

God's plans || our plans

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone, and happy Father's Day to all the dads out there. I got the standard socks this morning, which declares that apparently I'm number one dad.

So that settles the matter. That's the final word on that. In fact, I got five pairs that say I am number one dad, so I get to wear them every day at work. So, yeah, anyway.

Have a great day. On the screen is one of my prized possessions. It's a certificate of competency as a powder man.

Now, that's not a license as a makeup artist. It's, in fact, an explosives license. And I got that when I was 21. And I don't know why you're laughing.

I used to wear flannelette shirts before they were famous and before they were fashionable. In fact, it's when all Bogans wore them. And so that was many years ago now.

[1 : 02] But as soon as I got that license... Let's go back to the other screen. Oh, good. As soon as I got that license, I went out and bought 25 kilograms of explosives, which I was allowed to do because I had a license.

I was a competent powder man. And my grandmother was visiting at the time that I did this, and so I wanted to show her my newfound skill. And so I picked this old dead tree, which is about 300 meters from our house, and decided that I would show her how to dislodge a tree using explosives. I calculated the size of the tree and all that sort of stuff. I needed about four kilograms of explosives, so I prepared some strategic holes under the tree.

And then I had one of those moments, which you have when you're 21, of thinking, well, what if four kilograms is not enough? I knew, for instance, that you couldn't put...

You couldn't do a second blast. You had one attempt at this. And so I decided, well, let's just add a little bit more, just to make sure. And after topping up the four kilos, I realised in my bucket of prepared explosives that I had were just a little bit left over.

[2 : 23] And so I put that in too. And so in the end of it, I ended up with eight kilos of explosives under this tree, went out and got my grandmother, stood her in the position that she needed to be standing.

I went and I lit the fuse, which is a two-minute fuse, and you hastily walk away from the explosion site at that point. Don't run, because you might trip over.

You hastily walk away. And then I got to where my grandmother was, which was just outside the back door of our house, and in that moment, I'm doing what sensible people do, and you go over the calculations again to make sure you got it all right.

Now, most sensible people do that before they've lit the fuse. But I'm sitting there, and it was at that moment I thought, oh, my goodness, there's one calculation I forgot, and that was the calculation of amount of explosives compared to distance from the blast site that you need to be.

And it just went poof. And what happens is you see it. Then you hear it, and then you feel it.

[3 : 34] That's what happens with an explosion. It's awesome. And that's going back to last week. It truly is awesome. And so it was at that moment I realised 300 metres from the blast site is correct for four kilos, but not for eight.

It went off, and it all... You know, the tree's on its mission to Mars. And there's stuff going everywhere.

And then there's this eerie silence. And then I could start hearing this... What's that? It's getting louder.

And it's sounding like it's pretty fast. And then... Right! Five metres from us, this rock the size of my fist embedded itself into the ground.

By the grace of God, I just grabbed a sheet of iron and put it over us. What else can we do? My grandma couldn't run to the house. I mean, it was my first attempt to think, well, she's lived long. I mean, it's okay.

[4 : 42] You know? I'm only young, you know? I've got a lot to live for here. I could run. But anyway, all this stuff comes down. And just to give you an idea, a lump of wood, the size of our communion table behind us here, landed 300 metres past us.

Okay. So it travelled 600... It landed 600 metres from the blast site in the neighbour's place. For it to land 600 metres away, it goes twice as high.

So it went 1.2 kilometres into the air and boom! Into his... You need a tractor to pull it out of where it landed.

And it was pretty impressive. And it was purely by the grace of God that no one was killed. No animals were injured in the whole experiment.

No dents, no windows were broken, no cars were dented. Nothing went wrong at all. Now, at 21, I had a certificate of competency as a powder man, but I wasn't competent in regard to the realities of life.

[5 : 57] That's a pretty dangerous combination. Pretty dangerous combination. The definition of wisdom that we've been working with in this series is that wisdom is becoming competent in regard to the realities of life.

Wisdom is more than just pure intellect and passing exams and gathering qualifications such as certificate of competency as a powder man. Wisdom is knowing how things actually are in this world, how things work in this world, and how to live in accordance to that.

Now, it's 26 years since I made that decision and blew up that tree. And I've got 26 years more of experience behind me now and I've still got the license.

