
Traders Point, welcome. How are we doing? Good. Hey, my name is Ryan and I'm one of the pastors around here. Just want to say welcome to everyone watching online and to all of the campuses.

This is an incredible weekend, Memorial weekend. And we just love and appreciate all of those who have served our country and all of those who have given their lives. Yeah, can we celebrate all of our military heroes? Incredible.

Well today we're in a message. If you're the note taking type the title of it is *Sky-High Nose Dive*. And I know for some of you, that's like your worst fear. You literally just looked up to try to find your oxygen mask, like where are we going with this.

But seriously, if anything ever did go wrong on a plane that we were on, we would be the worst people to do anything about it. I've never seen a group of people more disrespected than flight attendants trying to save our lives before a flight takes off. We treat them like they are trying to sell us a timeshare in Oklahoma. Just hurry up with the thing so that we can get up in the sky.

Flying, in general, is one of the most impressive feats humanity has ever achieved. And pilots—what they are able to do is incredible. The way... Think how hard it is to navigate through the skies and all of the things that they have to be aware of as they go.

One that I was learning about and I was hearing is something terrifying to think about, let alone experience. It's something that they call black hole vertigo. This is something that pilots experience as they are flying through the clouds. They begin to lose visibility. They can't see what's going on in front of them, so this illusion kicks in between reason and reality. And one of the big things is that they can't tell the difference between what's up and what's down. As you can imagine, for a pilot that's a really big deal, alright?

One of the most famous cases we see of this happening is the story I was reading of J. F. K., Jr. As he was flying—it was a short flight with him, his wife, and his sister-in-law from a small airport in New Jersey to Martha's Vineyard. He would have taken off and as he left the lights of the city he began to fly in some really thick haze. He would have lost visibility. He would have lost his point of reference as to which way was up. This is when that illusion would have really kicked in.

And what's hard at this point, if you could imagine, flying through looking out the windshield and you can't see anything that is in front of you. You have zero visibility. But what you believe to be true, what you think is up is actually down. You're so confused but you're dead set that you are right. And what makes it even harder is when you look

down at your instruments, your control panel is telling you the exact opposite of what you are thinking. So you're put in this really tough situation.

And only expert pilots are able to disregard what they think and what they feel and trust their instruments. The crazy thing is that J. F. K., Jr. would have been nose diving at about 4,700 feet per minute before he crashed into the ocean. And what's even wilder than that is that he may have never even have known, if at all, but just two seconds before he hit the water, which is wild to think about.

But as I was reading this article, a much bigger picture kind of came to the surface. One just for not of those whose occupation is a pilot but for all of us. We're in the pilot seats of our lives and very rarely are the skies just open and blue. A lot of times we're flying through and there's no visibility. It's hard to know what's coming and what isn't.

We get brought into all of these different situations, but we have to make choices as to which way we're going to go. Should I take that job or should I not? Should I start this relationship? Should I end this relationship? Over and over again we get placed into these storms where we're trying to make a decision even though we can't see.

I think one of the... All of our fears kind of break down on this one Proverb. It kind of reaches the pinnacle of it. This is what keeps us up at night. This is what some of us go to bed thinking about. It's this idea in Proverbs 16. It says:

"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."

That's the one, right? When we're going through our life and we have all of these opportunities and things that are in front of us, we just start pacing—sweating, anxious, just fear is overriding us. We are saying, "God, what are we going to do? I can't see what is coming next."

And our worst fear is that we are going to be going the wrong way all along and we have no idea that we were nose diving. And as we begin to go through life we begin to—over and over again—find ourselves in this situation.

So what we are going to be looking at today is that is there a way—is there a way to avoid the nose dive? Is there a way to navigate through our lives with some trusted instruments that we can look to so that it's not all on us and what we feel and just the little bit that we can see? Is there something that we can grab on to and say, "No, we're going to be okay. We actually have a plan for where we are going." Is there a way to live our lives where we can have certainty and confidence?

