

How can you reduce stress and promote success? (16:3)

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

THE TEXT (NASB)

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

Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be stablished. Classic KJV - Proverbs 16:3

INTRODUCTION



This proverb doesn't address money matters directly; it reveals how we can both reduce our stress and achieve success—an impossible mix? Strange to say, our God is the God who likes to work, ambitiously. He works for six days and rests for one, not vice-versa.

As children made in His image, we have an inner craving to create something important, but too often our work becomes stressful and seems to lack meaning.

We don't have to be mired in drudgery. We have a powerful partner on our team: God. And it's even better, if we let Him be the Team Leader. But how do we work with the God we can't even see?



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COMMENTARY

Translations: *works, plans, established*



We deal daily with much that we can't see—like random anxiety, unproductive worry, and fear of failure. For dealing with worry, author Corrie Ten Boom warns wisely, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow – it empties today of its strength.” This text has secret to worry-free planning.

This proverb deserves careful attention to the sense of its Hebrew words. The Hebrew for “works” here, מעשה (mă•’ăšēh, pronounced “ma-a-sey”), is used 235 times in the Bible; first in Genesis 5:29, where Noah is described as the one who will give mankind rest from our works and toil of our hands. It’s often translated as “deeds,” “actions,” and even “business pursuits.”

The next important word, “plans,” מחשבה (mă•ḥăšā•bāh, pronounced “ma-kha-shah-vah”), is used 56 times in the Bible, with three basic meanings: “thought,” “plan,” and “invention.” It’s Hebrew root (hashab) describes the activity of our minds in focussed thought, especially generating new ideas.

The Hebrew word for “established” here, כון (kûn, pronounced “koon”), is a primary root verb meaning to be “set up” or “fixed with stability.” This means that our plans and thoughts don’t flop about. So the second phrase of this text is most frequently translated as “succeed” or “be established”:

- “Whatever you do, do it as service to Him and He will guarantee your success.” - VOICE¹
- “Trust your work to the Lord, and your plans will work out well.” - NLV²

The phrase also suggests mental satisfaction and inner peace: “Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.” - NKJV³

Perhaps the translation and paraphrase most clearly revealing the twin benefits promised in the text is this: “Roll your works upon the Lord [commit and trust them wholly to Him; He will cause



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your thoughts to become agreeable to His will, and] so shall your plans be established and succeed,” (*Amplified Bible*, Lockman, 1987).

God-assisted Planning

The promise of this proverb is enormous. The words “works” and “plans” are both plural, so the LORD can cope with many works and plans. We can apply this “method” to business ventures, parenting problems, sporting skills—anything. With infinite attention and command, the LORD can handle everything!

The whole of the Book of Proverbs wrestles with turning ideas into reality. We all have lots of ideas, all of which seem good to us, but only the LORD decides what can become reality. Think: He is God Almighty. He determines the outcomes. So it’s crucial that we want our works to be God’s works. Rather than praying, “Oh God, please bless my plans,” we should pray, “Oh God, guide me to make plans with your approval.” If our works are not God’s works, even if we don’t see them as defiant and selfish, we’re being rebellious. If we insist on acting all on our own, without God’s guidance, we import our own problems, deprived of God’s salvage. As my friend Paul MacKay once said, “A foolish man doesn’t plan, and another foolish man relies on the plans of man.”



God gives strong warnings against maverick, self-directed planning, which seems logical to the planner, but not agreeable to God. “Woe to the rebellious children,” declares the LORD, “who execute a plan but not Mine, and make an alliance but not of my Spirit,” Isaiah 30:1. Self-centered projects generate futile planning and stress, as the plans wander and the projects sputter. Yet many believers have worked fruitfully and serenely simply by first dedicating their projects to God. So the great musical compositions of both G. F. Handel and J. S. Bach bear the dedication, SDG or Solo Deo Gloria, meaning, “Glory to God Alone.” You might click on the music link below, as you read the rest of this commentary.

[George Frideric Handel: Water Music](#)

Thought Guidance

The LORD will not fulfill all our efforts as we envision them. Instead, He guides us in all our plans and inspirations, if we first ensure we’re working on his work. Have we dedicated the entire project to God—whatever it is? How do we do that?



