

PREPARING, PLANNING, and GOAL SETTING IN A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

We, as Christians, are surely to "live one day at a time," and commit the future to He who holds it. However, it does not excuse us from our Scriptural responsibility to prepare, plan, and set goals for ourselves, our families, businesses, or churches. Observe the following:

Prov. 4:25-26	Prov. 16:9	Prov. 24:3-4
6:6-11	16:33	24:8-9a
14:15-16	19:21	27:1
15:22	20:5	27:12
15:26	20:18	27:23-24
16:1	20:24	
16:3	21:5	

Someone once said, "If you aim for nothing, you will hit it every time!", and it's obviously true. We as Christians, should expect great things from the Lord in our lives. Observe from Paul - he knew what he was directing his energies toward - both long range and short range!

Phil. 3:7-14
Rom. 15:20-32

(Note also at the end of his epistles - personal plans clearly stated)

In fact, Jesus Christ Himself had specific goals and purposes in His coming to earth. (Jn. 6:38; Heb. 10:5-9; Jn. 9:39; 10:10; 18:37; 14:8-11; 12:46-47; Matt. 1:21; 3:15; 5:17; 9:13; Mark 2:17; 10:4,5; Isa. 61:1-3 and many more). The point is that He gave us definite goals before He went to heaven.

Matt. 28:19-20
Act 1:8

It is observed throughout Scripture other than the Proverbs references, that planning is a necessary part of life. Note some of the key New Testament references.

(1) Read Luke 14: 28-32

Take special note of how Jesus in his teaching about discipleship in this context, refers to "calculating the cost" in material things

"having adequately planned" in order to finish a project

"assessing the necessary resources and counsel for proper planning"

He refers to these things that are considered "common sense" and enforces that one who does not do them would be ridiculed. Obviously God's people should be an example of good stewards by doing all things decently and in order.

Now to be true to the context, note how He turns these already assumed "givens" of "common sense" to one's spiritual commitment (Luke 14:26-35).

(2) Read 2 Tim. 2:1-21

Observe how the Apostle likens the Christian to a :

"trustee", "faithful person", "teacher"

"good soldier", "an athlete", "hard working farmer"

"chosen", "rulers" (12), "a workman"

"a vessel... prepared..."

You don't get away (with using terms like that) denying the fact that preparation, planning, and discipline go into it.

- (3) Also observe 1 Cor.9:24-27 - Paul illustrates by use of the runner, athlete, and boxer the necessity of doing all in our power to do the best we can to be effective Christians in the way the "normal world" puts themselves into the things they do.
- (4) Especially consider Eph.6:10-18 - the vital necessity of spiritual planning and preparation if we expect to live victoriously.

It is not only the Scriptural command, but also the examples throughout Scripture that tell us to plan and prepare, from Joseph preparing for the famine in Gen.41 ff to Jesus preparing a place for us in heaven in John 14:1-6.

WHAT ABOUT JAMES 4:13-16?

James reveals a balanced Biblical perspective just like the previous Proverbs verses on planning. It in no way contradicts other Scriptural principles or examples for the wisdom of planning and preparation in being good stewards of what the Lord has entrusted to us. However, James exposes a sinful, presumptuous attitude of self sufficiency and living like a "practical atheist!"

- Notice how he exposes the sin of presumptuousness in regards to:

our life	our future
our choice	our abilities

Presumptuousness is an "over confidence", "taking it for granted" attitude. It is trying to guess or predict the future in some way. James is condemning the sin of presuming that my life belongs to me (not condemning planning - but qualifying the right attitude for proper planning).

- Notice how he exposes that the foolishness of ignoring the will of God comes from not properly understanding:

the complexity of life	the uncertainty of life
the brevity of life	the frailty of life

Observe other references on uncertainty and shortness of life.

Prov.27:1	Job 7:6-9
Ps.103:14-16	Job 8:9
Ps.102:11	Job 9:25
Ps.90:4-6	Job 14:1,2
Ps.90:9,12	Job 20:8
Ps.78:37	1 Chron.29:15
Ps.89:47	1 Pet.1:24
Lk.12:16-20	Gen.47:9

Because of the brevity and uncertainty of life, the application of these verses also condemns procrastination (putting things off). Plus, it reinforces the fact that our schedule, the use of time, is important to God, observe:

Ps.39:4	Ps.90:4,12
Eph.5:15-16	Col.4:5

(See "BASIC FACTORS FOR LIVING" study on objectives, priorities, schedules, discipline and motives).

