salvation.

When we sin—because Jesus was/is the only perfect man—we can rest on the truth of 1John 1:9, often called the Christian's bar of soap: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

To choose to live in continued disobedience evidences a false profession of faith.

1 John 1:5–6 "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth...."

Proverbs 16:7 ¶ When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

I can read this verse two ways. One is to say that when a man lives in a way that is pleasing to the LORD, even his enemies will be at peace with him. Another is to say that when a man lives in a way that pleases the LORD, the LORD will make his enemies be at peace with him. Both are general statements of truth. We know, however, that many Christians have suffered persecution when striving to live a life pleasing to the LORD. In fact, their way of life was/is the reason they were/are persecuted. That does not discount the fact that one who lives in such a way as to please the LORD is one who promotes wisdom, peace, love, mercy, etc. Sad to say, the power of the god of this world (Satan) is growing as the time for the LORD's return grows ever nearer, and we are more dependent upon the LORD's intervention than ever to be able to live in peace with those around us.

2 Timothy 3:1 & 12 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come....Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Proverbs 16:8 ¶ Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

This verse is basically saying that it is better to be poor and righteous than it is to be rich and unrighteous. A righteous person is one who reverences the LORD and seeks to do His will as recorded in His word.

Guzik: "It isn't that the only two options in life are to have either **little with righteousness** or **vast revenues without justice**. It's that when those two options are compared, the first is clearly better."

Proverbs 16:9 ¶ A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

These next two verses are difficult at face value. This verse makes it sound like we are just robots. It makes it sound like no matter what plans a man makes, the LORD either confirms or overrides those plans. This is when I wish I could read the original Hebrew. Because Solomon is teaching his sons, I believe he makes this statement as an encouragement to them. In context, he is exalting wisdom as being rooted in the fear of the LORD that motivates one to reverence and obey Him. The word "way" makes reference to "a course of life." One who purposes to live his life showing reverence and obedience to the LORD can take comfort in the fact that He will direct your steps (to do right, I believe is implied).

I believe it is also true that God is sovereign and that His plans can never be thwarted by the plans of evil men, as evidenced by men like Haman and Hitler. God can and does ensure that the plans of man are in accordance with His overall will. Those of us who love God and have placed our trust in Him can be assured that He will work everything for good that He allows to happen in our lives.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Proverbs 16:10 ¶ A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

This verse makes it sound like the judgment of a king is never wrong. I believe that you again have to look at the context of Solomon teaching his sons. The position of king (in Israel is the immediate application) was established by God, and he was to rule the people according to the word of God. A king who is functioning within such parameters will only provide answers that align with God's word and will not violate his moral law.

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 “When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee....And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.”

“divine sentence” = oracle

Webster defines an oracle as an answer of a god. In context, the reference is to the one true God, the God of Israel.

“transgresseth” = trespass

Webster defines trespass as any voluntary transgression of the moral law. We know that the moral law was established by God and revealed in His word.

Proverbs 16:11 ¶ A just weight and balance are the LORD’S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

This verse is saying that just and right weights and balances are ordained of the LORD. Weights and balances were and are significant in fair and honest business transactions. If one is purchasing one pound of goods, the weight on the scale against which the purchase is weighed and balanced on the other side of the scale should weigh 16 oz., not 14 or 15. A business person that honors the LORD will always be honest and use lawful weights and balances.

Clarke’s note on “all the weights...” - “Alluding, probably, to the standard weights laid up in a bag in the sanctuary, and to which all weights in common use in the land were to be referred, in order to ascertain whether they were just....”

Proverbs 16:12 ¶ It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

As noted in verse 10, God established the king as ruler in Israel under His authority to rule in accordance with His will. The king who chooses to rule wickedly is disgusting; that is something He abhors.

I was intrigued to read other translations that interpret this verse to mean that the king is disgusted by those that do wicked things. And that is certainly true of a godly king. I obviously read it another way as interpreted in the CJB: *“It is an abomination for a king to do evil....”*

Proverbs 16:13 ¶ Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

Again, we must remember the speaker and the context. A godly king is always delighted by those that speak to him with honesty and in truth. That cannot be said of an ungodly king; they would prefer to be flattered and affirmed in all they do.

