



Managing GOD's Money

Theme for the December: Goals and Plans

A New Year on the horizon; time for a fresh start! Do you want to start the year understanding what you should be doing and where you should be going? Better still, do you want to learn where God is working in your life, or where He wants you to be during the New Year?

This month, let's explore the Bible to answer these questions about goal setting and planning under God's direction. We will cover these topics:

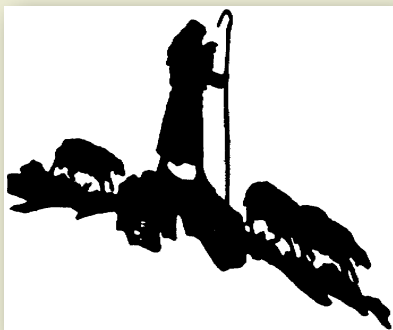
- *December 1-7: A Life Goal: Why am I here?*
- *December 8-14: His Goal or Mine: Why not mine?*
- *December 15-21: Smoothing Peaks and Troughs: Saving and spending?*
- *December 22-25: God's Perfect Plan: Available to me?*
- *December 26-31: Where is God: Where is my plan?*



Topic for the Week: Where is God; where is my plan

December 26-31

The Word



Job 42:1-3

Then Job replied to the LORD:

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. [You said,] 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Over the past few weeks, we saw David accepting that his goal to build the temple was not God's goal; God had something much bigger. So, David encouraged his son Solomon, the person God selected to carry out

His goal, to build the temple.

Next, we saw Joseph's faith in God and his steadfastness over fourteen years as he put into effect God's goal. David and Joseph developed plans under God's direction and carried out God's goals. David and Joseph's main goal was the same: **to obey God**, which should be the same for each Christ follower! David's specific goal (his *material goal* as opposed to his *life goal*) was to prepare the way for Solomon to build the temple, which he did.

This week we look at what happens when we don't hear God's plan to carry out His goal. Here is the setting: you know your *life Goal* and you are excited, but you don't know God's other goals (*material goals*) and related plans for you. So, you become flustered, convinced God abandoned you! I have been there, have you?

The Scriptures assure us God gives us specific or *material goals* and designs matching plans. We see many examples of ordinary people doing the extra ordinary under God's direction. Take Gideon, a farmer, whom God used to deliver Israel from Median. Esther, a slave girl whom God

used to save her people from massacre; and Peter, a fisherman, one of the twelve apostles.

Our daily challenge is first to accept that when God calls He will equip us, and second to be still and wait for His equipping—for His goals and plans. When we get them, we must learn to accept, try to understand, but not question them! Apostle John reminds us in **John 16:24** to ask according to God's will, and we will get His goals, plans, and much more:

"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Seldom do we accept that His goals and plans work but ours don't. Recall the goal tells us what we should do or where we should go, while the plan shows how to do the job or how to get to the chosen place. Usually God's goals become clear long before His matching plans, which remain unclear because we run ahead of Him. Still, the lack of clarity allows us to develop our faith in Him.

When we act on our own, our

goals and plans don't work. That's why we must *ensure we follow His will, not ours!* When we look at the model prayer our Lord taught His disciples, we see we ought to ask for God's will "be done on earth as it is in heaven" (**Matthew 6:10**).

We *believers* need to understand that God is always at work in our lives. We ought to be asking Him continually to show us how to recognize and act on what He is doing. That's the first step in finding His will.

So, we must reject TV evangelists and others who suggest we "name-it-claim-it" or other me-centered theology. These words from Apostle James (**James 4:13-15**) show why we must cling to our Lord and be where He is working in our lives:

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

Goal setting and planning according to God's will starts and continues with prayer. It recognizes that after you hear Jesus' goal, you might not *see* His plan clearly, so you need faith in Him to step into the unknown while missing pieces of the puzzle (**Joshua 3:13**). If we had all the pieces in advance, we would behave like we don't need God! As *believers*, God trains us daily to become like Him, so we must learn to trust Him. **Psalm 119:105** reminds us to stay in His Word so we will be able to see in this dark world; He will show us what we need, when we need it:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (**Psalms 119:105**)

When you can't see His goals or plans, don't doubt, resent, rebel, or sprint ahead of Him— especially if events appear to be going wrong. Get back on your knees to ask Him to confirm what He is doing in your life.

Projects and events will go wrong! Be patient! He has not promised you will never run into pain and difficulties! This is the lie many in our society preach. On the contrary, He has told us to expect difficulties; we must *take up our crosses daily!* (**Luke 14:28-34**)

A crisis presents an incredible opportunity to grow and be a witness for Jesus. Never forget, the plan is the journey He selected for you. And to work the plan, you need the goal. Ensure you have His goal always before starting the journey.

Suppose you are a believer in Christ, single, and in a relationship with an unbeliever. You are distraught, overcome by stress because this nonbeliever "won't accept Christ," despite your best efforts. You wonder: Where is God? Why doesn't He answer my prayers?

First, be assured God doesn't contradict His word. In this case, it states clearly you shouldn't be "unequally yoked;" meaning, a believer should not date a nonbeliever:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. What do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **2 Corinthians 6:14**

So, the question is: Do you want to be in His will? If yes, then, don't be unequally yoked with this unbeliever!

Rather than clinging to this person believing he or she is the one God has chosen, accept God's Word: don't date or marry an unbeliever. Ask Him if (a) He wants you to marry, and (b) to show you to whom. If you are to marry, He knows whom He has selected. Sure, He could open the unbe-

liever's eyes, but accept he or she is not His chosen one!

Adopt a similar attitude for all areas of life. If you are in business and seeking God's direction, ensure you are following His goals. Most importantly, did He approve the business? Your partners?

Regrettably, in these instances we act in the flesh, focus on and rationalize our goals, and then try to fit God into our plans. This doesn't work!

When potholes fill the road and the ride is uncomfortable, keep your eyes on the road and let Christ guide you through the bumps and potholes.

A *life goal* for a believer in Christ is unchanging: obedience to Jesus Christ. But, the pathway for each of us, the plan, is different and bumpy. Expect difficulties on the journey; they are not barriers, but occasions to grow closer to Him as He teaches us to depend on Him, to endure pain, and, or, to love others. That hurdle may contain a special blessing He has prepared just for you — and for His glory!

Application



Jesus is the Way!

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Are you doing something you are passionate about, confident it is God's will— if not, why not?

God is not hiding from you. He will never harm you. Invest time to listen, and to hear His voice without preconceptions of what you ought to hear. Absorb what He lays on your heart even if it seems like the "un-thinkable goal" for you! He will give you the resources and the passion to carry it out— but the ride will be bumpy to allow you to develop your faith in Him and grow closer in Him! Keep your eyes on the road — riveted on Christ!

Believe in Him and you will be free – **John 3:15-17!**

Action Plan



Considering this month's theme, *Goals and Plans*, this period's topic, *Where is God: Where is my plan*, each day reflect on the specific verses in the *Personal Reflection* section to the right. These questions might help your reflection:

- Who is talking to whom, about what, when, and in what context?
- How do these verses apply to me today?
- What lessons from these verses can I start to do today?

Memory Verse

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Personal Reflections

December 26th: Job 42:1-6; John 16:24

December 27th: James 4:13-15

December 28th: Matthew 6:10; John 3:15-17

December 29th: Joshua 3:13

December 30th: Psalm 119:105; John 14:6

December 31st: 2 Corinthians 6:14; Psalm 37:4

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