

How do you build anything successfully? (24:3-4)

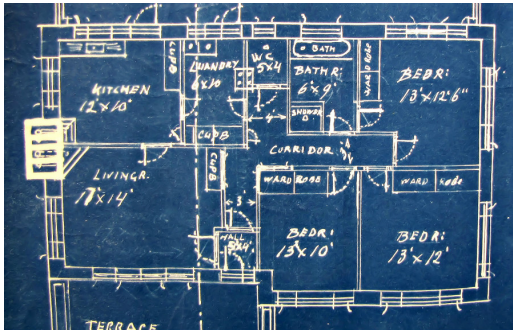
By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

THE TEXT (NASB)

By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

Through wisdom is a house built; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant. KJV - Proverbs 24:3-4

INTRODUCTION



Good things don't just happen; they are designed—deliberately.

Success, like a great **house**, takes more than lumber and labour, more than bricks and brawn. The text ignores materials and muscles, but speaks of skills and mental effort.

Isn't there another way?



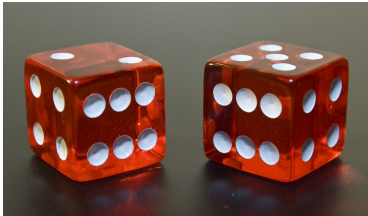
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COMMENTARY

Sloppy, haphazard activity builds nothing. Random processes achieve nothing productive. Good things don't "just happen." Positive progress is deliberate. Thoughtful, orderly, skillful effort is essential for success. The principle of systematic design and construction applies to more than just houses, but if our family refuge is built poorly—the place where we and our most dearly loved ones find rest and refreshment—then nothing else really matters. If our life doesn't work at home, we can't simply "export it" abroad.

Luck is No Strategy



The text condemns the "luck" strategy, often implemented as, "My financial plan is winning the lottery." The proverb does not speak of muscle, but of intangible mental exertion. It calls for planning prior to work. Yet we will then need brute labour, for as we shall see, the three words describing intelligent design, in Hebrew, mean more than just wishful imagination.

House and Home

The Hebrew word for "house," **בֵּית** (b^ə•yith, pronounced "ba-yith"), is used many times in Proverbs, referring to a common family domicile, regardless of its size or elegance. Since its rooms are being filled, the house is not a simple hut, and "house" is not being used poetically, in the sense of "family" (as in Proverbs 14:1). A well-built house, fully operational and furnished, provides peace, stability, and a secure sense of abundance, in one word—prosperity.

A Mansion: Finished and Furnished



Who wouldn't want a great house filled with all kinds of good things? When the rooms are filled with pleasant, even precious possessions, the furnishing is complete. There is nothing wrong with possessing **precious and pleasant riches**. This truth is stressed in



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Proverbs 14:24. Yet we must include God in the process, since “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it,” Psalm 127:1. Plans that seems shrewd and clever are doomed if they arrogantly exclude God. Read about the consequences of Godless planning in Job 5:12-13.

Dedicated Design Work

A house needs capital and labour, but capital and labour are useless without intelligent design and proper planning. Note the order of the three virtues: Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—wisdom is foundational. Wisdom, seeing the Big Picture, comes first. It is patient and methodical so that order and intelligence are built in. Being sloppy and “imaginative” undercut systematic stewardship.

A homeowner I know supervised the design construction of a beautiful house just outside Calgary, Alberta. The interior is a unique, architectural marvel. From the outside, it’s rather ordinary, but once you step inside you can see an arena of space in every direction. The bedroom doors on the main level are hidden and a broad stairway invites you down to an expanded walkout. But this didn’t just happen; she spent countless hours thinking, drawing, measuring, and revising how things would look.

Translation: *Wisdom*



The Hebrew word for “**wisdom**,” חכמה (ḥḥ•em•h, pronounced “h?k-mah”), is used in the Bible first at Exodus 28:3, describing the craftsmanship God gave to certain craftsmen, in order to make sacred robes for the priest Aaron. According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Hebrew “wisdom” is not theoretical and speculative—it’s practical. (See Proverbs 8:18.) ḥā•kemāh is intelligence applied to real purposes, unlike Plato’s philosophizing or mystical Buddhist navel-gazing. It’s directed at hands-on production, not mental gymnastics.

Translation: *Understanding*

The Hebrew word for “**understanding**,” תבונה (te?û•n•h, pronounced “t?-boo-nah”), is used in the Bible first at Exodus 31:3, describing the craftsmanship granted by God to Bezalel, gifted with incredible artistic abilities. It appears in the triplet, “wisdom, understanding, and knowledge,” implying that these three are a package: Seeing the Big Picture, understanding the particular situation, and knowing what to do with it. This proverb is likely a direct reference to



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Exodus 31:3: These three gifts were needed in building the sacred tent and utensils of God, in Israel's forty-year trek from Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land, and likewise, they are essential in building any lasting house. Interestingly, the Scriptures' first mention of the Spirit of God is followed by these three descriptors: Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—all emphasizing intelligent creation with Man, "made in the image of God," the Creator.

Translation: *Knowledge*

The Hebrew word for "**knowledge**," דַעַת (dā-ath), is used in the Bible first in Genesis 2:9 in referring to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Also refer to Proverbs 20:15. A house built without wisdom, understanding, and knowledge will be messy and unstable. "A house built upon sand" is vulnerable to collapse, especially during storms. Massive amounts of engineering and construction research has gone into building earthquake-resistant houses in California, given its frequent tremors.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

When it comes to goal-setting, we get some good guidance from a popular acronym, SMART, meaning that goals should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

SMART goal setting is commonly attributed to Peter Drucker's *Management by Objectives* formula. The first known use of the term occurred in the 1981 issue of *Management Review* by George T. Doran. Here are two video links on SMART goal setting:

[Quick Three Minute Overview](#)

[More Explanation in Six Minutes](#)

The following link gives more practical suggestions: [SMART planning applied to marketing](#)

Sophisticated planning takes many forms. The Nazis were SMART planners. The Islamic terrorists who flew the jets into the Twin Towers executed a plan that looked SMART. Obviously, SMART planning is not necessarily WISE planning. Sophisticated sin is very dangerous since it has a veneer of professionalism. A well-organized machine may be powerful, but evil in use. Generally, it is better to be well organized than sloppy, but organization does not ensure the goodness, needed to see the Big Picture. Look again at this proverb: A truly



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successful project begins with Wisdom, not with Smarts.

WISE planning

Wise planning, rooted in humility, recognizes the God is most important. (Proverbs 9:10):

- **Who** is in control of absolutely everything? God.
- **I** am not God. Simple? Try it. We don't naturally believe this. (Isaiah 30:1)
- **S**pirit-led, ensuring success with wisdom, power and fear of the LORD. (Isaiah 11:2)
- **E**ternity is forever. Our actions and thoughts have permanent consequences.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus lived a very disciplined and orderly life.

He submitted to God's plan as outlined in the Old Testament scriptures.

As the Messiah, His role was tightly scripted. Even His last action, while writhing in agony on the cross, was "by the book," John 19:28.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Think well before you speak or act.
- Learn more about the Intelligent Design movement.
- Get good advice and follow it, to improve your work habits.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

folly, planning, wisdom, house, understanding, knowledge, lottery, intelligent design

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 timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible



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pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.