Proverbs 16:14 ¶ The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

Proverbs 16:15 In the light of the king’s countenance *is* life; and his favour *is as* a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses go hand-in-hand; they represent opposite sides of the same coin. In other words, if you make the king angry, you put your life in jeopardy. In fact, an angry king is likely to respond in anger to an innocent person. A wise man will seek to pacify the king and keep him happy.

Proverbs 16:16 ¶ How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Even as a young king, Solomon understood that wisdom was to be treasured more than gold or silver. When God appeared to him in a dream and asked Solomon what he wanted Him to give him, he asked for wisdom—not gold or silver.

1 Kings 3:5–9 “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said....I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

If only world rulers today understood that truth!

Proverbs 16:17 ¶ The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

The highway makes reference to the path of life that one chooses to follow. The upright person will choose the path that departs from evil; he/she will choose to do what is right before the LORD. Choosing to follow the LORD is the key to preserving one's soul—your being, the rational and immortal part of you.

Proverbs 16:18 ¶ Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

God hates the sin of pride. Pride always leads to destruction and ruin. The prime example is Lucifer, the angel that determined he wanted to be like God and became the god of this world when Adam yielded to his temptation to disobey God. His destruction is sure, as is the destruction of every one that chooses to follow Him.

Matthew 25:41 "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Revelation 20:14–15 "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Proverbs 16:19 ¶ Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This verse basically says that it is better to live with a humble spirit among the poor than to live prosperously as one of the proud. God is opposed to the proud; that is a scary position in which to be.

James 4:6 "Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Proverbs 16:20 ¶ He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

A person that is wise will show himself good, AND the person that trusts the LORD will be happy and blessed. The "and" is important. You can't be truly wise without trust and confidence in the LORD. Wisdom is rooted in the fear of God. I think this is one of the primary themes throughout Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 16:21 ¶ The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

I liked the NLT for this verse: *“The wise are known for their understanding, and instruction is appreciated if it’s well presented.”*

I think the last part of this verse is important to remember when instructing children. Children (and adults for that matter) are more likely to respond positively to instruction that is presented with a loving, caring spirit. If you are arrogant and demanding or boring and obviously just going through the motions, it is not likely those under your instruction will learn anything—except the fact that they don’t like you as a teacher.

Proverbs 16:22 ¶ Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

I liked the CJB: *“Common sense is a fountain of life to one who has it, whereas fools are punished by their own folly.”*

This is yet another statement declaring that wisdom promotes life and foolishness results in the need for rebuke and chastening (from the Hebrew for “instruction”).

Proverbs 16:23 ¶ The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

The “heart” is the seat of one’s intelligence, one’s wisdom according to the Hebrew. A wise person will control what comes out of his mouth to the intent of providing good teaching and instruction.

Proverbs 16:24 ¶ Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

“pleasant” = agreeableness, i.e. delight, suitableness...grace

This verse flows in context from the previous one. We see from the Hebrew that pleasant words are agreeable because they bring delight or satisfaction. They are suitable or appropriate to the occasion. They convey love and mercy; their purpose is to benefit others. As such, pleasant words are compared to a honeycomb. They are sweet to the soul—pleasing, gentle, calm, amiable, and persuasive (from Webster). They bring health to the bones by promoting healing and soundness. Evidence abounds that one’s

mental health can have great impact on one's physical health as well as the other way around.

Proverbs 16:25 ¶ There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This verse mirrors Proverbs 14:12. The point of this verse—Man's reasoning is sometimes flawed. What seems to be the right choice to make can result in death. I think Solomon is implying that that is why God gave us His law. He wants what is best for His people. If we consider our plans in connection with how they line up with God's word, we are assured of making a choice that promotes life.

Proverbs 16:26 ¶ He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

This verse seems to be saying that a worker that is hungry will work a little harder in order to be able to satisfy his hunger.

