

## The Best-Laid Plans

### Acts 19:21-41

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-5-2008

#### Introduction

Hardy Powers once said, “Our plans usually mark the limits of our faith, for we usually don’t do more than we have planned to do.” I like that statement, especially the first part: “Our plans usually mark the limits of our faith...” Paul had audacious plans because he had an audacious faith in what Christ was going to accomplish in the earth. And my question today is this: “What kind of faith does your planning show?”

Some people actually think that planning is opposed to trust in God. But verse 21 indicates that Paul’s plans were moved by the Holy Spirit. God wants us to plan, and in Paul’s epistles, he speaks of his plans over and over again. So that’s one extreme – to not plan at all.

Others are so intent on pursuing their plans, that they miss new unseen opportunities that present themselves. Their plans almost become blinders for them. Their plans almost hinder them from succeeding. We will be seeing that Paul had neither extreme. Or another way of saying it is that Paul had faith, he used his head, and he was sensitive to divine appointments that God made available. And we need to have the same balance.

Just a few months later (during the time period of Acts 20), Paul wrote to the Romans saying, “**Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles**” (Rom. 1:13). Paul often planned to come to Rome, but was hindered. And here again, Paul by the Spirit plans to come to Rome, but something makes him stay just a little longer. And I think that the stay was also moved by God’s Spirit. The stay slowed him down just a little bit, but it was a profoundly strategic move, as we will be seeing. So today, we will look at the plans of Paul, the sovereignty of God, and how those two fit together.

© Copyright 2008 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

## I. Good leaders always plan (v. 21)

### A. *These were plans “in the Spirit”*

First, leaders must always plan. Verse 21 says, **When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit...** The plans to travel to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem and Rome were purposed in the Spirit. And notice that the word “Spirit” is capitalized here. They were purposed in the Holy Spirit. He had known for quite some time that the Spirit of God would eventually lead him to Rome. He didn’t know how, or when or why. But Paul had been making plans based upon the Spirit’s leading for quite some time. We just read from Romans 1:13 where Paul said, “I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now).” If the Spirit was leading him, and he made a number of plans to do what the Spirit was leading, why did Paul not do it right away? Why did he wait here for another nine months? I think the answer to that question is what helps give us balance in planning.

And by the way, we know it was another nine months by putting three verses together: verse 8 has Paul preaching in the synagogue for the first three months. Verse 10 adds another two years to his work leading up to verse 20. And chapter 20:31 summarizes the whole stay in Ephesus from verses 1-41 as being three years. So this means that Paul had a nine-month wait prior to being able to fulfill these plans.

I think this is extremely significant. **First**, when God’s Spirit leads, He does not intend us to turn off our brains. He does not intend us to stop planning. He does not intend us to turn down great opportunities for the Gospel. **Second**, his plans weren’t just for this week. He was planning a year long trip that wouldn’t start for another nine months. He was into long term planning. **Third**, his planning is not so rigid that he couldn’t adapt to new situations. He was constantly changing his plans. As we will be seeing, a very significant event opened up around verse 21 that made him convinced that he couldn’t leave yet. And we will look at that event. So Paul wasn’t too rigid in his planning. **Fourth**, Paul’s planning in the Spirit wasn’t so detailed that intervening things couldn’t be added. **Fifth**, God’s guidance was not detailed enough that it provided him with a complete plan. Paul’s own planning has to fill in the gaps in God’s guidance. Guidance has never been a replacement for reasonable planning. You see, Paul doesn’t know till he gets to Jerusalem exactly how all of this was going to transpire. He just knew eventually, he would be in Rome. It turns out that God gives Paul a free trip as a prisoner of Rome, free food, and free security officers like the ones that hang around President Bush. The Roman soldiers didn’t have cute

earplugs, but they did protect Paul from the Jews more than once. Paul free room and incredible opportunities to evangelize Roman officials all the way up to Caesar's household. But at this point Paul only has a tiny bit of information that he needs to incorporate into his overall planning.