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The direct command in the text is “commit,” so we need a full sense of what “commit” means. In the ancient Middle East, a heavy stone was used to cover the mouth of a well, preventing debris from falling into it. In Genesis 29, the Hebrew word for “commit” (galal) is used three times, meaning “roll,” as in “rolling the stone off the mouth of a well.” In other places (like Psalm 37:5) it means “roll” figuratively, in the sense of rolling one’s burden or trouble on someone else, away from oneself.

Rolling a stone takes a lot of effort, until inertia is overcome and it gains momentum. Getting something rolling may not be easy, but in theory it’s simple—just push hard in one direction. The stone is heavy, so the text’s prescription for freeing ourselves from heavy burdens is to roll them onto the LORD. He is able and willing to carry them. Practically speaking, we must let the LORD lead us, from up front, where he can take the brunt of the wind and debris. We should abandon ventures when it becomes clear that God is not leading us, and tackle them with new courage, when it’s clear that He is leading. Consider young David who thoughtfully and courageously attacked Goliath.

Humility and Courage

Goliath did not see David’s invisible ally. David didn’t brag about his aim or speed with a stone and sling. He bragged about the LORD. In killing Goliath, David used all his human abilities, but he placed his confidence completely in God. A prayerful person is made stronger by prayer, but it’s not the power of a magic spell. It’s the power of the Person called in prayer. At the start of a project especially, and through to its completion, we must humbly ask God to lead us. It’s not weakness to ask God for help, but maturity. It shows we understand that, apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Lock-step, moment-by-moment dependence on His Father was precisely the way Jesus lived in the flesh on Earth (John 8:28).

Classic Comments: Keil & Delitzsch

Note the *Keil and Delitzsch (K&D) Commentary on the Old Testament* paraphrases:

We should roll on God all matters which, as obligations, burden us, and on account of their weight and difficulty cause us great anxiety, for nothing is too heavy or too hard for Him who can overcome all difficulties and dissolve all perplexities; then will our thoughts about the future of our duty and our life-course, be happy, nothing will remain entangled and be a failure, but will



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be accomplished, and the end and aim be realized.

Invisible Yet Real

How do you commit your works to the LORD, when the LORD is invisible? Clearly it must take emotional and spiritual effort, as rolling a stone requires much physical exertion. The text does not say that by rolling our works onto the LORD, we absolve ourselves of our responsibility. It does not say that the LORD will perform our works for us. It does say that works, dedicated to God's purposes, receive God's help with both the planning and the ultimate results.

When we do a job, be it big or small, it's not all up to us, with nothing left for God, nor all up to God, with nothing from us. It's a divine-human joint-venture. Without God's support, human efforts come to nothing. So the psalmist described the need for God's blessing and participation in the building of a house or the military defense of a city (Psalm 127:1).

We must realize that God blesses some plans and frustrates others (Psalm 33:10). So we should seek the LORD's counsel (Psalm 33:11) as much as possible, and not merely human counsel. Once we've prayerfully yielded our agenda to the LORD, we must step out in faith. The LORD promises to guide us in our walking, not our sitting: He guides walks, not sits. He can't steer a ship aground (Proverbs 3:5-6).

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28. Why is Jesus willing to assume all kinds of burdens upon Himself?

Normally we try to avoid other people's troubles; we don't ask for them. Imagine someone saying, "All of you—give me all your problems, all of them."

Who does Jesus think He is? For a clue read John 8:58.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- Pray and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you manage your money. He handles details wonderfully well (Matthew 10:30).
- Pray again to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to take responsibility for your burdens—the responsibilities you have. This rolling of tasks onto the Lord can be practiced many times daily. Carrying less burdens ourselves does not mean we should be lazy but it means we have more time for laughter, lightness and joy.
- Tell the LORD that, even though you can't visibly see Him or audibly hear Him, you still want Him to carry your loads (Psalm 55:22-23). It will likely involve other members of His body, the church.
- Which one of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

anxiety, better life (quality), failure, LORD, planning, stability, stress, success, wisdom, work, prayer

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: "Haste makes waste," "brains over brawn," and "don't jump to conclusions."

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step," she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. "Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late." Pauline says, "First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity."

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day



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timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.



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FOOTNOTES

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