

19. Goal setting?

Principle: An obedient Christian life seems to be a balance somewhere between leaving everything to God and “going with the flow” or making our own plans and setting goals and submitting them to Him.

Key Scripture:

James 4:13-17 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." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

1 Corinthians 16:7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, **if the Lord permits**.

Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your **plans** will succeed.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the **plans I have** for you," declares the LORD, "**plans to prosper** you and not to harm you, **plans to give you hope and a future**."

Acts 16:7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus **would not allow** them to.

Acts 22:10 " 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. " 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

Comment on Scripture

Scripture makes it clear that our very existence is in God's hands. We can make our plans but unless they are consistent with God's will we will not prosper in the long run. There are examples in Scripture of people waiting on the Lord before they act (eg Paul in Acts 22: 10), equally there are examples of where faithful people act and then discover that God will not permit their plans to succeed (eg Paul in Acts 16:7). There is also the promise in Psalm 37:4 that if our delight is in the Lord, he will give us the desires of our heart. This is usually interpreted to mean that if we are close to God we will be excited to see his will done irrespective of our own plans. Thus there is Scripture that supports the two extremes and the range in between – these extremes being - God being totally in control with no say on our part, - and God saying make your plans, submit them to me and I will give you what you seek.

Application in daily life??

- ♦ When we really want to do something we often talk about “pushing doors” and seeing obstacles as “tests of faith” or Satan trying to stop us doing God's will. On the other hand, when we don't want to do something, we are inclined to talk about “no doors being open” and obstacles are interpreted as signs that it's not God's will. Both approaches in themselves are probably arguable from Scripture – it is more about whether or not you are being obedient in whichever approach you are taking – ie obedience irrespective of the outcome, rather than attempting to get your preferred outcome irrespective of what God might want.
- ♦ Sometimes God will offer us an “open door” or opportunity that we were never looking for – it is still just as important to seek his will in this as it may be there simply as an exercise in discernment /obedience - we should not assume we are to automatically go through it!

- ♦ Even when our world seems stable, we should still be open to the possibility that God may still want us to change it in some way.

Our example?? Do we seek God's will in each situation whether it is a "want-to-do" or "don't-want – to-do" matter or even when everything seems routine or stable