



A Time for Everything

Lesson 3

A Time to Plan

Prayer

Introductory Activity

Planning, Just for Fun

We give our best to God when we plan. You could even say that to give God our best, planning is necessary. Proverbs 21:5 says, *"The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty."* Of course, anything good that comes from our planning is still solely because of God's blessing. Proverbs 16:9 says, *"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps."*

Divide up these scenarios by group.

Group 1 – Brainstorm what it would look like if a restaurant did:

- No planning
- Poor planning
- Great planning

Group 2 – Brainstorm what it would look like if a bride and groom in preparation for a wedding did:

- No planning
- Poor planning
- Great planning

Group 3 – Brainstorm what it would look like if a family in preparation for a two-week road trip vacation did:

- No planning
- Poor planning
- Great planning

Group 4 – Brainstorm what it would look like if a state or local government did:

- No planning
- Poor planning
- Great planning

Then all groups consider:

Brainstorm what it would look like if a church did:

- No planning
- Poor planning
- Great planning

Hopefully people can have some fun with this activity imagining the disaster that awaits those who don't plan for the things listed. When it comes to the church, no planning generally means that we will major in minors, there will be no direction or goal setting, frustration from members, stress on the part of workers, inefficient use of time, etc.

God Plans, So We Plan

1. Our God is a planning God. He created the world with the plan to live with humanity in perfection, but when sin ruined this world, God immediately announced his plan to send a Savior thousands of years in advance: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel"* (Genesis 3:15). Throughout Scripture we see time and again that our God makes very specific plans. Look up the following passages and identify how God is a planning God.
 - Genesis 41:34-36 - *Seven years of plenty provide for the seven years of little. Imagine how many would have died if there were no plan!*
 - Jeremiah 29:10-11 - *God planned for his people to go into captivity, but also assured them of his blessings in the future!*
 - John 14:1-3 - *Jesus is preparing your room! His plan is for you to be with him in heaven!*
 - Revelation 1:1 - *God has a plan for this world and shows us his future plans again and again in the book of Revelation.*
 - Your own scriptural example: *Examples abound. Moses leads the people out of Egypt because 400+ years earlier, he made a promise to Abraham. This may be a place to note that God's plans are not vague or general. Think of all of the prophecies about the coming Messiah: Born in Bethlehem, not one bone broken, casting of lots for his clothing, etc.*

We Plan, Trusting God

2. There is such a thing as bad planning! Based on the passages below, name two things that make a plan “bad.” Give a “real life” example of each.

Luke 12:16-21 - A bad plan is living for yourself and not to the glory of God. We could be the example when you think of how often you think of getting more, doing that thing, etc. vs. glorifying God with all that you have as you make plans for your life.

Luke 14:28-32 - A bad plan is failing to plan, using your reason and logic as you do. What church that has an annual offering of \$150,000 builds a church that costs \$10,000,000. We may say, “Trust the Lord,” but he has also asked us to be good stewards. We don't want to “force” God to do a miracle.

3. Look up Acts 16:6-10. What does this section of Scripture say to us about God's plans versus our plans?

The old saying from the 19th-century painting holds true: “Man proposes, but God disposes.” It's okay when we make plans if they do not turn out the way we'd hoped. This is not failure. Finally, God will guide all things to accomplish what he wants through us. This truth does not keep us from planning but keeps us willing to accept whatever blessing God brings, even if it's different from our thoughts.

4. In our personal and congregational plans, what does it mean to “commit [your plans] to the Lord?”

We ask God to bless our plans according to his will. We make plans that are based on what God has told us is important. Our goals as a congregation need to flow from “In Jesus name” not just so that God hears us but that our plans are aligned with his will. Finally, our faith is in God's plan, not our own: “If the LORD wills.”

“Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” (Proverbs 16:3)

“Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” (James 4:15)

We Trust, God Blesses

5. As we plan, we are guided by God's Word, and we make use of our reason and logic. Based on the passages below, what encouragement does God give us as we make our personal and congregational plans?

As we entrust our plans to God, he will bless us with good gifts, whether they look “good” to us or not. Remember, God can only give good gifts to his children (“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!”). When we keep first things, first, we do not need to worry about our plans—we are free from anxiety! As we focus on what God would have us focus on, he grants us peace.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5,6)

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:33,34)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:6-8)

Group Discussion

Planning helps us clarify where we want to go and keeps us focused on what is most important.

- List three things you currently plan for in your personal life.

Answers will vary.

- Understanding the blessings of planning, come up with two things you would like to start planning for.

Answers will vary, but God willing, people will focus on the thoughts of the previous three passages. They will focus on the true, noble, right, etc.

- Then share one of each of those things with your group.

A common axiom in planning goes something like this: “We don’t need to plan the things we love to do, but we do need to plan the things we don’t like (or are hard to do!).” How is this true in your personal life? How is it true for a/your congregation?

Answers will vary. The pastor may want to walk around the room to help groups with this one.

- Think of one thing your church does well when it comes to planning.
- Think of one thing your church could improve on when it comes to planning.
- **What is the next step to get there?**

Just because we plan, it does not mean that we will be blessed in the way we think we should be. Proverbs 19:21 says, *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.”* What a comfort because his way is always better than ours! Often, planners will talk about making “SMART” goals (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**imed). Those are things *we* can do and God blesses us as he sees fit. We don’t dictate to him what the results should be. Now, dream a little!

- What is one thing you wish for your congregation in the future? (i.e., what God controls)
- What is a “SMART” goal you can set to work toward that future? (i.e., what we control)

Answers will vary. Our synod also offers many fine resources to help through Congregational Services.

Closing Activity

Haiku!

Take three minutes to write a Haiku illustrating truths about planning, either personal or corporate. Haiku are three-line poems with the syllable structure of 5-7-5.

Example: Make a plan today.
 Just entrust it to the LORD.
 Our God will bless it!