I've grown and I've changed. And if I had exactly the same opportunity again, I'd do exactly the same thing. It was awesome, let me tell you. It was fantastic.

I mean, there's nothing like a great explosion. Except this time, what I'd do is I'd stand a bit further away. That's all. I'd still overload the tree. I'd still put too much in.

[7 : 01] It's just a habit of mine. I overload, you know. But I'd just stand further away. See, making wise choices is the key to wisdom. It's one of the key elements, if you like, to wisdom.

It's not too much to say that you make or break your life, or potentially other people's lives, on the basis of your choices. There's a whole category of choices that you don't need a lot of help with. You know, it might be 20% of the choices we face, you don't need a whole lot of, you don't need to spend time. You know, for instance, you're married or a married person propositions you to commit adultery and the things might not be going well in your own marriage and this is a very real possibility.

It's not something you need to pray about. You don't need to spend time on that work. What's the will of God at this point? He's made it really clear in the Bible. Don't do it. But there's about 80% of choices in life where, is this the right person to hire?

Is this the right career? Is this the right amount of freedom to give my child in this moment? Is this the right person to have confidence in? Is this the right person to marry?

[8 : 14] In those situations, there is a number, multitude of options. And most of those decisions are moral, most of them are legal, most of them are allowable, but it doesn't mean that, therefore, you don't need wisdom in the choice.

Yeah, for instance, it is totally legal and allowable for middle-aged men to wear these pants. You know, I didn't break the law when I bought these things.

However, Lady Wisdom, as Proverbs calls her, and in my hand, we call her Natalie, as she suggests, it is totally, I should buck the trend of middle-aged men wearing these things without putting shorts over the top of them.

You see, that's what wisdom does. So we need guidance to make a whole bunch of choices in life, all the decisions that we face where the Bible is not, you know, black and white on them.

We need guidance to make these wise decisions. And the Hebrew word for guidance occurs a number of times in Proverbs, such as in Proverbs 11, verse 3, where it says, the integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

[9 : 39] Now, the word that we translate there into the English word guidance comes from the Hebrew word rope. It's the origin of the word is of rope.

There is the idea of sailing boats. The rope which hoists the sail or lowers the sail or changes the direction of the sail. It carries the concept of navigation to it.

And so that's what we're facing here. How do we get God's navigation? How do we get God's guidance? How do we get God's navigation when we're faced with all these choices about is it this way or that way?

That's what we're going to look at very briefly. And I suspect by the time we finish the day you're going to be frustrated. Just give your heads up on that one.

So let's have a look at a couple of parables. Proverbs 21 I've got an outline in front of you so hopefully some of these passages are in front of you. Proverbs 21 verse 5 and 1633.

[10:38] 21 5 The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty. Now that proverb to us makes sense.

It encourages action, planning, strategy, making decisions. decisions. That's fine and it's particularly good for people with my type of personality. But what about Proverbs 16 33?

The lot is cast into the lap but it's every decision is from the Lord. Now the lot casting there is equivalent to what we might call rolling a dice or flipping a coin or picking drawing a straw.

So what's it saying? It's saying that every coin toss every detail comes down exactly the way that God plans it to come down.

How do you hold Proverbs 21 5 and 1633 together? You see we tend to feel that either our choices matter and our destiny is fixed or we believe that everything is fixed and so who cares what you do?

[11:51] We tend to go on one of those two and yet the Bible says that we are absolutely free and absolutely determined at exactly the same time.

we see it again in Proverbs 16 1 and verse 9 16 1 to humans belong the plans of the heart but the Lord comes from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue then down in verse 9 in their hearts humans plan their course but the Lord establishes their steps your plans and your choices are yours you are responsible of them God's not forcing you in any direction do something stupid do something wicked do something cruel do something selfish and there will be bad consequences for those things people will hold you accountable and they should hold you accountable the police will hold you accountable they should hold you accountable God will hold you accountable and he should hold you accountable but what actually happens as a result of your stupid choices are absolutely controlled fixed and set by God

