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Few Are the Plans of Many The Wisdom in Scheduling Well



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What if much of the strife and stress in your life was owing to your aversion to planning? What if many of your problems were fueled by a restless inability to stop, pray, prioritize, plan, *and then* run, serve, work, and love?

By no means does that dynamic explain all our angst and sorrow, but many of us suffer from constant strain and turmoil because we have refused God's gift of planning. One of my greatest weaknesses in marriage, in my work, and in ministry (at least so far) has been my reluctance to plan — not that I refused to plan, but I have consistently failed to plan and communicate well. And failing to plan means I often fail to love.

My failures in this area often still *feel*, to me, like love, because I am working so hard. However, because I have not planned well, I sometimes work in vain (or at least fail to do the most important things). I do many

things, often many *good* things, but not the *best* things. And when I do, I not only let down whoever was depending on me, but I am left feeling unnecessarily anxious and guilty about all that I didn't get done.

Planning is vital to stewarding and investing our limited time and energy well, especially if we really want our lives to make much of God.

Beware of Planning

Now, none of us can *truly* or completely plan our lives. The wise man charges us, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring” ([Proverbs 27:1](#)). And James warns us,

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ([James 4:13–14](#))

If we think we can *dictate* tomorrow through good planning, we may be even more foolish than those who refuse to plan. No one makes plans for God, and no one knows all that he has planned. That we do not know or control what tomorrow brings, though, does not mean we should not give some serious thought to tomorrow. It means we make all our plans with open hands and heads bowed. And we pray that reality will far surpass our plans. How boring would it be if our lives always played out according to our own plans?

James continues, “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that’” ([James 4:15](#)). He could have said, “So, do not make plans for tomorrow,” but he didn't. Instead, assuming we will make our good plans for tomorrow — to live, and do this or that — he said to remember that God may have different plans, *better* plans, than ours.

When God, in infinite wisdom and fathomless love, ruins our plans, he means for his people to welcome it with trust and even joy. So, we say, “If the Lord wills,” knowing our God will ultimately decide tomorrow. But then, how do we plan for tomorrow?

The More Subtle Laziness

Without some form of planning, we are inevitably unprepared to live and serve well — that is, to the glory of God. A lack of preparation is often just a subtle, more frenzied form of laziness. Some laziness lies on the couch all day, refusing to work at all. Other forms of laziness may keep busy, even frantic, but refuse to do the harder, earlier work of preparation.

Proverbs confronts the unprepared *sluggard*, who is a model for both forms of laziness:

Go to the ant, O sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief,
officer, or ruler,
she prepares her bread in summer
and gathers her food in harvest.

How long will you lie there, O sluggard?

When will you arise from your sleep? ([Proverbs 6:6–8](#))

Even the ant has the wisdom and foresight to plan ahead, and do the hard work *now* that will bear fruit months from now. And yet how often do we, consciously or unconsciously, refuse to look past the end of the day? Wisdom knows to prepare and plan well for winter — for next year, for next month, for next Tuesday.

Again, Proverbs says, “Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, *and after that* build your house” ([Proverbs 24:27](#)). Effective building, working, and serving often come in the wake of planning. Again: “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty” ([Proverbs 21:5](#)). We often fail to plan because we’re in such a hurry. It feels like there’s no time to plan, because there’s so much to do. But those who persist in doing, without planning, eventually go bankrupt — if not financially, then relationally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Jesus weaves the same kind of wisdom into the church age, when he tells his disciples to take up their own crosses ([Luke 14:27–30](#)). The principle: Before you plunge into following Christ, stop and count the cost. Before you build the tower with your hands, build it in your mind. Before you go and do, pause and plan.

The Great Purpose of Good Planning

Knowing it is wise to plan ahead and prepare for tomorrow, we need to anchor all our plans in a purpose. Plans without an anchor may send us sailing for miles, but in the wrong direction. A life without plans will almost certainly fail, but a life full of misplaced plans can be just as dangerous and wasteful. Make [1 Corinthians 10:31](#) your anchor, your rudder, your compass:

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Wisdom sounds a similar note about the cornerstone of our passion, in all of life, for God and his glory:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths. ([Proverbs 3:5–6](#))

If *he* is at the forefront of our planning, he will make our paths straight in the end, convoluted as our lives often feel. He will lead us along the narrow paths of fruitfulness and love, and he will guard us from the distractions that eat up our lives and drive us away from him. Acknowledging him in everything, and pursuing his fame in everything, will purify the decisions and plans we make.

No matter how much we prepare and plan, the eternal will of God will be done (which includes our planning!), and any success or fruit we experience will belong not to us, but to him. “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord” ([Proverbs 21:31](#)). That is the fundamental goal in all our planning: not that we get the victory, but that our God does. We get the joy of joining him. We do not merely concede, but *sing*, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!” ([Psalm 115:1](#)).

And not only do we want all our plans to honor him, but we want them to lead us to *more* of him. “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it” ([Proverbs 15:16](#)). “Better is a little

with righteousness than great revenues with injustice” ([Proverbs 16:8](#)). A little on earth *with God* is always better than abundance without him. Effective plans that leave us with less of God are not effective. If they *feel* effective, we have lost our anchor, our rudder, our compass, our treasure: God and his glory.

Commit Your Plans to the Lord

Our planning can, of course, disregard and insult the sovereign power and planning of God. That does not mean the sovereignty of God eliminates the importance and benefit of good planning. As much as Proverbs commends the wisdom and necessity of planning, it rehearses, all the more, the wisdom and sovereignty of God. “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand” ([Proverbs 19:21](#); [20:24](#)) — meaning, many of our plans will not happen, because as good as they may have been, they were not in God’s plans.

God manages every detail of the universe: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” ([Proverbs 16:33](#)). Not one bird falls from the sky apart from him ([Matthew 10:29](#)). He places every petal on every lily in every field ([Matthew 6:28–29](#)). Even evil cannot escape his plans for good ([Proverbs 16:4](#)). So, we say to him, with Job, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” ([Job 42:2](#)).

God knows infinitely more than we do, and can *do* infinitely more than we can — should we be surprised in the least when he has planned differently than we have? Plan on it. He has, and he will. But that doesn’t render our plans a waste. Faithful planning flourishes in those moments, because it is not focused on control, but on faithfulness and worship and God. Disruptions become welcome reminders that God is real, that he is almighty, and that his plans always prove wiser than ours.

So, “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established” ([Proverbs 16:3](#)). Make time for planning, aim to do all for the glory of God, and then entrust yourself and your plans “to a faithful Creator while doing good” ([1 Peter 4:19](#)).