And why do I bring that last point up? Well, too many people are paralyzed in their planning because God's guidance has been incomplete, and they keep begging God for more guidance. I want you to realize that that's the way it always was, and it always will be. Guidance is only part of the process of a leader's planning.

Turn to chapter 16 where this is especially clear. For those who have the illusion that guidance is a substitute for Scripture and/or a substitute for planning, this chapter is a great corrective. Let me read verses 6-10.

**Acts 16:6 ¶ Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.**

**Acts 16:7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.**

**Acts 16:8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.**

**Acts 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."**

**Acts 16:10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**

Notice how piecemeal this guidance was. Paul planned to go to Asia in verse 6, but the Spirit changed his plans. He then planned to go to Mysia in verse 7 and the Spirit again changed His plans. He planned to go to Troas in verse 8, and the Spirit gave him the Macedonian call of verse 9. But all the way through he was planning, and the Spirit didn't stop him from planning. In fact, God expected him to plan. That's why God doesn't give him detailed information. He wants Paul to use his head. And he wants you to use your heads. Even when he has his vision in verse 10 this is true. **Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.** Concluding... Paul was using his head. He was making a deduction to the best of his ability.

Why is this important? Because it will spare you from legalism. It will spare you from stupid mistakes. It will spare you from over generalizing your guidance. And it will spare you from blindly submitting to the guidance of others. It will spare you from falling down elevator shafts just because somebody told you to walk through an open door. We can value the guidance of the Spirit, but it is important to realize that it was never intended to be a substitute for diligent study of the Bible and diligent planning. Guidance was one tool of planning, not a substitute for planning.

But having said all that, I want to affirm what a blessing it is to have the Spirit's wisdom in our planning. Even though I will not be emphasizing this point, you do need to seek His guidance and wisdom. He knows our future; we don't. I like the story about the boy and his father who were planning a fishing trip for the next day. That evening, as the father was tucking his son into bed, the son put his arms around his dad's neck and said, "Daddy, thank you for tomorrow." Tomorrow hadn't happened yet, but the father's planning gave the son great joy and anticipation. The son didn't even know all the details of what they would do, but the fact that his dad was planning it was enough to be excited. That's the state of my heart every day with God. I know He's got something for me tomorrow that comes from a loving hand. And I am ever so thankful for His wisdom and insight as I plan for tomorrow. Paul's plans were always subject to the Father's will. When he planned, he allowed God to blue-pencil in whatever changes Paul had failed to foresee.

If we can view our planning in the same way, we will avoid frustration. God is in the inward guidance, but He is also in the outward providence and He is also in the mental planning that Paul engages in. And being sensitive to what God is doing in any given situation can help us to strategically make the most of our time. Don't make false dichotomies between guidance and planning. They work in tandem. Both are needed.

### ***B. A job accomplished (v. 21a)***

Let me try to set up what was happening here. Verse 21 says, "**When these things were accomplished...**" The dictionary defines the Greek word as, "to bring to completion an activity in which one has been involved from its beginning," or (second definition) "to bring to completion that which was already begun" or (third definition) "to complete a period of time." It doesn't matter which definition you use, it is clear that Paul had finished everything that he had planned to do in that city. At two years and three months, he had already stayed longer than he had stayed anywhere else. It was time to move

on. And yet, he ends up not moving on. We will look at that in a moment. But the point that I want to make here is that your planning needs to be flexible. If you do your plans exactly as laid out even when it doesn't look wise, you are being legalistic. Good planners leave flexibility built into their planning. That enables them to capitalize on opportunities that God brings their way without feeling that they are violating some sacred plan. Plans are general guidelines that often need to be adjusted. And that first phrase, "when these things were accomplished" indicates that after everything Paul had planned was finished, he found himself needing to add to his plan significantly.