Ironsides: "Wealth gotten without labor is generally a very dangerous acquisition. He who knows the weariness of honest toil will be careful how he uses the results of his labor."

Guzik: "The Bible recognizes the principle of personal property and that the reward of work properly belongs to the worker (**labors for himself**). This argues against schemes of forced communal living, either on a small or national scale. It also argues against excessive taxation, because it does not say *the person who labors, labors for his government*."

Proverbs 16:27 ¶ An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

Proverbs 16:28 A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

I think the CJB states it well: "*A worthless person digs up evil [gossip] — it is like scorching fire on his lips. A deceitful person stirs up strife, and a slanderer can separate even close friends.*"

It is so sad, but true, that this sin is prevalent throughout the professing church as well as the world. Words can inflict great harm, and every Christian should be ever mindful of that truth. The Lord gives us His commentary through the words of James.

James 3:6–10 “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

Ironsides: “There is no question that whispering and backbiting is one of the greatest curses among Christians. This detestable vice alienates the dearest friends and creates misunderstandings of all kinds. Many are defiled by repeating tales which a godly person would seek to cover and never repeat.”

Proverbs 16:29 ¶ A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.

Proverbs 16:30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

A cruel, unrighteous man lures his friends and family to follow him in doing what is evil. He concentrates on make plans that go against God’s law and confidently sets about putting those plans into action. Sometimes you can tell just by looking at a person that they are up to no good.

Ironsides: “Fair speech coupled with a magnetic personality have often led one into a way that was not good. It is wise not to be too easily persuaded. Before making a decision, take time to ascertain the mind of God, so you will not be a partaker of other men’s sins.”

Proverbs 16:31 ¶ The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

The hoary head is a reference to the gray hair that comes with old age. It is considered a crown of honor to those who live righteously before the LORD. I think this was a more obvious reward for righteous living in Old Testament times—especially pertaining to God’s people, the people of Israel. Long life was promised to those that obeyed the LORD’s commands. Consider the following verses.

Deuteronomy 5:16 “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged....”

Deuteronomy 6:1–2 “Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”

Psalms 91:14–16 “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him....With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.”

The promise pertaining to honoring ones parents in the LORD applies yet today.

Ephesians 6:1–3 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

I believe the ultimate fulfillment of all these promises, and others like them, is to be found in the eternal life that awaits those that place their faith in the LORD for their salvation.

It should be noted that there are many wicked people who live to old age with gray hair. For such people, however, their hair is not a crown of honor. They do not reflect the grace and peace that are reflected in men and women whose experiences throughout life have brought him/her into closer fellowship with the LORD.

Proverbs 16:32 ¶ *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

In Solomon’s day, mighty men and warriors were honored and respected. For him to say that it is better to be slow to anger, to possess patience and self-control than to be such a man would resonate loudly in the hearts of his sons.

Clarke: “It is much easier to subdue an enemy without than one within. There have been many kings who had conquered nations, and yet were slaves to their own passions. Alexander, who conquered the world, was a slave to intemperate anger, and in a fit of it slew Clytus, the best and most intimate of all his friends, and one whom he loved beyond all others.”

Henry: “The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true wisdom, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a

victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one.”

Proverbs 16:33 ¶ The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

This is quite a powerful statement about the sovereignty of God and His intimate involvement with His people. Casting lots are like rolling dice. Solomon is saying that the LORD is in control of the outcome of the throw of the lot. The people of Israel were instructed to accept it as a way of ascertaining the will of God. Consider the following.

It was used to determine the land inheritance of each tribe in the Promised Land.

Numbers 26:55–56 “Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.”

This was the method used to order the priesthood in the time of David (1Chronicles 24).

It was used to determine who would live in Jerusalem after the completion of the wall after returning from captivity in Babylon.

Nehemiah 11:1 “And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities.”

The disciples used this method to determine who would replace the traitor Judas.

Acts 1:24–26 “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

In context, one must remember that the use of lots was to determine God’s will. There is no application to frivolous uses, such as in playing games.