

Our Plans and What Really Happens

A Godly Response to a Pandemic – Part 9

Series Overview

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” The COVID-19 outbreak certainly shows that this is true. When 2020 began, we had no idea we would face this new kind of challenge. Though it caught us by surprise, we know God was not surprised. He knew this would happen and will guide us through this challenging time.

This study guide is the second in a new Faith Baptist Bible study series called “A Godly Response to a Pandemic.” Each lesson will provide biblical teaching that enables us to think, feel, and live in a Christlike way throughout this pandemic experience.

Together, we’ll tackle topics like fear, anxiety, and loneliness. We’ll also examine our behavior as a church. Most importantly, we’ll learn about our loving, sovereign God who is all-knowing, almighty, always present, and trustworthy in every way.

Series Guidelines

This series will continue throughout our period of “social isolation” in New York City. To participate, please take the following approach.

1. A new study guide will be provided each Saturday at Shepherd Thoughts. You can follow the guide online or download and print it as a PDF.
2. Use each guide for an in-home Bible study from 9:30-10:30 a.m. on Sunday.
3. If you live with a Christian family, you can study together. If not, try studying together with another believer from Faith by phone or internet using a service like Facebook Video Chat, Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom.
4. For each study: (1) begin with prayer, (2) read the Scripture passage, (3) work through the study guide, then (4) end with prayer.
5. Then tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson. Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.
6. You can also leave comments on the blogsite at the end of the study guide page and Pastor Overmiller will respond by sometime Sunday.
7. As a bonus, memorize a verse or more from the passage and think about it throughout the week ahead.

Lesson Introduction

We all stormed (or rolled) into the year 2020 with big plans, serious resolutions, and high expectations. The American economy was booming, colleges were marching towards commencement ceremonies, our jobs were chugging along as usual, and the NBA and NHL were making a mad dash for the playoffs. Some of us even smiled as we joked about

having a “2020 vision” for the year ahead. Then COVID happened and our hopes and visions vanished into thin air.

As we slowly emerge from the dust of this dilemma, like black bears or groundhogs emerging from hibernation after a frigid, furious winter, what will we find? Will the landscape of our lives return to normal? Are we being too careful and moving too slow, or are we being careless and moving too fast? What will change, and what other unexpected surprises are waiting beyond the horizon?

Experiences and questions like the ones we’re facing right now help us evaluate the foundations of our faith and the blunt reality of how we view the world and make decisions in it. More than ever, we’re quite aware that many people have many opinions about what’s going on, what to expect, and what to do. But here’s the real question – are we truly trusting God? To answer this vital question, let’s take a close look at Prov 16:9.

Proverbs 16:9

A man’s heart plans his way,
But the Lord directs his steps.

Study Guide

Consider the Background

This statement appears in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, which provides an extensive collection of insights for a wide variety of situations. They teach us how to live in a skillful, successful, and satisfying way.

Most importantly, they teach you how to make choices in light of what you know about God, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Since God is who he says he is, does what he says he does, and rules over every aspect of our lives, we should give him the respect he deserves by making choices with him in mind.

This specific principle (Prov 16:9) is important because it’s a “worldview” principle. It applies to our fundamental mindset and overall approach to all the decisions and plans we make in life, not just some of them (like money, marriage, work ethic, or morality).

Examine the Scripture

- Who is doing the action of the first line in this proverb?
- Who is doing the action of the second line in this proverb?

When we read this proverb, we can see that the A-line refers to a person (like you and me) and the B-line refers to the Lord.

Examine the Scripture

- What does a person do according to the A-line?
- But what does the Lord do according to this verse?

The word *plan* means something like “to plan, compute, plot out – to think out” and describes the way that people think ahead and make plans for their future.

The word *direct* means something like “to prepare, arrange, direct, or determine.” The basic idea here is that people make plans, but God determines what actually happens.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- How does this make you feel about making plans and decisions?
- How does this make you feel about God?

Examine the Scripture

This proverb reminds us of at least three things regarding our plans in life:

- We are not in control of our destiny.
- Fate (or chance) is not in control of our destiny either.
- Other people are not in control of our destiny.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- Which of these three options do we prefer to have determining our future and why?
- What are the disadvantages of each alternative?
- Why might we be unhappy or uneasy about God determining our future?

Examine the Scripture

According to this proverb, not just a god or any god controls our destiny. There is only one God who determines our destiny and his name is the LORD (Yahweh). This name comes from the basic word for existence, “to be,” and means “the eternally-existing one.” To understand the significance of this name, [listen to this 10-min. explanation](#).

Ask Yourself Some Questions

What do we know about God that should reassure us how wonderful it is that God – not us, not fate, and not other people – determine the future circumstances and outcomes of our lives?

If we believe that Yahweh determines what ends up happening in our lives, how should that affect our response to the things that happen?

- When the things that happen to you are just the way you planned, how should you respond? How do you respond when this happens to you? (Think of a past example and be honest.)
- When the things that happen to you are *better* than you planned, how should you respond? How do you respond when this happens to you? (Think of a past example and be honest.)

- When the things that happen to you are *worse* than you planned, how should you respond? How do you respond when this happens to you? (Think of a past example and be honest.)

Knowing that we don't determine our destiny – the Lord does – should we still make choices? What good is making choices if the Lord decides ends up happening anyway?

Conclusion

In our next lesson, we'll study Prov 16:3 to discover how we should approach decision-making and planning things out with God's sovereignty in mind. This is especially important as we face the uncertainty of returning to life after COVID. The question today, though, after considering Prov 16:9, is whether we are trusting God about the unexpected things that have happened and will happen in our lives. Perhaps now is a good time to pause and pray to God, letting him know that you trust him entirely with your future, even when he alters your plans.

Share Your Feedback

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