### *C. Plans in the Spirit to go to Macedonia and Achaia (v. 21b)*

Verse 21 goes on to say, "**purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem...**" Macedonia was where Paul had planted the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Achaia was in Greece where Paul had planted the church of Corinth. It doesn't matter whether you are traveling by land or by sea, Macedonia and Achaia were not on the way to Jerusalem. Those two were north and Jerusalem was south – the opposite direction. But those two places needed to be visited for two reasons: 1) First, because they were experiencing trouble and Paul needed to strengthen the churches, 2) Second, because he wanted to bring an offering from those churches to help the church in Jerusalem. Romans 15:26 says, "**For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.**" Paul has already encouraged the church of Corinth to get their offerings ready to transport in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 and again in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9. Those were the plans. Now, with these new changes, as good as the changes are, Paul is going to be pressed for time. So Paul seeks to organize and plan as efficiently and strategically as he can.

### *D. Plans in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (v. 21c)*

Look at the results of the delay in Acts 20:16. It says, **For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.** Just because you are a good planner does not mean you won't be rushed at times. Any businessman, pastor or other leader knows that God can throw some stressful times into an already packed schedule. Don't think you are a poor planner simply because you must hurry. Those who are sensitive to God's fine tuning have to make these adjustments on the fly. And those who are not willing to, miss out.

Paul was a perfect balance of doing everything he could to achieve his plans, but being able to relax in God's sovereignty when that was not possible. For example, William Hendriksen points out that Paul later tried to make it to Jerusalem by Passover, and when ministry made that impossible, he was shooting for a Pentecost arrival, 50 days later. Paul's example can make some of you feel a little bit more relaxed when you are 50 days behind schedule. I can definitely relate to Paul. So we have a nine-month delay, and then we have another 50-day delay in chapter 20. And Paul's lateness on his own schedule is because he is in tune to God's sovereign schedule. Paul's delays were not due to laziness or lack of planning. He had no doubt said with James, "If the Lord wills, we will do such and such," and God had not willed. Planning enables you to relax, especially when you have planned contingencies. I think this is a great passage on planning.

### *E. Plans to go to Rome (v. 21d; Rom. 1:13)*

The last phrase of verse 21 shows Paul talking to his team, "...**saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'**" There are certain things that are certain for Paul: he must go to Macedonia and Achaia and he must see Rome. In the past that was not possible, but now it looks like it will be a possibility. He doesn't know that God will detour Paul for quite some time in Palestine. He doesn't know the marvelous ways that God will provide for Paul courtesy of the Roman army. But he does know that good leaders must make plans. And he does know that God's guidance will eventually come to pass.

## **II. Good leaders learn to adjust their plans (v. 22)**

### *A. Paul delays these plans until after Pentecost (v. 21b with 1 Cor. 16:8)*

Let's look next at how good leaders learn to adjust their plans. The "but" in verse 22 indicates that Paul wasn't able to leave right away as he had anticipated. He was telling his team, "I must go," yet verse 22 says, "**but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.**" Summarized, that means, "I must go... but he didn't go [at least not right away]." 1 Corinthians 16 explains this quick change in plans that occurred between these two verses. I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 16 because this is so instructive on Paul's uncertainty about the future and his need to be flexible. I've seen some people's plans, and there is no flexibility built into them. There is no slush time, and it's no wonder these people are stressed out to the max. They

haven't learned to relax and strategically drop portions of their plans that God's providence is blue-penciling out.

1 Corinthians 16. Paul has already written this letter before he makes his statement in Acts 19:22. Let's begin reading at verse 1. 1 Corinthians 16:1-12.

**1Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:**

**1Corinthians 16:2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.**

Here Paul's plans relate to making his visit efficient. He is prepping these churches and his leaders so that he doesn't waste any time when he later visits. Verse 3:

**1Corinthians 16:3 And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.**

Paul knows that he is not in control of every contingency, so he prepares himself to be flexible. These people may have their own idea of how this money will be sent. Paul is OK with that. Paul is recognizing that he might have to stay in Corinth to deal with the problems. He would rather not, but it is one possibility he is entertaining. This flexibility shows that he was not a control freak. Verse 4:

