



## Keys to Successful Planning

Learn how to ensure that the spiritual vision and direction of every ministry is maintained.



Without a qualified guide, no mountain climber would attempt such an ambitious enterprise as the conquest of Mt. Everest. Before he reaches the upper areas of the Himalayas, which are shrouded in mists and blizzards, he must cross a wilderness of ice. Every mountain climber knows there is but a step between him and death. He may have the best climbing gear, his chart and compass may be the last word in efficiency, but still he needs a guide.

Modern ships are equipped with radar; some are loaded with sounding gear. Yet they are compelled to carry a chart and compass, and at certain points, must take a licensed pilot aboard.<sup>1</sup>

The Church and the Christian must not dare to chart a course in this world without the infallible chart of God's word and the immutable presence of the Holy Spirit.

When it comes to planning in the church, the track record of recent history has been to look to the corporate world for methods and strategies, and then blend a few biblical passages with worldly approaches to make them more appealing. There is nothing inherently wrong with the way a company plans to reach its goals, but this is not to be the model for the church. As leaders, we must always ask *What does God's Word reveal about any subject?* This includes planning. Here are four clear principles for successful planning in ministry:

### **Submit to God's sovereignty as you plan**

James 4:13—"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business....'"

Recognition of God's sovereignty needs to be the starting point of our planning. With that acknowledgement we are saying, "God, you're in charge, we are not." Making plans without submitting them for God's review, correction, and approval is an act of arrogance. It is a common sin, known as *practical atheism*. It leaves God out. It is not sinful to plan; however, it is sinful not to plan. We need to be good stewards (Eph.5:15-17) and we cannot afford to fail because of unwise planning. What God condemns is presumptive planning or independent planning. Planning without submitting it to God is like taking a trip without a map, or sailing at sea without a compass. The consequence is that we will always end up lost.

### **Rely on God's infinite knowledge as you plan**

James 4:14—"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

The reason we need to do this is two-fold: our knowledge is too limited—"...you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow..." and our lives are too short—"...you are just a vapor..." (Cf. 1 Chr.29:15; Job 7:6; Ps.90:12; Prov.27:1)

### **Defer to God's will as you plan**

James 4:15—"Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'"

This is more than a catch phrase to sound spiritual. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "...yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36), we hear the prayer of a Person whose plans were made in dependence upon God's will. (Cf. Prov.16:3; Ps.37:5)

### **Honor God's holiness as you plan**

James 4:16-17—"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

The way we plan is not a matter of convenience or intelligence, it a matter of holiness. To plan apart from God is sin. It is sinful to do and say things that are wrong, but it is equally sinful to refuse to do what is right. God is for planning His way.

#### Note:

1. Leonard Ravenhill, Sodom Had No Bible, pg. 107

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