That's what we are going to be looking at today and we're going to be in Proverbs, chapter 16, starting in verse 1. If you have a Bible you can get there. If not, don't worry. Everything is going to be on the screen behind me.

Proverbs 16—Proverbs in general is a book of wisdom. It's a book that kind of helps us navigate life. And it's really rich. It's more than just like fortune cookie wisdom, like do this, don't do this. It is big and it is full. So we're going to read it and then we're going to break it down as we go today.

Proverbs 16, starting in verse 1, it says:

"We can make our own plans, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives.

Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.

The Lord has made everything for his own purposes, even the wicked for a day of disaster.

The Lord detests the proud; they will surely be punished.

Unfailing love and faithfulness make atonement for sin. By fearing the Lord, people avoid evil.

When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them. Better to have little, with godliness, than to be rich and dishonest.

We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps."

So here in Proverbs 16 we begin to see, when we ask the questions: How can we know that we are going in the right direction? How can we have God's guidance for our lives? Big. What is God's will?

We see right away that there is this relationship between us and God, between all of mankind and God. God is active but we're also active as well. If you check it here, there is almost language that seems contradictory at first because it says that we can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. We may throw the dice, this is what it says at the end of chapter 16, we may throw the dice, but the Lord determines how they fall. So we see right away that, when it comes to our lives, as we sit in the pilot seat, as we're navigating this thing, we have choices to make, alright? So first things first. This just kind of puts this in picture:

Autopilot isn't an option.

It's one we like to slip into and hit the imaginary button like it's a real thing as we go through life. I'm just not going to worry about it. I'm just going to drift into autopilot. Sounds good. It sounds like an amazing thing.

Like if I really could just fall asleep in the back of the plane and just coast until we hear God's voice over the intercom, like: Thank you for flying flight 777, you have arrived in heaven. The weather today is—well it's perfect. It's going to be perfect every day while you're here. Thank you for flying Divine Airlines. See you out there.

That sounds incredible. If that was really a thing—if life could be that easy... But we see right away that there is a lot more going on. God is active but we are also active within this. And this is where things really begin to kind of take shape of what God's will is and what our role is. We see this relationship where we can do things, we can make plans, we get to throw the dice, but God determines how they fall. God determines if they are a success.

So maybe you are asking right now, "So, which is it? Do I have freedom to make choices in my life or does God have complete control?" And the answer is: yes. And this is where things get dicey, because it would make a whole lot more sense if we would say, "Hey, God controls all of it or none of it. We have complete freedom with all of all of it or we have complete freedom with none of it." But that's not what we have here.

I know it sounds wild. It's hard for our brains to fathom, because when we think about this, that God has 100 percent control and we have 100 percent freedom it is mind blowing, right? It is hard for our minds to get around this idea. How does that work? But I'm telling you, practically, it makes so much more sense and it's a much better option than either one of those other extremes.

I mean, think about it. Think about if you knew that you had no freedom. That everything had already been decided. That God was in complete control of everything—it really would feel like you would just want to sleep and not get up and get out of bed. Because what would be the point? It doesn't even matter.

And think about it if it was on the other side. If everything was dependent upon us, every choice and God said: Hey, I'm completely removing myself from this situation, good luck you tiny, tiny little humans. I'm not wasting any of my time on you. We would crush ourselves under the weight of our decisions.

We would wake up every day looking at our calendars and what we have to do, trying to piece our lives together. I mean, it's one giant puzzle that's all sky pieces. All of the same color of blue. It would be the worst.

But we see that, no, no, no—that's not what we have. What we have here is that we have freedom, we have 100 percent freedom to make the choices good and bad and God has 100 percent control.

We see this right here in Proverbs 16. We have all of this freedom to make good decisions and bad decisions. Right here it says that the Lord God has made everything for his own purposes, even the wicked for a day of disaster.