**1Corinthians 16:4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.**

At this point, Paul did not have the clarity of guidance that he later had in Acts 19:21-22. It shows that he is making contingency plans. He can't control some of the contingencies, but he does have a say over what his own team is going to do. Verses 5 and 6:

**1Corinthians 16:5 ¶ Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia).**

**1Corinthians 16:6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.**

Notice the words "it may be." Paul is not dogmatic. Why? Because in his planning he is not certain about the future unless God has revealed the future. Paul is modeling for us the same advice that James gives. We must

say, “If the Lord wills.” You can’t control the future. Your plans should not be set in concrete. Yes, make plans, but make sure that you let God blue-pencil them in. And know the flexible points of your plan, so that you can change them easily. The last phrase of verse 6 also shows a bit of uncertainty. He knows his desired plans include Jerusalem and Rome, but he says, “**that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.**” Paul realizes that he might have to adjust his plans even on where he travels. God might add a couple of other stops on the way to Jerusalem. He knows he is going to Jerusalem and he knows he is going to Rome, but there may be some other destinations on the way. And as we read later in Acts we discover that he is right. There were a number of unanticipated waits. It was right to be prepared to be flexible. Verse 7:

**1Corinthians 16:7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.**

Critical words – planning, but always, “**if the Lord permits.**” This shows humility in planning. When churches plan for the future, they often sound like their goals are set in concrete. But all of us need to learn flexibility and humility. I’m excited about 100 year plans, but I know that every step of those plans must have an “**if the Lord permits.**” And I need to be grateful when God makes the changes rather than being frustrated when I can’t fulfill my plans.

Hear me on this: if even the apostle Paul was uncertain about the future, we ought not to feel shame when we don’t know what’s around the corner. It shouldn’t keep you from planning or taking action. Unfortunately, with some people it *does*. Some people are paralyzed into inaction because they don’t know what’s around the corner. They never end their research of what is around the corner, and so they never go forward. But we need to always be moving forward on the wisdom track (that’s planning) until God makes it obvious that changes are needed. Don’t let lack of information paralyze you. Some people over-plan and over study, trying to rule out every possible contingency. But that’s not how Paul worked. We will be seeing that he does try to deal with contingencies, but he relaxes in his limited knowledge. God’s not going to blast you off the earth because of your lack of knowledge. Some people’s perfectionistic tendencies to want to have exhaustive knowledge will ensure that they get nothing done. Be flexible. Relax. Pursue your plans of wisdom until it becomes clear that God wants something different.



***B. The reason for the delay is “a great and effective door has opened and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9)***

In 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 Paul then gives his reason for the nine-month delay.

**1Corinthians 16:8 ¶ But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.**

**1Corinthians 16:9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are many adversaries.***

We can understand the many adversaries, but what was the great and effective door? After all, Paul had already had two years and three months of great and effective ministry, and he had already accomplished everything that he had planned on doing. What more could there be to keep Paul in Ephesus for another nine months?

***C. The great opportunity was no doubt the extreme popularity of the Artemesian Games***

I can't prove it, but I believe the huge opportunity was the Pan-Ionian Games that were scheduled to be played in Ephesus at that time. This was an unprecedented opportunity for witness, because sports fanatics from all over the empire were planning to travel to Ephesus to either participate in or to watch these games. Indeed, government officials, businessmen, and other important people from all over the empire would likely be present. Though Paul was satisfied that the church in Ephesus was well-grounded and strong enough to meet any issues that might come up, and even though this church had enough leaders to effectively plant churches all over Asia, the leaders had perhaps talked Paul into staying to guide them on one of the most strategic witnessing efforts ever. Perhaps one of their arguments to keep him there longer was that the remote countries he was planning to plant churches in might have representatives coming to Ephesus. There never would be another time like this when Paul would be able to come into contact with people from around the world. I think that's what kept Paul in Ephesus, even though it put a tremendous time crunch on him. And we are going to be seeing in the rest of the chapter, that they were so effective that it really cut into the sales of the idol makers. They had never had such poor sales in their lives.

