

## **A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN**

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LAST TIME WE STUDIED THREE IMPORTANT BIBLICAL TRUTHS ABOUT OUR SELVES. FIRST, WE ARE THE RESULT OF GOD'S CREATIVE GENIUS. SECOND, WE ARE FALLEN IN SIN WITH NO POSSIBLE WAY OF RETURN TO RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD. THIRD, GOD HAS A REDEPTIVE PLAN FOR MAN WHEREBY HE MAY BE RECONCILED TO GOD. THIS REDEPTIVE PLAN INCLUDES A PERSONALIZED PLAN FOR EACH PERSON WHO HAS BEEN CONCEIVED.<sup>1</sup>

### **WE CANNOT DISCOVER THIS PLAN ON OUR OWN**

Proverbs 16:25 **There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.** (NAS)

THE PROBLEM IS, GIVEN OUR OWN "SMARTS" WE CANNOT FIGURE OUT GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. IT STARTS OUT WITH BEING RESTORED IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP AND THEN AFTER THAT DISCOVERING OUT HIS WILL FOR OUR LIVES. THE WAY OF DEATH HERE IS GENERALLY APPLIED TO SALVATION, BUT CAN JUST AS WELL BE APPLIED TO THE BELIEVER WHO STUBBORNLY SEEKS HIS OWN WAY AND FALLS INTO A CONDITION OF TEMPORAL DEATH WHERE HE LIVES A LIFE OF THE CARNAL MAN.

SO THE CHOICE IS OURS - SEEK THE LORD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES AND "LIVE" UNTO HIM OR GO OUR STUBBORN WAY AND FALL IN AN EXISTENCE OF "TEMPORAL DEATH" WHERE WE ARE INEFFECTIVE IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK. **WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING THE LORD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES - WE WILL STUMBLE, WE WILL FALL, WE WILL BECOME COMPLETELY INEFFECTIVE IN OUR LIFE IN CHRIST.**

### **WE MUST MAKE "PLANS" FOR OUR LIFE.**

Proverbs 16:1 **The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.** (NAS)

2 Peter 1:9-10 **For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. [10] Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;** (NAS)

PETER TELLS US TO "...be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling..."<sup>2</sup> THIS MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO SOME, BUT DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN REQUIRES CONSISTENCY AND THINKING. SOLOMON TELLS US TO MAKE PLANS BUT TO EXPECT THE ANSWER FOR THESE PLANS TO COME FROM THE LORD.

**PROVERBS 16:1.** SO, HERE'S THE FIRST PRINCIPLE WE SHOULD CONSIDER - THE LORD EXPECTS US TO HAVE A CURIOSITY AND INTEREST IN HIS PLAN FOR OUR LIVES AND FOR US TO **THINK ABOUT IT**. THIS SHOULD BE A DAILY CONCERN FOR US. THE ORIGINAL FOR OUR WORD "PLANS" MEANS TO MENTALLY ARRANGE THINGS. IT INFERS GOING OVER THE DETAILS, TRYING TO PIECE THE PARTS OF OUR LIVES TOGETHER LIKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE. WE ARE NOT PROMISED THAT ALL THE PIECES WILL "FIT" BUT WE ARE EXPECTED TO STEP OUT IN FAITH (MENTALLY) AND EXPECT THAT THIS JIGSAW PUZZLE OF OUR LIVES WILL COME TOGETHER. THE ANSWER OF THE TONGUE IS THE FINAL OUTCOME OF OUR PLANS - WE ARE TO PLAN IN THE HEART BUT WE ARE TO LISTEN FOR THE ANSWER - AS THE OLD TESTAMENT BELIEVER WOULD LISTEN TO THE PROPHET OF GOD - FOR THE FINAL OUTCOME OF OUR PLANS.

### **GOD KNOWS OUR MOTIVATIONS FOR OUR PLANS**

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 139:16 **Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.**

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet 2:10

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Prov 16:2 **All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.** (NIV)

**PROVERBS 16:2.** ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT POINT FOR US TO CONSIDER IS THAT GOD KNOWS OUR MOTIVATIONS FOR THIS PLANNING. IF WE MAKE OUR PLANS FOR SELF-CENTERED PURPOSES THEN WE FALL INTO THE CATEGORY OF VERSE 5 WHERE THE NIV HAS IT - **"The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished."** THE CHRISTIAN WHO TRIES TO FOLLOW HIS OWN PLANS IF WE DO NOT CONSIDER GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIFE WE ARE PROUD OF HEART AND WILL BE DISCIPLINED BY THE LORD.