Let's make sure that we are reading this right here because it doesn't say that God creates bad things, it doesn't say the God forces people to do bad things, but it says: you want to know how in control he really is? He's given us freedom to make any decision that we want good or bad, and he's saying that he's powerful enough to still work in that and to control everything that is going on.

It's like God is not up in heaven in a corner somewhere looking like: Oh, my gosh. Did you see what Jim did at work yesterday? Now we have to redo everything. The plan—we'll bring it back. We're going to have to pencil this thing in. No, God is in control over everything. In this tension we have complete freedom to make decisions and God has complete control over everything.

And our role in the midst of all of this tension is right there, spelled out perfectly. What we are called to do in the midst of all of these actions that we have, all of these plans that we get to make—this is what we're called to do. Verse 3 says to commit your actions to the Lord and your plans will succeed. This is us. Commit your actions to the Lord and your plans will succeed.

Now I love the pictures we get behind words. Commit is one of those words. Commit—much more than the definition, the idea or the picture that you get behind someone committing to someone or to something is them being all in. Every pound down to every ounce. When you commit yourself to a relationship, you are all in on it. There's nothing... You're saying, "I'm all in on this. I'm not breaking apart from this. I'm committed to seeing this thing through."

So this is what God says: If you want to know how to navigate life with my wisdom, how to know that you're going the right way, well commit everything that you do to me. Before you do it, commit it to me.

And this is what that looks like. This is what we're called to—to unconditionally trust God with everything. Unconditionally trust God with everything. And this is very different than how we approach God. Some of us (I'll say that) when we look to God, especially for the will of God—like where he wants to take us and why he's taking the direction that he's going to, a lot of times our conversations with God are not unconditional, they're conditional.

I know that's probably not true for a lot of you good folks here and at all of the campuses, so I'm just going to give an example of what a conditional prayer might look like. Off the top of my head and surprisingly with slide support, it might look something like this:

God, if you would, then I would.

Right? Conditional. "God, if you would, then I would. God, I don't know where I am going next. I'm losing visibility, but if you would just make it painfully clear as to what you want me to do and how you want be to do it, then I would go."

"God, if you would just give me a little bit more security in my job, then I would trust you with my finances."

"God, if you would do this..."

"God, if you would do that, then I would just feel much more comfortable. And I promise you that if you would make it clear, then I would go."

Conditional.

And lucky for us, a conditional relationship isn't what Jesus offers, so it's not something that we can demand from him. No, the command that we get is to unconditionally trust God with everything, especially when we can't see what's coming next, especially when the storm is crashing and we have no idea what to do or how the thing is going to shake out—we trust.

I just want to put this out there. What would it look like instead of praying, "God if you would, then I would," what would it look like to say:

God, here's what I want, but I trust you will give me what I need.

Remove the condition. "God, this is what I want, but I trust you will give me what I need." From my vantage point as I'm going through life and I have little visibility, this is what I'm going for, "I'm going to apply for this job. I'm doing everything that I believe lines up with your mission. I think I can go in this direction. I think that it's going to be great. But I know that I don't see all of it. So if it is yours and it's what I need then I trust that you will give it to me."

And if you get the job, you celebrate God. And you say, "God, I know that I committed everything to you, and you gave me this job. I know that. All good gifts come from heaven. I know this is just more proof of you looking out for me. Thank you."

And on the flip side, if go through with the job and you say, "God, this is what I want but I trust that you will give me what I need," and you don't get the job you're not resentful. You're not looking at God like he's holding something back from you, because you know that he's a good God. You know that he's in control of everything. You know that he has a plan for you.

So even when you don't get the job you say, "God, thank you for saving me from what I couldn't even see, because I know that there was something in that direction, it's not that you were withholding or didn't want something good for me, but it's that you have something better. Your plan is always leading me in the right direction. So, God, thank you for saving me from that and for leading me into what it is that you do have for me." And we see this. God wants us to know where he's going. It's not like he's trying to hide stuff from us. He's painfully making things, over and over again, aware to us as to what he's like and what he wants and the life that he has for us and for us to trust.