Let me quote from Chuck Swindoll's biography of Moses, which I believe summarizes nicely the lesson I am trying to make. He says, "To walk by faith does not mean that we stop thinking. To trust God does not imply becoming slovenly or lazy or apathetic. What a distortion of biblical faith!

You and I need to trust God for our finances, but that is no license to spend foolishly. You and I ought to trust God for safety in the car, but we're not wise to pass in a blind curve. We trust God for our health, but that doesn't mean we can chain smoke, stay up half the night, and subsist on potato chips and Twinkies without consequences. ... Faith and careful planning go hand-in-hand. They always have." [Charles Swindoll. *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication*. (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1999) p. 27] I think he makes a great point.

Some people pit trust in God against planning for pregnancies, but that is an unbiblical contrast between faith and planning. You need to plan. It's part of your dominion. And does God overrule your plans? Yes. Praise God that He does! He commands you to plan, but He tells you to trust Him when He makes the changes. Some people fail to have realistic plans for their finances because they believe it is not trusting God. And my question is: "If you really have faith that God is going to do something, where is your planning?" As Hardy Powers said, "Our plans usually mark the limits of our faith." So I have to assume that if you have no planning, you actually have no faith in that area of your life. But what does the great hymn say? "Trust and obey," and planning is part of our obedience. Some people believe that having insurance is not consistent with trusting God, but that is simply good planning for contingencies. Follow Paul's model of faith, planning and sensitivity to new opportunities that God has opened up.

### III. Good leaders face risks & pain

#### A. *"there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9)*

But there is not just planning, point III indicates that there is also risk and pain that we must be willing to face. We had already read Paul's allusion to "many adversaries" in 1 Corinthians 16:9. Acts 19 certainly speaks of adversaries in Ephesus. And Paul was not averse to taking on risk for the sake of the church. Look at Paul's intentions in verse 30, when the riot is in full swing. "**And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.**" Better minds prevailed and kept Paul from a premature death. But Paul still knew that victory requires some risk taking and suffering.

What athlete for the Olympics does not suffer pain to achieve his goal? Such disciplined sacrifices are incorporated into his planning. And if they aren't, he won't make it at the Olympics. What successful businessman

does not take some calculated risks at times? The greatest opportunities in life sometimes require risk. I think of Gary Spies amazing feat when he crossed the Atlantic Ocean in fifty-four days in a ten-foot boat. It brought him fame. But he had to work hard for it. He planned, sacrificed, studied and took some risks. Some of the violent parts of the Ocean crossing were so tough, that when he reached England, his entire body was black and blue. Most of us are not even remotely interested in sacrificing for something like *that*, but is there *anything* that you have as a goal in life that is worth such sacrifice? If you don't have any audacious goals in life, you might want to go back to the drawing board and ask God to reveal His calling. The Sermon on the Mount indicates that the kind of Christianity that God wants for the most simple farmer, mother, or child, is an audacious calling that requires God's grace. Are you willing to make the sacrifices needed to achieve your call? And have you worked such sacrifices into your budget, time management and overall planning?

### ***B. Paul helped Ephesus face a crisis (vv. 23-41)***

In verses 23-41 (which we will look at on another day), Paul helped Ephesus face a huge crisis. Ephesus was still a city of darkness. But Paul described it as a place of opportunity – great opportunity. He didn't look at the negative and say, "There are so many unbelievers where I work...I've got to get out of there!" He was not an escapist. If you are tempted to bail out of the darkness at your work, realize that light bulbs are most useful where it is dark. That doesn't mean that you should go into places that will drag you down or pull at your besetting sin. But God has placed many doors of opportunity for us to walk through. We've got to have eyes to see those.

