

## 9 Axioms of Planning

1. **Whatever God decides to do will happen.** God knows the future. God plans for the future (“I know the plans that I have for you...” (Jer. 29:11, NIV). “But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.” (Ps. 33:10). Planning is therefore godly. If God isn’t in your plans, He may frustrate them, “The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.” (Ps. 33:10). If He lets them succeed, we’ll wish He hadn’t.

2. **God expects that we will plan** It isn’t unspiritual to plan, unless we presume upon our intellect, taking the form of planning independent of God, or confident assertions about a future we cannot guarantee--“When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.” (Ps. 146:4). As Jesus planned to call twelve men out of all the nations of Israel to carry on His work after an internship with him, he spent the night in prayer seeking God’s mind (Luke 6:12-13). He committed His plans to God, Who directed His steps. “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.” (Prov. 16:3).

The other extreme is failing to plan—just living day-to-day. We may not see the larger purposes. We either don’t have priorities or don’t make room for those priorities, going with the flow of the day and whatever events occur. We only respond to our environment and responsibilities.

3. **Decide upon your ministry priorities—you can’t do it all.**

a. Jesus had ministry priorities. He valued preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God over a healing and exorcism ministry (Luke 4:40-44). Many were probably disappointed that He left a healing ministry to preach in other towns. He had the priority of seeking and saving people. His ultimate priority was to die for the sins of the world (Luke 19:10).

b. Paul the Apostle had ministry priorities. He visited urban Roman population centers, from which the Gospel could radiate. He valued follow-up and discipleship. He wanted to preach where the Gospel had not been preached before (Rom. 15:20), and serve specifically Gentiles, in response to the knowledge God had given him through Ananias (Acts 9:15).

4. **Be flexible.** Another problem is becoming too set upon the plan, not allowing God to adjust it. We probably didn’t get the full-orbed vision at onset. We must be flexible in goal pursuit. “In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.” (Prov. 16:9). “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.” (Prov. 19:21).

Others might disagree with our ministry priorities, as best we can determine them. This may include those who normally support us. They may or may not be right. God can speak through them, and a test of wisdom is the ability to discern and accept accurate correction (Prov. 9:8-9).

5. **Keep in step with God.** Paul tells us to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal.

5:25)—not to get ahead or to lag behind God—an art. We are like a horse in harness, keeping the tempo of the driver—not walking when we should be trotting and not trotting when we should be galloping. Paul pursued his aim to evangelize virgin territory, but was blocked when he tried to preach in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-10). “The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.” (Acts 16:7b). There were days of confusion. I might have thought it was the devil trying to keep me out. Often a closed door is God’s redirection into a more fruitful ministry. The only options were to turn home, or to go to the shore of the Aegean Sea and wait, where God, as we know, spoke to him in a vision. The next morning he got in step with the Spirit and crossed to Macedonia.

6. **God guides in ways other than Scriptures.** He uses counsel (Prov. 15:22), circumstances, and His fear in our heart to lead us. He lays a matter upon our heart (Neh. 2:12; 7:5; 1 Chron. 22:7 [David & Temple]), which is the way He most guides me. God wills and works in us to do His will, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Phil. 2:13). I was impressed in my spirit less than 50 days before going to Africa that God wanted me to go there. The trip was almost entirely pre-financed. Often I’ve awoken to solutions discovered in my subconscious while I slept. This morning I awoke with a way to save on an order I’d placed the day before, recovering \$27 for the identical items.

7. **Faith is foundational to planning** (Rom. 14:23). We must come to a place of confidence in God’s direction, continuing to take the matter before God as needed. As we are confident of God’s plans for us, we have the needed faith to pray those plans into reality. George Muller—the methodical German benefactor of 2000 orphans—demonstrated faith in his meticulous journals, detailing prayers for any given need, sometimes over many years. “What has God given you the faith to believe Him for?” (Bill Gothard).

Praying that your plans will succeed gives faith and hope. With little prayer, there is little hope in your future.

8. **Plan with many counselors.** “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” (Prov. 15:22). “Make plans by seeking advice.” (Prov. 20:18a). “Wisdom is found with those who take advice.” (Prov. 13:10b).

9. **Study and listen to experts.** Gain knowledge and understanding touching upon planning issues. Prov. 8:10-12 says that wisdom dwells with prudence and possesses knowledge and discretion. I greatly rely upon expert counsel and analysis. Counselors, books, articles, and the Internet—together with the principles of God’s Word—inform the best plans.

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