Romans, chapter 12 gives us exactly what this looks like. Chapter 12, verse 2: he says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's **will** for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

So what does God want from us? As we go through life, we're seeing here that God wants us, not to just have a better life, he wants us to have new life. He wants us to be able to discern so many things. That's why he gives us the instruments that he gives us. He says: You don't have to fly through this thing alone eyeballing it, white knuckling this thing to try to figure out which way is up.

He says: No, I'm going to give you trusted instruments. I'm going to give you my word, an instrument panel that will always point you in the right direction. I'm going to give you my word that you can look to. You want to know how to navigate those relationships in a healthy way? Right here. You want to know what marriage should look like? Right here. You want to know what it looks like to be generous all the time? This is how you do it. You want to know who I am and what I'm like and what I... Jesus. It's all right here. Follow me and you will know exactly where you are going.

And on top of that—come on we're going to keep going—on top of this trusted instrument panel that we have, on top of that for you to know without a doubt that I have a plan for your life, for you to know that I'm the One determining your steps, I'm the One who is in control, that I want the best for you—I'm going to send you my Spirit. I'm going to send you the same Spirit, the same powerful Spirit who rose Jesus from the dead—I'm going to give you that One so that you can go through life not navigating alone but that you can know that I want the best for you, you can know that I will never leave you. We have all of this; all of this has been revealed to us from God—who he is and what he is like and he's given us trusted instruments of how to navigate life. But a lot of times, we drift away from looking down at our trusted instruments that we have and we begin to search for this hidden will of God. These things that are hidden that are never going to be revealed.

What that looks like, instead of just saying, "God, we trust you with everything." We begin to look at: Why?

Why are we going in this direction? "God, I don't understand. I can't see this so I'm not going to go in this direction. God, how are you going to make this thing work? I don't understand. God, if you would just make it clear. God, can you just show me what's coming next?" And we question over and over again: Why? And: Why? And: Why? If I could explain it like this, a lot of times when we go through life and we look for the will of God, it's almost like we're looking through the windshield of our lives with this little light and we're kind of looking out into the darkness, into the clouds, trying to make sense of what we see.

And we begin to squint, and we begin to strain trying to understand, "God, where are you and where am I? I don't understand where I should be going. God, if you would just open this up. God, if I would just know that this is the direction that you want me to go in, or, God, is it over here? God where are you in my life? I don't see you."

And after a while of this, after searching for God's will as if it's something to find, we eventually stop looking. We say, "You know what? I can't see through the clouds. God must not have a plan for my life." And we quit.

And if everyone could just look up here, God loves us way too incredibly much to give us something like a lifetime of staring out the windshield trying to make sense of what he's going to do and what he's not going to do—trying to decide what he's involved in and what he's not involved in.

If I could put it this way:

God's will isn't something that you have to search for, it's something that you're standing in.

God's will is not something that you have to search for, it's something that you're standing in. This is the incredible thing about following Jesus. When we come to know a God who is fully in control of every single thing, the good and the bad—that he is never going to leave us because he sent his Spirit here to be with us, when we're in here we have this freedom to stand in his will.

When we know that he's with us we have freedom to live the life that we have always wanted to live—a life that takes away any fear, and that takes away any anxiety. Because if you've committed yourself to him, you're standing in his will and you're aware of it—take the job, don't take the job. Go, make choices. Live the life that he has called you to. Be obedient to it.

And you can't mess it up. There's nothing that you do to that can take away God's will. There's not storm big enough that can push you out of God's will. There's no mistake that you can make that can push you out of God's will. There's no depth that you can fall where God's will is still not on you and his plan is not for you.

He loves you so much. Jesus said: Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies and yet God knows every single one of them. He knows when they fall. Doesn't God love you so much more? Every hair on your head is counted: Trust that I'm involved in everything. Can we celebrate how good God is? How much of a loving Father he is? Let every fear be stripped away. It's incredible. God's will isn't something that you have to search for. It's something that you're standing in.

