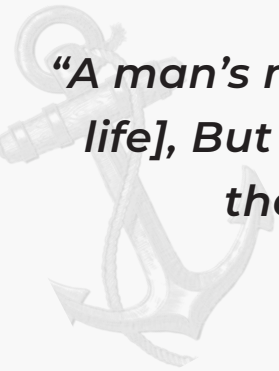


Hope & Foundations

Building toward what we desire
while remaining open to what God reveals

ANCHORED VERSE



“A man’s mind plans his way [as he journeys through life], But the Lord directs his steps and establishes them. [Ps 37:23; Prov 20:24; Jer 10:23] “

— Proverbs 16:9 (AMP) —

When a new relationship starts to emerge, it’s easy to rush ahead or hold back to protect ourselves. This week we look at how to hope honestly, build faithfully, and stay willing to see clearly, with Proverbs 16:9, the two builders in Matthew 7, and Paul’s prayer for discerning love.

by Sean Brannan

Friday, 25 September, 2026

Welcome friend,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to spend here with me. This week, I've been thinking about the hope we bring into new relationships and the responsibility that comes with caring about where they might lead.

A Quick Update:

From Survival to Surrender and its *Companion Journal* are now available on Amazon! The book explores how fear and self-protection shape our lives and relationships, and how we begin moving toward healing, trust, and surrender. The journal offers space to work through those themes with reflection, prayer, and practical application. I hope they support the work God is doing in your life.

From Survival to Surrender: [Direct Order](#) | [Amazon](#)

S2S Companion Journal: [Direct Order](#) | [Amazon](#)

Hope & Foundations

As we build new relationships, there comes a point when we begin imagining where they could go. Conversations deepen, shared values emerge, and we start considering how our lives might fit together. I've been sitting with that possibility lately, including how quickly my mind can move ahead of what has actually developed. The Hebrew in this proverb speaks to both sides of that. *“Plans”* (*chashab*) describes careful, deliberate thinking, the word used for the tabernacle's skilled designers. *“Establishes”* (*kun*) means to make firm, the same word Proverbs 24:3 uses for a house that understanding establishes. Solomon honors our planning while placing the work of making something stand with YHWH. So how do we build toward a future we desire while remaining willing to accept when it cannot become what we wanted?

Allowing Ourselves to Hope

Allowing ourselves to want something again can feel vulnerable, especially when previous hopes ended painfully. I've felt that tension myself: part of me wants to rush ahead and secure the outcome, and another part wants to hold back so it can't hurt me again. Both are forms of self-protection, and both keep me from being present with the person in front of me. That pattern is what I wrote about in *From Survival to Surrender*, and it resurfaces every time I risk hoping. Wanting a shared life is good; expecting an emerging relationship to settle every fear or prove our worth puts demands on it that I think deserve deeper examination. Before David invites us to pour out our hearts in Psalm 62:8, he twice describes his soul waiting in

silence for God, explaining that his hope comes from Him (vv. 1, 5). He empties every desire before God, including the part that wants an answer sooner than one is available, and rests his expectation in Him rather than in the outcome.

Participating in Building

Hope gives direction to our effort. If we want a relationship marked by honesty, care, and consistency, we have to practice those things as it develops. We also watch whether that participation is mutual. In Matthew 7:24–27, Jesus describes two builders. Both hear His words, and the same rain, floods, and wind slam against both houses. The difference is that one acted on what he heard and built on the rock. The storm reveals the foundation that was laid long before the storm hit. In a relationship, that foundation gets laid in ordinary moments: whether we tell the truth, practice patience, and treat another person with love when our preferences differ. Practically, that might look like saying plainly what you're looking for instead of hinting and hoping they guess, showing up when you said you would, or bringing something up that bothered you before it quietly hardens and turns into resentment. Each is small, and each either strengthens the foundation or leaves a gap.

Remaining Willing to See Clearly

As we invest, we also learn. Sometimes the relationship grows toward what both people desire; other times, a repeated pattern or a clearly stated intention shows us that the future we want is not shared. Psychology describes [confirmation bias](#) as our tendency to favor evidence that supports what we already expect while overlooking or discounting evidence that challenges it. The more we want something, the stronger that pull becomes. In a relationship, that might look like giving one encouraging conversation more weight than repeated failures to follow through.

Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9–10 offers a different picture. He prays that love would abound in knowledge and discernment. The knowledge Paul has in mind (*epignōsis*) is first a deep, relational knowing of God and His will, the same thing he prays for in Colossians 1:9–10, and discernment grows out of it. His word for discernment, *aisthēsis*, appears nowhere else in the New Testament and describes perception that notices what is actually there. The better we know God's character, the more clearly we recognize what reflects it and what doesn't, in ourselves and in the people in front of us. The word translated "*recognize*" (*dokimazō*) was used for testing metals to prove whether they were genuine. Paul expects love rooted in knowing God to see more clearly and to test what it sees.

In practice, that means asking the questions we've been avoiding because we're afraid of the answers:

- » What are you looking for?
- » Where do you see this going?
- » How do you handle conflict when it comes?

It also means being willing to act on what we hear. If someone tells us plainly that they aren't ready for what we want, or their actions keep contradicting their words, love that is growing in discernment takes them at their word rather than quietly waiting for the answer to change on its own. That willingness protects both people, because it keeps us from building on a picture that exists only in our own minds.

When it becomes clear that a relationship can't reach the future we hoped for, accepting that may involve real grief. We lose the connection itself, and we also lose the future we had started to imagine:

- » the plans
- » the conversations
- » the sense that something was finally coming together

That loss of an imagined future is easy to dismiss because it never fully existed, yet it was real to us, and it deserves to be grieved honestly before God. We can be grateful for what was good, name what we learned about ourselves along the way, and still choose a different direction, trusting that the One who directs our steps is directing these as well.

Some days, I'm still tempted to run ahead, and on other days I'd rather protect myself and not hope at all. Proverbs 16:9 brings me back to the posture I need. I can think carefully and take meaningful steps while trusting YHWH to establish what is meant to stand, including when that asks me to reconsider something I deeply wanted. That means slowing down enough to notice what is actually happening. This week, I'm asking what I can honestly contribute to what is growing, and whether I'm willing to receive the truth as it develops, even while the outcome remains unknown.

 ***“Nothing is easier than self-deceit.
For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true.”***
— Demosthenes 

Anchored Prayer

Abba,

Thank You for meeting me in my hopes and uncertainties. Help me bring my desires before You honestly. Slow me down when I run ahead of what You are building, and give me courage when I'm tempted to hold back out of fear. Teach me to build with patience and integrity, and give me discernment to see what is actually developing. Where I need to change direction, help me accept the truth and trust You with the disappointment. Lead my steps as I learn to care deeply and surrender the outcome to You.

Hallelujah. Amen.

My Prayer

[illegible]

Anchored Breathwork

Paced Breathing (4 – 2 – 6) for Slowing Down

Purpose: To help your body settle when your mind runs ahead, so you can respond to what is real rather than to fear or anticipation.

Posture: Sit comfortably with your feet grounded. Relax your shoulders. Open your hands in your lap as a physical reminder that you don't have to hold everything so tightly.

1. **Inhale** through your nose for **4 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"You direct my steps..."*

2. **Hold** gently for **2 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"I am here, in this moment."*

3. **Exhale** slowly for **6 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"I don't have to rush ahead."*

Repeat for 5–7 cycles.

Pro Tip: A longer exhale helps signal your nervous system that it's safe to slow down. If the hold feels uncomfortable, skip it. Try this before a significant conversation, or whenever you catch yourself rehearsing what might happen next.

"A wish for friendship arises quickly, but friendship does not."
— Aristotle

Anchored Reflection

Consider a relationship or opportunity you care about. Give yourself room to answer honestly:

What am I hoping this will become, and have I communicated that clearly?

What am I contributing to its foundation, and what evidence of mutual participation do I see?

Is there something becoming clear that I have been reluctant to accept?

Your Ideas are Important

Every newsletter, article, and Anchored Reflection begins with a real question or burden.

If something is pressing on your heart, send it my way. Each week I choose a focus for the newsletter, an article, or a reflection. What you share could be the catalyst for someone else's breakthrough. I would also love your feedback on recent articles.

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