## **IV. Good leaders try to make contingency plans (v. 22)**

### ***A. Why was Paul needed in Corinth? Apollos had to be gone (1 Cor. 16:12)***

We've already dealt with point IV to some extent, but let's read Acts 19:22 and look at more contingency plans that Paul made. **So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.** According to 1 Corinthians 16:12, Paul was needed in Corinth desperately because Apollos had to leave. Paul said, **"Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time."** Sometimes you can't count on other people. They bail out on you. They let

you down. They spoil your plans. So we've got a difficulty. Paul is needed for nine more months in Ephesus, but Corinth needs him too. I'm sure you've all experienced those kinds of dilemmas. Paul's not passive. He tries to talk Apollos into it. But when not successful, rather than getting stressed out about it he makes contingency plans.

***B. Timothy and Erastus covered for him (v. 22 with 1 Cor. 16:10-11)***

So Acts 19:22 says that *Timothy and Erastus* were sent to cover for him. “**So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus...**” Paul needed these two, but it was the only solution that came to mind for the multiple needs that were staring him in the face. 1 Corinthians 16 fills out the picture. In verses 10-11 Paul told them,

**1Corinthians 16:10 ¶ And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.**

**1Corinthians 16:11 Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren.**

Paul knows that with the problems going on in Corinth, he is sending these two into a sticky situation. So he tries to prepare the way as best he can, and he commends these two to fill in for him. Based on the two letters, some have assumed that Paul was not even welcome. But in any case, Paul tries to make the best contingency plans that he can. And the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians show a variety of tactics that Paul used.

I've given a lot of applications already on humility, flexibility and other things, but let me summarize what I have said with seven final applications that flow from this passage:

**Conclusion: What can we learn from this?**

***A. Be a planner***

First, it is obvious by now that we should be planners. Don't let life just happen to you. So many people lose opportunities because they were blindsided and weren't prepared to respond appropriately. Planning is essential. I recommend at least a five-minute time of planning at the beginning of each day to look at your list from the previous day and try to figure out the best way to approach your tasks for this day. I recommend

about an hour of planning once a week. And I recommend a couple of days of planning once a year. Don't just plan for work. Set goals for every area of your life: spiritual, family, ministry, social, intellectual development, physical health, occupational, financial and emotional goals. Do planning alone, and do planning as a family. You can sit down together to plan next year's vacation, figuring out the place, the costs, the benefits, the people you will meet, etc. Just a family vacation could meet goals in six or seven areas of life in one fell swoop. Planning can be fun for the whole family.

Let me give you seven reasons why you need to do this. First, because of human nature. If it's not planned, we tend to do what comes naturally, and normally what comes naturally is not good. Righteousness rarely just happens. It must be planned and worked at.

Second, goals and planning gives a person a sense of hope. God made man to be a creature of hope. Hope is the subjective counterpart to our objective goals. When we lose hope, Scripture says that we lost motivation to do anything. According to Scripture, hope purifies us, brings perseverance, gives a context for joy in the face of tribulation and gives us vision.

Third, we should plan because God calls us to be stewards of our time. Goals and planning give us concrete ways of measuring whether we have been good stewards or not. It makes us more objective in our self-evaluation.

Fourth, because planning makes us more efficient. We tend to misuse time just like we misuse money when we don't plan.

Fifth, because planning ahead helps us to pinpoint obstacles to progress. It helps us take preventative medicine rather than always restorative medicine.

Sixth, planning is important because it helps us to take Dominion. You are much more in control of your environment and much less tyrannized by the urgent when you plan.

Seventh, it helps you to know how to say "yes" or "no" to opportunities that come along. Too many parents can't say "No" to their children's demands simply because they don't know what God wants them to do. They are constantly involved in this and that project, depending upon the desires and pressures of the moment. Plan.

***B. Be strategic***

Second, be strategic in your planning. There were all kinds of ministry opportunities for Paul (far more than he could possibly do), but he chose ones based on his calling, the impact that the action would have, the need of the moment, the resources that he had. Don't try to do everything. Based on your gifts, your calling, your limited time, your season of life, etc, evaluate what is the most important thing to do now. Just because the pastor's family or your friends are doing something, does not mean you should be. God's unique calling on Paul made his plans different from Peter's or Timothy's or Apollos'. It's interesting that Apollos did not let Paul pressure him into going to Corinth again before he was convinced he should. Apollos was apparently being strategic. Because he too was a planner, he wasn't easily pushed around.