But the conflict comes, the hard part comes, when the storms hit—the hard part comes when that black hole vertigo begins to set in, because it's one thing to trust God when the skies are open, when it's beautiful, and it's blue, and you can see everything that is happening and you like everything that is happening. And you're looking and you say, "Oh, yeah. God is all over this." And you're looking down and you're trusting his instruments, "Yep, he wants a good life for me. Everything is going great."

The conflict comes when the readings are conflicting. When you've fully committed yourself to God, you say, "God I trust you with everything. I'm bringing everything to you unconditionally. I trust you, God. Lead me," and it feels like you go into one storm after another, and you begin to think, "God, why would you take me into another one when you could easily just take me right and take me out of here? Maybe I need to get control of this thing and take over."

The conflict comes when we're living what God has called us to, when we're obedient, trusting him, which means that we're loving people like they've never been loved before but we're not being met with love. We get stabbed in the back. When we do something that we believe that God has called us to, his instruments are leading in this way to maybe take a new job, but then you hit a financial crisis, "God, I'm trying to understand this. It feels like I'm doing the right thing. My head is telling me now that this isn't the

right thing. It's telling me that I'm nose diving, but your word is saying that I'm doing the right thing, which one is it?"

I remember the first time I gave, financially, at the church. It was at the Northwest Campus. I was sitting somewhere right over there. And I had thought about it all week. I had been coming to know who Jesus is, I believed he is good, I believed that he had given me so incredibly much, I was prepared, joyful, ready to give.

Then the plate came—this is when we used to pass the plates across the aisle, and it came, and I almost added an extra sound effect to make it sound like it was more money than I was putting in the plate—boom! And it went by. And it was incredible. I got it. I was trusting God. I was committing everything to him. Life was looking great. Beautiful open skies. And I thought, "Man, this day is too good. I'm going to remember this day. I'm going to celebrate."

I left here and I went to Taco Bell, because I deserved it. No, I did. "I'm going to go. My trophy is going to be a Cheesy Gordita Crunch. It's about to happen." And I pulled up to order my order. And I go to roll down my window. And it starts to go down a little bit, and then, doof. The window drops like the Drop Zone at Kings Island all the way underneath the door panel.

And I pretend like it didn't happen. I just go to hit the window like it's going to come back up, and it was just like making the noise. And the lady on the other side asked me what I would like from Taco Bell right as rain is pouring into the window. I have no way to stop it.

So two things: One, you're crazy if you think I didn't still order my Cheesy Gordita Crunch and enjoy every single bite. But you're also crazy if in that moment I didn't look up to God like, "How, is this happening? How is this your plan? How is this your will? Did you miss something? I did the thing. I gave money to you, your church, and then you took away my window?"

I hear people tell stories all of the time. Like, "I gave and then it was given back to me tenfold." That would have been incredible. Like if I would have pulled up and been like, "Yeah, I want a Cheesy Gordita Crunch," and she was like, "Oh, wow. Well it's your lucky day. For no reason at all, we're going to give you a life-time supply of Cheesy Gordita Crunches. It's just weird, I know, but enjoy it."

"God, thank you. I knew it." But that's not what happened. I trusted him. I committed everything and then it felt like it took me into a storm. It felt like he wasn't there for me. And in those moments what we have to do is to say, "No, no, no. Just because I can't see it, just because I don't understand it—I'm going to trust. I'm going to trust that there is One who is above all of this. I'm going to trust the One who is determining my steps and has a good plan for my life, the One who wants the best for me, even when I can't see it, I'm going to trust God.

And we have the perfect example of what this looks like, practically, to do. And it's in the life of Jesus. Did you ever think about the last week, specifically, of Jesus' life? This is someone, Jesus, God in the flesh, who committed his plans to God perfectly.