In gaining a Biblical perspective from James, notice:

- (a) The false presumption of choice and abilities - "I will..." (vs.13)
- (b) The true perspective of self and life - "vapor" (vs.14) in comparison to the infinite and eternal realm.
- (c) The right attitude of submissive confidence - "if God wills", decrees (vs.15) - not intended to be a trite cliché.
- (d) The wrong attitude of pride - "boast in arrogance" (vs.16)

- God doesn't want us to think the world revolves around self (vapor) as the "determining factor".
- God doesn't want us to think we know the future.
- God doesn't want us to cut Him out of the picture.
- God doesn't want us to run our lives apart from Him.
- God doesn't want us to depend on ourselves.

Instead, say "If the Lord wills". Since the world revolves around a Master Plan by the One who has the whole picture, we can trust in Him with all our heart, acknowledge Him in all our ways, submitting them unto Him, and His will, and be sure that He will direct our paths!

Think for a minute now - What are you striving to achieve or accomplish?

- What do you want to see happen in your life as a _____? (wife, husband, Christian worker, student, employee)

PRACTICAL STEPS

1. Write those goals and plans out specifically.
2. Look up Scripture that can be used as guidelines (2 Tim.3:16-17).
3. Next, don't forget the Biblically balanced perspective from James 4:13-16: "If the Lord wills."
4. Recognize the Sovereignty of God's will over your "puny" planning (in relation to the Decreed Master Plan before the foundation of the earth), and submit to Him. (See "SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD" study)
5. Prayerfully work out a detailed and specific plan of action (1 Cor.14:40).
6. Evaluate the resources needed (time, people, money, education...).
7. Discipline yourself to carry out those plans - "Plan the Work and Work the Plan."
8. Give yourself, not God, a deadline to which you will be able to evaluate your progress.
9. Constantly give God the right to be God, to over ride your decisions, and do whatever is best (as long as it's not violating Scriptural principles). Even Jesus prayed, "Not my will but Thy will be done"(Matt.26:39).
10. Be assured, if it doesn't go your way, God has the whole picture and plan in mind. So don't get frustrated, make the necessary adjustments and changes, learn contentment, and go on trusting Him who works everything out according to the counsel of His own will (Eph.1:11).

If you do get "frustrated" when things dont go "your way" you need to:

- (1) relearn the lesson from James
- (2) increase your knowledge of the Sovereignty of God (Rom.8:28; Isa.46:9-11).

"PLANNING" from PROVERBS

Proverbs:

- 15:22 - Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.
- 15:26 - Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord.
- 16:1 - The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.
- - - - -
We can make our plans, but the final outcome is in God's hands (LB)
- 16:3 - Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.
- 16:9 - We should make plans, counting on God to direct us (LB)
- - - - -
The mind of man plans his way, but God directs his steps.
- 19:2 - Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet sins.
- - - - -
It is dangerous and sinful to rush into the unknown (LB)
- 19:21 - Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand.
- - - - -
Man proposes, but God disposes. (LB)
- 20:5 - A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.
- 20:18 - Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.
- - - - -
Get good advice and you will succeed; don't go charging into battle without a plan.
- 20:24 - Man's steps are ordained by the Lord; how then can a man understand his way?
- 21:5 - The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.
- - - - -
Steady plodding brings prosperity; hasty speculation brings poverty (LB)
- 24:3,4 - Any enterprise is built by wise planning, and becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts (LB)
- 24:8-9a - He who plans to do evil, men will call him a schemer. The devising of folly is sin.
- 27:1 - Don't brag about your plans for tomorrow - wait and see what happens (LB)
- 27:12 - A sensible man watches for problems ahead, and prepares to meet them. A simpleton never looks, and suffers the consequences (LB).
- 4:25-26 - Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established.
- 6: 6-8 - Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest.
- 14:15-16 - The naive believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps. A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil.
- 16:33 - The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

(LB) - Living Bible - a paraphrase - one man's interpretation and application of Scriptural principles.