

Proverbs 16:9 - Man Decides, God Guides

Gregg, Josiah. Commerce of the Prairies. Edited by Max L. Moorhead. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954, page 36ff:

After fifteen miles' progress, we arrived at the 'Diamond Spring' (a crystal fountain discharging itself into a small brook). Near twenty-five miles beyond we crossed the Cottonwood fork of the Neosho, a creek still smaller than that of Council Grove, and our camp was pitched immediately in its further valley.

When caravans are able to cross in the evening, they seldom stop on the near side of a stream—first, because if it happens to rain during the night, it may become flooded, and cause both detention and trouble: again, though the stream be not impassable after rain, the banks become slippery and difficult to ascend. A third and still more important reason is, that, even supposing the contingency of rain does not occur, teams will rarely pull as well in 'cold collars,' as wagoners term it—that is, when fresh geared—as in the progress of a day's travel. When a heavy pull is just at hand in the morning, wagoners sometimes resort to the expedient of driving a circuit upon the prairie, before venturing to 'take the bank.'

If there is a verse which might be the slogan for our study of the Santa Fé Trail it is:

Proverbs 16:9 - The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

This is the New American Standard translation and it is all right except for maybe four words. “*mind*”: *leb*: Hebrew equivalent to the Greek word, *kardia* and thus refers to the stream of consciousness.

“*plans*” is fine if you understand it means that man plots a course based on a complete understanding of his mission.

“*way*”: *derek*: This is a synonym of *ma'gal*, both of which correspond to the Greek *trochia* and means wheel-track.

“*fixes*” (directs): *kûn*: We are expected to use the doctrine we know to execute our plans. We must be flexible however so as to orient and adjust to mitigating circumstances leaving details to God. God thus “*directs,*” “*leads,*” “*guides.*”

“*steps*”: *sa'ad*: This is a military term for marching, or to “*walk in cadence.*” It stresses the importance of the believer's submission to imperative moods while being alert to God's leadership with regard to details.

From this we can arrive at the following corrected and expanded translation:

Proverbs 16:9 - A man plots his path toward the ultimate objective by means of Bible doctrine resident in his stream of consciousness but God leads and guides his steps with regard to his immediate objectives.

These pioneers had developed wisdom from spending countless days on the prairie. Knowledge of how nature worked made it possible for them to anticipate exigencies before they happened. The novice would be caught on the wrong side of the river should rain occur during the night and then face the task of striking the stream with a team of cold-collared mules the next morning.

Experience in the Angelic Conflict when linked with Bible doctrine enables the believer to anticipate many exigencies in life. Doctrine in the soul plus experience under pressure equals wisdom and enables the believer to avoid many pitfalls and sorrows in the daily march.