I made a stupid decision to overload a tree stump and it was a complete grace of God that nothing went wrong nothing happens that is not in accordance with his plan our choices belong to us but what actually happens as a result of those plans is set by God and both of those things happen at exactly the same time it's not 50-50 50% free 50% determined it's 100% free in our choices and 100% determined under the sovereignty of God and human categories cannot work that out it just blows your mind there is no human category to fit that in we tend to think that things are either free or they're fixed people in ancient times essentially saw that people were fated the order behind the universe was set and you either learnt to submit to it in a stoic brave kind of way or your whole life would be dashed to pieces that's that's the ancient times one example is

Oedipus from Oedipus from Greek mythology who was fated in an oracle that he was going to kill his father and marry his mother and it didn't no matter what he did he tried to do everything possible not to do that including running totally the opposite direction to his parents it's exactly what happened now the rise of the Christian faith in those times brought quite a different perspective on the universe Christianity saw the universe and still sees the universe not as an impersonal order that somehow you were fated with but as a universe made by a personal God who created human beings as responsible moral beings and who cared about how we live and he still cares about how we live and how we behave and the choices that we make our secular culture has taken the corrective good that

Christianity brought into our world and has taken it into the extreme the other way that is Christianity poured into our world the importance of individual choices and our culture has gone radically and increasingly individualistic take God out of the picture and so the highest purpose of our culture is to set all individuals free to live as they choose without any hindrance from other people and certainly not from God and so choice individual choice is the one sacred value and discrimination the only moral evil we tolerate everything except intolerance that is in our world nothing is set nothing is fixed nothing is determined your future is what you make of it and we see that when we move from

[16:23] Oedipus in classic ancient literature to Marty McFly in classic modern Hollywood at the end of the Back to the Future trilogy of movies Doc Brown explains the profound message of those movies and he says to Marty McFly your future is whatever you make it so make it a good one that's popular culture that's the way our world thinks that's what we believe in this country now while it might be hard to hold together the concept that intellectually hold together that we're 100% free and 100% fixed and determined at the same time there is something in our hearts that connects with that and resonates with that there's something about it that rings true you see if you believe that you are either totally free or totally fixed then put it mildly you're stuffed either way if you believe that there is no connection between your choices and your destiny that is everything's fixed everything's faded then you're going to be totally passive you're going to be bored you're going to be cynical you're going to be hard you're going to be indifferent and in fact too many

Christians who believe 100% in the sovereignty of God default into that position of not making any choices or doing anything however if you go with popular culture and believe that there is a total connection between your choices and your destiny and if you truly believe that that you are free and if you truly thought about it you wouldn't get out of bed in the morning you'd be too scared to what fool knowing how little we know about this world and the way it works would want to live in a universe where your future is completely determined and fixed by the choices that we make day by day what fool wants to really live like that you'd be too scared to get out of bed so even though what these proverbs are saying are pretty hard to hold together intellectually they are so practical the bible doesn't say that your choices have no connection to your destiny or that our choices determine our ultimate destiny the bible says that god in his sovereignty partially relates our choices to our destiny but he is the one who fixes our destiny we have every incentive therefore day by day to live wisely to make great choices but behind it all is a god who is working out everything for the good of those who trust in him now god's guidance is however not always obvious notice proverbs 16 4 the lord works out everything to its proper end even the wicked for the day disaster now that is saying that not only are the little things part of god's plan but so are the bad things part of god's plan now if we hadn't just gone through what we just gone through we'd be saying well you know it appears there that god is the author of evil but remember what we've just read to humans belong the plans of the heart evil deeds belong to the evil doer they are responsible god doesn't force anyone to do evil deeds they are your deeds they are my deeds and yet god is going to overrule and weave through that the ultimate good even in the worst of things not necessarily immediately it says in the end and a great example of that is joseph in the old testament genesis 37 to 50 he's one of many sons to his father jacob jacob had been poisoning the relationship between his boys by favouring joseph and as a young lad joseph wasn't helping things a whole lot by kind of rubbing his brother's nose in it by showing off he's the one with the fancy coloured coat and one day the brothers got jack of it they threw him in a pit and then they sealed him off to slavery and as a slave in egypt joseph went from one pit to another pit to another pit from one dungeon to another dungeon he was accused of wrongdoing and it seems that things just went from bad to worse year after year he cries out to god consistently help me god help me god help me god and there's no answer only years later do we see that because of each one of those things that god had shaped him and elevated him to a man of greatness bit by bit by bit and as a result his family and in fact the whole part of the world are saved from starvation in the end and in

