

Laying the Foundation for Planning

Why God Calls Us to Plan

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MANY ASPECTS of an envisioned future can be influenced or changed by decisions and actions you make today. For the church, this is not simply projection-based planning but the realization that through prayer and obedience you can be a catalyst to help bring about a future that is in alignment with God's will. Through prayer, the framework for plan is established. Implementing the plan requires continued daily prayer for direction accompanied by obedient action in response to what God reveals.

One of the questions many churches wrestle with is, "Should a church try to plan future direction?" James 4:14 (NASB) says, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." So why plan? The next verse goes on to say, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" The real issue is not *whether* we should plan; it is whether we will put God's will first in our planning, always deferring to His wisdom and sovereignty.

Our attitude when we plan should result in this kind of prayer: "God, we want Your will above everything else. We're not just asking You to bless whatever plan we

devise—we want Your wisdom. We want to move by Your direction and in Your timing. Please guide our thoughts and keep our hearts tuned to Yours."

God designed us with the ability and need to plan. From the moment He placed Adam in the Garden "to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15), planning became essential. If anything, it is even more important after the Fall:

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:15–8).

These verses warn us not to be foolish, just doing what comes naturally with no organizational strategy. That results in weakness and missed opportunities to live for God in an evil environment. Planning is a necessity, helping us to be aware and make the most of the opportunities God provides. The key is to make plans by seeking God and asking for His discernment.

A Scriptural Basis for Planning

There are many reasons why it is scriptural to plan. Consider these reasons and supporting scriptures:

GOD'S WORD TEACHES THAT WE SHOULD PLAN

"The plans of the diligent lead to profit" (Proverbs 21:5). "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3).

PLANNING HELPS TO ENABLE GOD'S BEST FOR US

God wants only the best for his children. When we make Him the center of our planning, we free Him to give us His best. "May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed" (Psalm 20:4).

PLANNING MEANS ANTICIPATING COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES

"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways" (Proverbs 14:8). Prudent churches know where they are going. Planning helps them get there. Every mistake revealed on a planning sheet saves the cost, pain, and waste of the same mistake in real life.

A wise person calculates the hard and hidden costs. Luke 14:28–33 presents two parables that underscore the importance of counting the cost. The first is about building a tower: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28). Jesus relates both stories to the cost of being His disciple, emphasizing the price to be paid and the necessity of counting the cost beforehand.

PLANNING PRODUCES FAVOR

When God gives us understanding, we gain favor with man. “Good understanding wins favor” (Proverbs 13:15). People will see that we know where we are going and how to get there, that we know the costs as well as the consequences. Being diligent assumes planning, and those plans lead to plenty. “The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5).

PLANNING HELPS US TO HEED THE WARNINGS IN SCRIPTURE

The Scriptures warn us: “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1). “Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice” (Proverbs 13:10). Pride, as used here, means relying solely on our own opinion and not seeking God’s wisdom or the counsel of others. This is human nature—the fallen nature that is in deadly rebellion to God’s purposes.

A good planning process keeps us humble and constantly returns us to God for His perspective. While planning, we continually ask, “Lord, what is your direction in this area?”

Through prayer, the framework for plan is established. Implementing the plan requires continued daily prayer for direction accompanied by obedient action in response to what God reveals.

PLANNING CAN KEEP US FROM DISASTER

Planning can keep us from doing what might seem right but would end up in disaster. We usually intend to do the right thing but we often fail to think through the whole process. After the disaster, our post-mortem evaluation reveals that we did not consider unintended consequences: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

We need to be prudent, carefully considering our steps; “A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps” (Proverbs 14:15).

How We Should Approach Planning

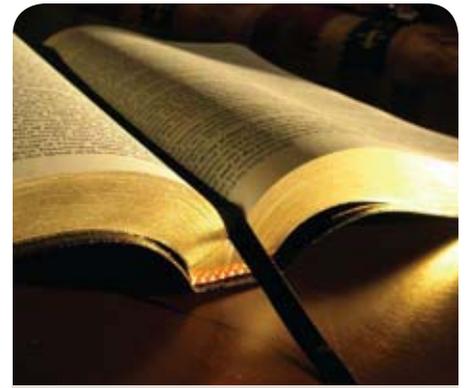
Scripture teaches us the planning process. Consider these guidelines:

PLAN BY SEEKING GOD’S WISDOM

We begin the planning process by seeking what God wants us to accomplish. He reveals His desires through Scripture, inspired thoughts in our minds, and the counsel of others. He may also use dreams, visions, and prophecy.

The key is to meet with God, get our directions from Him, and then be obedient. There is no substitute for serious study of God’s Word. The same is true for unhurried time in which we not only speak our concerns but also listen. Look at the importance God places on wisdom:

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).



Summary

- God designed us with the ability and need to plan.
- Planning helps to enable God’s best for us.
- Planning means anticipating costs and consequences.
- Seeking what God wants begins the planning process.
- There are several important aspects of devising a plan:
 - Trusting God
 - Acknowledging His leading
 - Emphasizing prayer
 - Planning with wise counsel
- A strategic plan is a living, dynamic document.

Authors

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