***C. Creative in problem solving***

Third, be creative in problem solving. Paul had two competing opportunities, both of which were critical. And he couldn't be in two places at one time. It would have been very easy for him to say, "I guess I have to say 'No' to one of these." But he didn't blind himself with an either/or decision. "Either I solve Corinth's critical problems or I take this once in a life time opportunity in Ephesus." No. He thought outside the box. He realized that he could minister to Corinth by letter, so he wrote two letters to Corinth. He also sent two trusted leaders to Corinth, while he himself stayed in Ephesus. He was able to kill two birds with one stone. It is so easy for us to think in either/or categories. If you have a tendency to do that, do a brainstorming session with your family to see if anyone can think outside the box for solutions. And don't shoot down bad ideas right away, or you will narrow your options. Put everything on the board. Sometimes bad ideas can spark good ones. Be creative like Paul was.

***D. Be flexible***

Fourth, be flexible. Paul was constantly changing his plans, and because he had plans, he knew what changes were possible and what ones were not. He wouldn't have been able to do that if he hadn't already done some planning. And by the way, being driven to and fro by the tyranny of the next urgent thing is not being flexible. It's a failure to plan.

***E. Don't get stressed out when things don't work out as you hoped.***

Fifth, don't be so driven by your goals that you are constantly frustrated when God keeps you from achieving the plans. Plans are tools, not

absolute rules. Only God is absolute. And realizing up front that your plans will change will help you not to get so stressed out when things don't work out as you had hoped.

### ***F. Trust God***

And then finally, trust God. Trust him to prosper the plans that are good, and trust him to change the plans that need to be changed. Trust Him to be in the details of your life. Trust him for your future. In fact, the main reason you can plan good for the future is that you have a God who loves you and has a good future for you. Like the little boy that I started with, you can put your arms around God and say, "Thank you for tomorrow." Invite the Holy Spirit to be part of your plans. Ask for His wisdom. Give Him glory when the plans turn out. Trust in the power of the cross. Be driven by the greatness of the Great Commission. Hardy Powers said, "Our plans usually mark the limits of our faith..." Where are the limits of your faith? Stretch your faith by planning to do what only God could accomplish through you. It is only as you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation (as Paul had) that you will have this grace for living.

And as you seek to imitate Paul in your planning, may God prosper you and fill your hearts with joy. Amen.

I charge you not to limit your faith by failing to plan. Instead, with faith in the goodness of the God who holds your future, plan audacious plans that require God's grace, seek His guidance, and relax in His sovereignty. Amen.

# The Best-Laid Plans

## Acts 19:21-41

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-5-2008

### Introduction

- I. Good leaders always plan (v. 21)
  - A. These were plans “in the Spirit”
  - B. A job accomplished (v. 21a)
  - C. Plans in the Spirit to go to Macedonia and Achaia (v. 21b)
  - D. Plans in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (v. 21c)
  - E. Plans to go to Rome (v. 21d; Rom. 1:13)
- II. Good leaders learn to adjust their plans (v. 22)
  - A. Paul delays these plans until after Pentecost (v. 21b with 1 Cor. 16:8)
  - B. The reason for the delay is “a great and effective door has opened and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9)
  - C. The great opportunity was no doubt the extreme popularity of the Artemesian Games
- III. Good leaders face risks & pain
  - A. “there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9)
  - B. Paul helped Ephesus face a crisis (vv. 23-41)
- IV. Good leaders try to make contingency plans (v. 22)
  - A. Why was Paul needed in Corinth? Apollos had to be gone (1 Cor. 16:12)
  - B. Timothy and Erastus covered for him (v. 22 with 1 Cor. 16:10-11)

Conclusion: What can we learn from this?

- A. Be a planner
- B. Be strategic
- C. Creative in problem solving
- D. Be flexible
- E. Don't get stressed out when things don't work out as you hoped.
- F. Trust God