And he's going through and he's loving people like people have never been loved before. He's healing people. He's doing all of these things. It's still him, he's being met with betrayal. It's still him, he's flying in the storms left and right. And it gets so bad in the days leading up to his death that he's praying to God and he knows death is in the background, but still he doesn't place conditions on God.

He said: God, I can see, I can almost feel the pain that is coming my way. I know it's going to be really, really bad. I know the storm is going to be almost impossible. If there's another way, take it. Take it away from me. God, if there is another way that I can avoid this storm, take it. But if there's not, if this is your plan to do what you called me to do, if this is how you've determined it, I'm going to go. I'm going to commit myself to it 100 percent.

That's exactly what he did. Jesus would soon be arrested, beaten, mocked, wrongfully accused, and then sentenced to murder. He was going to be crucified. Think about that. As Jesus is going to the cross, he's saying he committed everything to God and now he's walking to his death.

To the world, this would have looked like a nose dive. In his mind he has to be crashing. What does he do with this? How is God going to use this? Jesus went all the way to the cross trusting in God.

Just because you can't feel it or have peace, you know, you have trust that God has a plan for it.

Jesus—his lifeless body being taken off that cross, that was the biggest nose dive the world had ever seen. Where was God? Silence. More people looking into the sky trying to understand and trying to make sense of the hidden will of God, but they couldn't. But three days later—three days later, though—God had a plan. All along, even in the most horrific situation, God had a plan and he was working all along. Three days later engines firing, three days later the breath is back, that tomb is empty. Jesus shows us that not even death can stop his plan. It's too good. Jesus rose and declared the grave has no place for us.

We are called to eternity with God our Father. This is for everyone—everyone:

Don't fear the nose dive.

Don't fear the nose dive when you're going through life and you feel like you're alone, when that black hole vertigo really begins to set in and your mind is telling you one thing

and you're saying, "I can't see God in this. I'm not sure about how to move forward," trust that you're standing in God's will.

Trust that he has a good plan for you. Trust that he is never going to leave you, even when it looks crazy, even when the storms are all over you, even when people are whispering saying how you're going the wrong way—you need to do this: No! Don't conform to the ways of the world but be transformed by what Jesus has for you. Trust your instruments. Fly through the storm. Do not fear anything, because your God is with you.

What we're going to do right now is I'm going to lead us in a prayer. I'm going to lead us in a prayer because I know that a lot of us are flying through a storm right now. A lot of us are having a hard time trying to make sense, because we can't see anything that is in front of us and we're saying, "God, if you would... God if you would just do this, I'd just do that."

But if we can be brought to a place where we can trust, even in the storms, we can look to our instruments above even what we see. If we can look to God and say, "God, I trust you. I'm committing myself to you because you committed yourself to me, even when that meant committing your own Son to die for me. I trust you."

So I'm just going to pray—pray for the kind of trust and faith and courage that it takes to trust God with your plan, even when your mind is doing something different. So I'm just going to pray and then we're going to have a moment of reflection for you to sit and to look to God.

Let's pray:

God, we thank you. God, we thank you for who you are. You are a good God. You are a Father. You want what is best for us. God, that you're so powerful, so in control that you can use everything, even our messes, you find a way for them to work for our good for the glory of who you are.

So, God, I pray right now for us as we're going flying through our lives, God, you know it's hard to see. God, you've been here to see what's coming next. But God, I pray for all of us, I pray that you would allow us to pray unconditional prayers, that we would learn to trust you unconditionally, that we would say, "God, we trust that you're going to give us what we need even if that means going through a storm, we'll go and we'll trust you every step of the way.

We will fear no nose dive. We will fear nothing because you have made a perfect way for all of us. God, help us to navigate life so that we're not searching for something that is hidden but standing in the confidence to know that we are in your will and that we are your children and that you love us so incredibly much.

God, help us to look to our instruments. Help us to wake up every single day looking to them more than we trust ourselves. Jesus, we love you so much. It is in your perfect and holy name that we pray, Amen.