WE CANNOT FOOL GOD. WE MAY LABEL OUR PLANS "GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES." BUT IF WE ENTERTAIN SELFISH MOTIVATIONS AND ARE REACHING FOR SOME SELF-SATISFYING GOAL, OR PERSONAL AGENDA, GOD WILL NOT GIVE US THE BLESSING OF HIS PLAN. THE APOSTLE JAMES WROTE TO THE EARLY CHURCH WITH A STRONG WARNING, (James 4:3) **"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."** (NIV)

WE NEED FOLLOW PETER'S ADVISE AND **"...make certain about His calling and choosing..."** (2 PET 1:10b) IN OUR LIVES - GOD KNOWS OUR HEARTS BETTER THAN WE DO.

### COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST.

Prov 16:3 **Commit your works to the LORD, And your plans will be established.** (NAS)

"WORKS" IS OUR PATHWAY, THE COURSE OF OUR LIFE. HERE IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. "COMMIT" IN THE ORIGINAL MAY NOT BE WHAT YOU THINK. LET ME ILLUSTRATE THIS WORD. LET US SUPPOSE THAT MY SON, ALAN, DECIDES THAT THE LORD'S PLAN FOR HIS LIFE IS TO JOIN THE MILITARY. PART OF BASIC TRAINING REQUIRES HIM TO SLOG THROUGH DIFFICULT TERRAIN WITH A 90 POUND PACK ON HIS BACK. WELL, LET'S SUPPOSE HE HAS GONE 10 MILES IN THIS "FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE" AND THE DRILL SERGEANT COMES UP TO HIM AND SAYS, "AL, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD DO WITH SOME RELIEF. WHY DON'T YOU JUST ROLL THAT BACKPACK OFF ONTO MY BACK AND I'LL CARRY IT THE REST OF THE WAY. THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN, BUT IT HAPPENS TO BE THE MEANING OF THIS WORD IN THE ORIGINAL - APPLICATION: WE ARE TO ROLL THE WORRIES, THE CONCERNS, ALL THE DETAILS OF OUR LIVES ONTO THE LORD'S BACK<sup>3</sup>.

COMMITMENT OF OUR LIFE TO THE LORD IS NOT TO BE A BURDEN BUT A BLESSING. THE JEWS OF JESUS' DAY WERE BURDENED DOWN BY THE APOSTATE RELIGION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. THEY WERE NOT OBEYING THE LAW OF GOD, THEY WERE TRYING TO FULFILL THE LEGALISM OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE DAY. THEY HAD NO HOPE OF TRULY FULFILLING THESE REQUIREMENTS. THAT IS WHAT JESUS, IN EFFECT, SAID TO THEM WHEN HE SAID, (Matthew 11:28) **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** THEY WERE TO ROLL THE BURDEN OF THEIR SINS, THE WEIGHT AND LABOR OF THE SCRIBES' LEGALISM OFF ONTO THE LORD JESUS' BACK - HIS PROMISE WAS THAT HE WOULD GIVE THEM REST.

SO, WHILE COMMITMENT DOES EXACT A "PRICE" OF CONSISTENCY AND SINGULAR PURPOSE - OF PRESENTING OURSELVES TO THE LORD. THE BLESSING IS THAT WE DISCOVER HIS PERFECT PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. THE BLESSING IS THAT WE ARE NOT ENTANGLED WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF A LIFE FILLED WITH SELF-CENTERED PURSUITS.

THE RESULT OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD IS THAT HE WILL CAUSE OUR PLANS TO STAND, TO BE ESTABLISHED, HAVE A FIRM FOOTHOLD - OUR THINKING WILL BE CRYSTAL CLEAR ABOUT THE PLAN OF GOD FOR OUR LIVES. IT'S SOMETHING LIKE POWER STEERING IN A CAR. WE TURN THE STEERING WHEEL TO MAKE THE CORNER, BUT IT'S THE HYDRAULICS OF THE POWER STEERING THAT TURN THE WHEELS. IF WE COMMIT OUR LIFE TO HIM, GOD WILL TAKE OUR PLANS AND GIVE THEM THE RIGHT GUIDANCE.

Prov 16:9 **In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.** (NIV)

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<sup>3</sup> Remember, we do not stop thinking! We just are thinking about God's will and in so doing "roll all our concerns onto His back." We bring God into our thinking.

