

God's Purpose Prevails: Proverbs 3:5-6 (1-12), 16:9, 19:21

Proverbs is a book of wisdom. It mentions the wise and foolish use of lips 25 times.

A Catholic girl's school changed a rule and allowed the girls to wear lipstick. Every morning some of the more popular girls gathered in the school bathroom, put on lipstick, and kissed the mirrors leaving lip prints on the glass. Sister Mary who directed the school ordered the girls to stop, but they kept kissing the mirrors. After many warnings she got wisdom. Finally, she gathered the girls in the bathroom along with the school janitor. She said, "Girls, this is George the janitor. He wants to show you something." George said, "Girls, your lip prints are greasy and hard to get off the mirrors. It's extra work for me. I want to show you how hard it is to clean the mirrors." George the janitor took his squeegee and dipped it in the toilet, swirled it around in the toilet bowl, and then cleaned the mirrors. After the girls saw George do that there were no more lip prints on the mirrors.

This story is an example of wisdom in action. I want to give you some wisdom in action this morning. My message today will include some testimony and some teaching. I want to share with you some lessons I learned last year and how I came to be standing before you today.

I have two wise points.

First, waiting is not wasted time.

Second, God's purpose will always prevail.

Waiting is not wasted time.

Last year I was on a sabbatical and waiting for God's direction.

I am a person of action and waiting is frustrating for me. I am impatient. I hate waiting in traffic. I hate waiting in lines. I look for the checkout line that will be the fastest, but I always end up in the slowest line. (I know it's God's way of teaching me patience.) You will often hear me say to my wife, "So what are we waiting for?"

Waiting is wasted time in man's economy, but not God's. What is the value of waiting in God's economy? It's a time of testing and preparation. Before you complete a goal or fulfill a plan there's a period of preparation that includes testing.

- My preparation to complete the Doctor of Ministry started over 5 years ago and now I will finally graduate May 18. I completed my project and wrote my 150-page report and then met with a committee of three professors who wrote comments all over my paper. I had to make many corrections. That tested my perseverance!
- My daughter is getting married April 27. Sandie and I and the groom's parents are preparing for this event. We started preparing last year. There's a lot of preparation preceding a wedding and working with my wife on this comes with testing.

There's a lot of waiting in the Bible. Noah who waited 120 years. Abraham was Promised Land and descendants as numerous as the stars. He obeyed God's call and left his homeland at 75-

years old. Abraham & Sarah waited 20 years and had their promised child Isaac when Ab was 100 and Sarah 90 years old. When he died at 150-years old, he only owned a burial cave in Canaan which he bought to bury Sarah, and he had two sons - Ishmael because he was impatient and couldn't wait and Isaac according to God's plan. Moses waited 40 years in the wilderness, but God wouldn't let him into the Promised Land because of his disobedience. The Jews waited until 1948 before they could return to Israel. We, as Christians, are still waiting for Jesus to return, almost 2,000 years later.

Waiting in God's economy is not doing nothing. Psalm 130:5-8: *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

The attitude of waiting is earnest expectation. It implies hope as well as patience. Hoping and waiting are in their very nature inseparably united. The tense of the verb indicates a habit. It's a hopeful expectation of God's goodness.

I pray a lot more when I am waiting, so waiting isn't wasted time. (Maybe that's God's purpose for waiting!) I keep a prayer list on my refrigerator. It has prayer requests and recorded answers. When I first printed the prayer list it had only requests. A few months later I printed the list a second time and it had a few answers. Now it's about 50/50 requests and answers. My faith grows when I see answered prayer.

For example:

- One month before I started my three-month chaplaincy training at Pensacola Baptist Hospital I had no place to live. I was anxious and prayed, and then God provided a condo.
- Sandie and I have prayed a long time for the salvation of her family members. Her older sister had a kidney transplant in China. Her number was high. (The 'number' indicates acceptance or rejection of the new kidney.) Her sister said, "If my number goes down then I will believe in Jesus." After reading the Gospel story of Jesus and the faith of the Roman Centurion, Sandie and I practiced prayer with authority from a distance. Both requests were answered. Her kidney number went down and she prayed to receive Christ.

I pray Bible promises while waiting. One of my favorite Bible verses to recite while walking around my pond and praying is Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

I want to make sure I understand what I'm reciting and believing. It is the word of God. It is a promise from God.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. I feel like I only trust in the Lord with 75% of my heart. I worry about many things. Sometimes I'm more afraid of living than dying. How do I get to 100% trust in the Lord? I hope to get to 95% trust with the help of the Holy Spirit!

