

Bible Study: Planning God's Work

The process of planning often takes a bad rap.

Those familiar with the following Bible verses sometimes contend that the Lord does not wish for us to plan:

Many plans are in a man's heart, but the Lord's decree will prevail. Proverbs 19:21 (HCSB)

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." You don't even know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like smoke that appears for a little while, then vanishes. Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." James 4:13-15 (HCSB)

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps. Proverbs 16:9 (HCSB)

The solid truth emphasized by these Scriptures is that the Lord's plans prevail over man's. But I don't believe they counsel against planning. If anything, they accentuate the need to keep our priorities set in concrete but our plans set in sand - so that we can respond to the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God is a Planner

Throughout the Scriptures, we discover that God is a planner. And since our behavior is modeled after His, we too are to plan with purpose. Let's look at what the Bible says.

God's planning nature is portrayed in Exodus 25 when He conveys instruction for building the Tabernacle. His first direction was to take a specific offering from the Israelites. It was to include such things as precious metals, fine linens, manatee skins, oil, spices, fragrant incense, gemstones, and other valuable materials. (See Exodus 25:1-7).

Keep in mind that the Israelites had just spent 430 years as oppressed slaves in Egypt. Where do you suppose they were to get such luxurious resources?



Bible Study: Planning God's Work

Read Exodus 1:6-22 and jot down the ways that the Israelites were oppressed by the Egyptians.

It's not likely that they would have owned the materials that God requested for the Tabernacle, but God had a plan to provide and He gave hints of that plan long before the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness experience.

When the Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush, He promised to give the Israelites such great favor with the Egyptians that when they left Egypt, they would not go empty handed. He elaborated, "Each woman will ask her neighbor and any woman staying in her house for silver and gold jewelry, and clothing... so you will plunder the Egyptians." (See Exodus 3:21-22).

It is evident that God planned - with divine awareness, mind you - what types of supplies the Israelites would need to complete the Tabernacle. As only He can do, He ensured that the group of former slaves had everything they needed.

God also had a comprehensive plan for the Tabernacle. Read Exodus 25:8-9. Why was it to be constructed?

The Lord of Hosts wanted to dwell among the people, but that would require more than just a structure in the wilderness. Let's glance all the way back to Genesis and discover more of how the planning nature of the Lord is revealed.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation and did something the Lord specifically told them not to do. They ate the fruit (see Genesis 3:1-6).



Bible Study: Planning God's Work

God's Holiness

Something revealed often in Scripture is that God is a holy God. Holy is a word that means set apart or separated. Because of His holiness, it is impossible for Him to overlook sin or spend time in the presence of sin. In other words, He is fully separated from sin.

His holiness is such that only through the provision of a blood covering can God fellowship with people who are sinful (and that's all of us). Romans 3:23 teaches "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (HCSB).

Atonement for Sin

In His love and mercy, God provided the first blood covering the moment it proved necessary. Atonement for their sin was provided by God, right in the garden of Eden, through the first blood offering which came through garments from the skin of animals to clothe Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:21-23). They sinned and God provided for atonement (made a way for reconciliation).

How a Holy God Dwelt Among Sinful People

God's meticulous and perfectly ordered plan for the Tabernacle made a way for Him to dwell with people. Through it, He made continuing provision for an atoning system of sacrifices that covered the sin and disobedience of the people.

The Ultimate Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

This, however, was not the complete remedy. God loves us with unfailing love and through that love, He sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to give His life on the cross for our sins (see John 3:16).

Our sins separate us from God, but He provided a permanent means of atonement through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior (see Romans 6:23). God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8, HCSB). We deserve punishment for our actions, but Jesus took it on His own body on our behalf.



Bible Study: Planning God's Work

Jesus gave His life to provide a timeless and everlasting blood sacrifice that would reconcile us with the Holy God of the universe.

The story doesn't end there. After his death on the cross, Jesus was buried and rose to life after three days. In doing so, He established His power over sin and death. His work on the cross is finished but we can't claim it as our own unless we accept the tremendous gift He provided.

We must commit our lives to Christ and embrace the truth that His sacrifice removed our guilt and shame. If you are not trusting Jesus as the only One who can reconcile you to a holy God, will you stop and pray right now?

• Talk to God and tell him that you recognize that you are a sinner and have made mistakes that keep you separated from Him.

• Express your understanding that Jesus took the punishment for all of your sin and that through Him, your sins are forgiven.

• Place your trust in Christ alone for salvation and eternal life with God.

If you gave your heart to Jesus through this or another heartfelt prayer, I would love to know! Please connect with me through my website (www.cathymcintosh.com) and share your amazing news with me!

You're at an incredible place to pursue your God-given purpose and this course on Making the Most of the Time will mean immeasurably more to you now.

Now, Back to God's Plan for the Tabernacle:

In Exodus 25:8-9, how was the Tabernacle to be constructed?



Bible Study: Planning God's Work

God's instruction for the construction, its furnishings, and the practices that were to take place inside are written in Exodus 25:10-30:38. Nearly 5 entire chapters of the book of Exodus are dedicated to every intricate detail that the Lord wished to convey. If you'd like to catch a glimpse of His elaborate instruction, peruse some of that passage.

After reading of God's plan for salvation, above, I hope you understand why the Tabernacle was so important. Not only did the Lord plan every detail of the project, He prepared the people to do the work.

How did the Lord prepare the skilled craftsmen who were to make holy garments for Aaron and the priests? (See Exodus 28:3)

How did the Lord prepare those He had appointed by name to complete the artistic work? (See Exodus 31:1-6).

Take note that God knows us by name. Let that sink in as you read our final section of this study about planning.

God's Plan for our Lives

I hope that God's planning nature is becoming more obvious to you. It's clear that He planned the Tabernacle and a way for our reconciliation to Him. Throughout the Bible, we see that He also has a plan for our lives.

Write the following verses in the space provided:

Psalm 138:8



Bible Study: Planning God's Work

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:28

Ephesians 2:10

You Were Created for a Purpose

If you have ever felt as if you are without purpose, I pray that the above Scriptures help dismiss that belief. God has a plan, and it's a good plan, for your life. He is already in the process of working ALL things (the good and the bad) together for your good and His purpose.

One of the exciting things to me about God's plan is that it never fails. We can trust that what He purposes, He will accomplish in His perfect timing.

If you have any questions about this study, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I'll do my best to answer, or put you in touch with someone who can address your questions personally.

God has planted a holy love in my heart for you. I deeply desire His best for your life and I'm committed to helping you embrace it. Until our next session on Perseverance, please know you're in my prayers.