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**ATTENDING TO ALL THE DETAILS OF LIFE  
IS IMPORTANT IN DISCOVERING THE PLAN OF GOD**

Proverbs 16:20 **He who gives attention to the word shall find good, And blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.**  
[21] **The wise in heart will be called discerning, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.** [22]  
**Understanding is a fountain of life to him who has it, But the discipline of fools is folly. (NAS)**

IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE MUST ATTEND TO ALL THE DETAILS OF LIFE FOR US TO FIND GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. THE ORIGINAL FOR "THE WORD" IS *DABAR*. THE KJV IS COMPLEMENTARY IN TRANSLATING THIS WORD AS "A MATTER." LOOK AT THE REST OF THIS PASSAGE AND YOU WILL SEE THAT SEVERAL "MATTERS" ARE IMPORTANT TO SOLOMON AS HE TEACHES ABOUT DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN - VS' 1-3 COVERS THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING GOD IN OUR PLANS - 4, 5 WARNS AGAINST WICKEDNESS AND PRIDE - VS 10 INSTRUCTS US TO HEED THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF OUR LEADERS AS THOUGH GOD HAD MADE THEM. MOST IMPORTANTLY, **WE MUST HAVE DISCERNMENT AND UNDERSTANDING AND THE WISE OF HEART - A HEART FILLED WITH THE WORD OF GOD AS THE KEY ISSUE IN DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES. WE MUST ATTEND TO ALL OF THESE DETAILS AND NOT LET ONE OF THEM SLIP FROM OUR ATTENTION.**

### CONCLUSION OF THE "MATTER."

Proverbs 15:29 **The Lord is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous. (NAS)**  
Proverbs 19:21 **Many are the plans in a man's heart, But the counsel of the Lord, it will stand. (NAS)**  
Proverbs 20:24 **Man's steps are ordained by the Lord, How then can man understand his way? (NAS)**

**PROVERBS 15:29.** THROUGHOUT THIS SERIES I HAVE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST (WISDOM) AND HIS WORD. THIS IS OUR STARTING POINT TO DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES. **WHAT I HAVEN'T SPENT MUCH TIME ON IS PRAYER.** GOD'S PLAN HINGES ON OUR RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WHICH INCLUDES FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM IN PRAYER. **NOTHING GETS ACCOMPLISHED IN AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE OR A LOCAL CHURCH UNLESS IT IS BATHED IN THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS.** THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WORDS "FAR" AND "HEARS" IN OUR TEXT IS REMARKABLE. FAR HAS THE CONNOTATION OF BOTH TIME AND SPACE. IT MEANS "DEFINITELY NOT HERE AND NOT NOW." HOWEVER, THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS HAS THE CONNOTATION OF THE LORD'S RAPT ATTENTION - AS THOUGH HIS ATTENTION IS TRANSFIXED ON WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO SAY. **WE CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN DISCOVERING THE LORD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER MATTERS ALREADY MENTIONED.**

**PROVERBS 19:21.** WE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO MAKE PLANS BY FAITH. MANY TIMES PLANS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE OR MINISTRY WOULD SEEM IMPOSSIBLE TO US AT FIRST. IF WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE LORD IS IN THESE PLANS THEN WE MUST KNOW THAT THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD *WILL STAND*. THE FLAVOR OF THIS VERSE IS THAT THERE MAY BE A LOT OF PLANS RATTLING AROUND IN OUR HEADS BUT WE NEED TO CLAIM THIS *PROMISE* THAT GOD WILL REVEAL *HIS* PLAN, HIS COUNSEL TO US. OTHERWISE WE WILL EITHER DASH AHEAD FOOLISHLY, OR WORSE STAGNATE IN DISBELIEF OR SPIRITUAL COWARDICE.

**PROVERBS 20:24.** THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A BIT OF "HOW'S HE GOING TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?" WITH THE LORD. MANY TIMES, IN THE PLAN OF GOD, IT WILL BE IN THE FACE OF IMPOSSIBILITY. GOD'S WORD SAYS THAT HIS PLAN IS MANY TIMES IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE LORD.

THE WHOLE POINT IS TO SEEK GOD'S WILL AND KNOW THAT IF YOU SEEK IT DILIGENTLY, YOU WILL FIND IT.

Eph 3:20, 21 **Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by**

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Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.