Do not lean on your own understanding. This means do not support yourself by your own ability to figure things out. A building is supported by concrete and rebar. The concrete and rebar of your life cannot be your own imperfect understanding, your own thinking, your own intelligence. The concrete and rebar of your life must be trust in the LORD, trust in his goodness, trust in his plan and purpose even when you can't figure it out with your own understanding. I remember a song, "Lean on me when you're not strong and I'll help you carry on." It's OK to lean on other people, but people are weak and fail and may not be able to bear the weight of your leaning. I know it's hard to lean on the Lord because he isn't in a physical body standing next to you. I think the disciples missed the physical presence of Jesus Christ, but they had the Holy Spirit. Lean on the Lord's Spirit.

In all your ways acknowledge means enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord. Don't let any worry or stress come between you and enjoying the Lord's presence. If anxiety tries to build a wall between you and the Lord, then listen to some worship music and sing along. Read some encouraging testimonies from other believers. Get in a Bible study and read the word of God.

And he will make straight your paths. Straight does not mean trouble free. A straight path is not a path without obstacles. The Lord's straight path for you means guidance. He will guide you. The Lord's straight path means he will fulfill the plan and purpose he has for your life. Joseph had a straight path even though he was betrayed by his brothers, unjustly accused, and thrown into prison. That seems like a very crooked path! It was Joseph's straight path because it was the Lord's plan and purpose for him.

Isaiah 45:12-13 refers to the Persian king Cyrus, "*I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hand that stretched out the heavens (the expanding universe), and I commanded all their host. I have stirred Cyrus up in righteousness, **and I will make all his ways level - I will make straight his paths**; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward," says the LORD of hosts. The LORD declared his sovereignty over Cyrus. The Lord accomplished his plan and purpose through Cyrus, a king who didn't even know him. The Lord overcame all human obstacles and satanic opposition for Cyrus to free the Jewish exiles and rebuild Jerusalem. He is sovereign over your life. The Lord will do the same in your life when you trust in him with all your heart. This points me to my second wise lesson.*

God's plans always prevail.

The assumption is you want God's plans to prevail and not your own. Do not fear God's plans. His plans are better than yours.

Proverbs 16:9: *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*

Proverbs 19:21: *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*

I am standing here because the purpose of the Lord prevails. There were many plans in my mind during 2018 and January 2019. I applied to FCBC in the fall of 2017 when I saw it listed on

the NOBTS job postings. I thought the opportunity died because I didn't receive any communication for a few months. I gave up on it. But it came back to life in late May 2018 when Penny sent me an email and asked if I was still interested. I was with my family in HK at the time. I said to Sandie, "I thought that FCBC opportunity died, but it came back to life. I wonder what God's plan is."

During the time I was waiting for the result of the voting, I had several opportunities happen at the same time. I was accepted as a resident chaplain at hospitals in New Orleans and Houston, and had several churches contact me for interim service. I preached to the English-speaking congregation of a Korean church for a few months. (The Korean church had a kitchen and lunch every Sunday.) While I was sorting through those opportunities I kept praying the promises **Proverbs 3:5-6 (1-12), 16:9, 19:21**. I prayed, "Father God, I have many plans in my mind, but I want You to establish my steps; I want Your plan to prevail."

If you are seeking God's will about a specific decision, then pray the promises, trust, and take comfort in the truth that God's purpose for you will prevail. It's a promise. The Lord will establish your steps and His purpose will prevail.

Why would you want God's plans for your life to prevail? Maybe you think the plans in your mind for your life are better. Maybe you think your plans will make you happier. You can control your own life because God gives you the power of choice, the gift of free will. But after you end up unfulfilled and unsatisfied, lonely and empty, and maybe even self-destruct, you cannot blame God. It may be hard to entrust your life to God, but you can still turn your life over to God and find peace in his plan and purpose for you because God is love and his plans are good. God's purpose is always good - Romans 8:28. God's purpose is to bless you and make you a blessing to others. Let God's plan and purpose prevail in your life.

The whole Bible demonstrates that God's purpose prevails against all obstacles! God's plans prevailed, and we have salvation. Even the opposition to God's plan actually moves the plan forward. It's like the opposition is built into God's plan to achieve the plan. Without the opposition of the Jews and Romans Christ would never have been crucified for our sins. When God made his salvation plan he took into account the opposition and used it to accomplish his purpose. So don't worry about opposition or trials. It's just part of God's plan.

Read Isaiah 40:27-31. Your life is not hidden from God. He will give you guidance and strength when you wait on him. Waiting is not wasted time when you seek the Lord. God's purpose will prevail in your life as long as you want it and seek Him for it.