Joseph's famous summary of all these events of his life we have an almost exact statement of what we have here in Proverbs 16 1 it's in Genesis 50 20 you intended to harm me but god intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done the saving of many lives it's a wonderful forerunner to an even greater example of god at work through the paradoxical and the non-obvious the ultimate good the redemption of all humanity was provided by the Lord Jesus but it was brought about through an act of horrifying evil in Acts 2 Peter's in front of a crowd and he's explaining the crucifixion of Jesus and he says that though Jesus was put to death by wicked people this was done Acts 2 23 by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge and this idea of this proverb lies behind Paul's assurance in Romans 8 28 that in all things God works for those who love him who have been called according to his purpose so never ever ever ever think that God is not working and at the same time never ever ever think that you'll be able to work it out what he's up to in the immediate it's not always clear what God's doing and he's working but he is he is working now I've heard many people say that they need God's guidance need to know God's will according to the Bible God's guidance is something that he does it's something that he does not just something that

he gives that is can I say right now under the sovereignty of God you are standing in it you're standing in his guidance right now you're in the middle of it you're standing in a stream where he's in control of all things you don't most of the time we go you know God which direction which direction he's moving you right now you are being navigated you just probably can't see it now of course God does give guidance so how does he do that so it's not just something that he does but it's also something that he gives at this point I want to turn our heads basically turn on our heads the way we normally think about guidance and this I think is absolutely essential and it's connected to what we've already preached on and what we looked at one of the most intriguing proverbs is Proverbs 16 3 it says this commit to the Lord whatever you do and he will establish your plans and we read that and we go oh that's awesome that's what I'm looking for that's exactly what I need and this is how we normally read it it seems so obvious isn't it what this proverb is saying we automatically think it's you know commit your plans to the Lord and your plans your deeds will succeed commit your plans to the [24 : 59] Lord and your plans and your deeds will succeed and we go wow that's awesome every decision I need to make in life I just need Lord bless my plans and then they will succeed but that's not what that proverb is saying is it it's actually saying the exact opposite it's saying that if you commit your deeds to the Lord then you'll become more and more a person who makes the right plans and the right choices commit your deeds to the Lord not your plans your deeds to the Lord it's in the you know in the context of making decisions for us as a church I wrote this in our bulletin this week if you haven't already written it read it I'm convinced that Romans 12 because I'm asking the question in terms of what do we do as a church do we go this way this way go this way and I'm convinced that Romans 12 is absolutely essential for us do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed in the renewing of your mind then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is his good pleasing and perfect will and then if you go down into the rest of chapter 12 it tells you what it looks like and I'm convinced that what

Romans 12 says is staff parish council leadership members don't think the way the world thinks be transformed pursue renew mind in verse 2 of Romans 12 have humble views of yourself verse 3 look always to Christ in faith in verses 3 and 6 love authentically abhor evil cleave to the good in verse 9 rejoice in hope be constant in prayer in verse 12 Paul's assumption is that that is the way that you discern the will of God that is what is good what is acceptable what is perfect and I would add what is wise if you commit your deeds to the Lord then you will become a person who more and more discerns what the will of God is that is commit your life how you live to the Lord and you become wiser in the plans and decisions that you make now the word commit in verse 16 is a word that means to put all your weight on and it's the same idea that we looked at in Proverbs 3 last week unconditional trust with all things that happen in your life unconditionally trust God and you'll become a person who makes plans in accordance with reality if God says in his word don't do this go that way do this you unconditionally put your weight on him and what he has revealed what he says and you will in over life grow and grow and grow as a person in wisdom to ask for the guidance of God requires abandonment it's costly so this proverb says here we don't say if I trust you you're going to give me what I want if I trust you you're going to give me what I want that's the way we think about Proverbs 16 3 at first glance instead it says I trust you I trust you I trust you and therefore you give me or you withhold from me whatever you choose God's guidance is costly we come to God not asking for his advice on the decision we come to him asking for his will and seeking his will and his will is not optional it's not advice where we take it or leave it it's his will remember what I said two weeks ago two questions to be wise I will obey anything you tell me whether I agree with it or not and I will accept anything you send me whether I understand it or not the more we saturate ourselves in what God has revealed about himself his plans his ways the way the world works that is saturate ourselves in his word and commit ourselves to obeying him unconditionally the wiser we become in the choices that we make now who does that totally the unconditional total trust certainly not the bloke behind the microphone this morning only Jesus only Jesus in Mark 14

Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane and he's wrestling wrestling with God's plan for him to go to the cross and he has no peace about it I mean so many people come to me and say I'm trying to make a decision I have peace about this one but not that one as if somehow my peace in my heart is the settled conclusion Jesus didn't have peace in the garden of Gethsemane he's wrestling with it but in verse 636 he says Abba father everything is possible for you take this cup from me yet not

what I will but what you will and he submits himself to the father's will he goes to the cross for the sins of humanity and as a result of that obedience in the end he is given the name that is above every name and he has opened the way for people like you and me to be navigated back to God the one who knows how the way the way works the way the world works how things actually are [31 : 08] Jesus is the navigator he is God's revealed word Hebrews 1 says in the past God spoke to ancestors through the prophets in many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he also made the universe the sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful majesty in heaven see in Jesus God has uttered a comprehensive and final word in Jesus God has brought all of his purposes and plans to fulfillment in Jesus the very goodness of God dwells he is the exact representation of God's being and in the Bible we have the great and final message of God written down and as we read it and as we obey it God's spirit work in our hearts we hear God's voice to us today and especially his call in our lives to repent and to unconditionally trust him in all things guidance is something that

God does through his sovereignty and it's something that he gives through the person of the Lord Jesus and his word now I suspect that many of you sitting here right now are really frustrated I want wisdom now Steve you know you got to understand I got these choices to make you know I want what Moses got I want what King David got I want a direct answer from God by close the business tomorrow why doesn't God do do do that and he did it for some people in the Old Testament didn't clearly do it for everyone didn't do it for Joseph why spend so many years and all the difficulty after difficulty to get Joseph to where he was why not just show up and say to Joseph hey Jacob stop showing favouritism to your boys you brothers quit your murderous plans Joseph stop being a prat about your fancy coloured coat and by the way 25 years from now it's going to be a really big drought start saving 15 minutes and he's done

I mean that's the kind of guidance I want you know why doesn't he do that now let me say first of all in expecting that from God we need to be careful of not undercutting the majesty and finality of God's revelation to us in the Lord Jesus according to 2 Peter 1 3 God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness so let's not diminish at all the finality of the majesty of what we have in the Lord Jesus growth in wisdom and making choices is a journey but here's one option of why God doesn't fix everything instantaneously for us imagine Amelia my four year old comes to me tomorrow afternoon at five o'clock and asks whether she can go out and play for a little bit and

I say okay you know I'm getting dinner ready and so I'll call you when it's ready to come in out she goes fast forward 16 years she's 20 years old she's at university somewhere and she calls me five o'clock Monday afternoon and asks is it okay if she goes out and plays a few friends are playing some netball frisbee whatever out in the quad and she's wondering is it okay if she goes out and play I'm going to be at the phone there and I'm going to go what's wrong with you what's the matter with you girl seriously make a decision make a decision now there are parents that like having their child that emotionally dependent upon them but

God is not one of them he wants us to be like him he wants us to to he's created us to make decisions to grow in maturity to move on to be wise but to trust him in our wisdom what I do know is that even if the choice I make is a total failure God is simply planning something else something that I can't see that's all he's doing and by his grace he will navigate my total failure of a decision in such a way that good will come out of it in the end his desire for you and for me is to be like his son the Lord Jesus and he will allow things to happen in the course of our lives that will cause us to grow in humility cause us to grow in dependency upon him make a decision you don't have control over the end you can't play

[36 : 38] God it's not you make a decision commit your deeds to him and make a decision God guidance is something that God does as much as something that he gives and he's doing it for you right now where you are and as you stand in his guidance look to Jesus the author and the perfecter of your unconditional trust in God get rid of the sin the bad deeds that trip you up and get rid of all the things that are not black and white but slow you down in your unconditional trust and he will establish your plans Amen