

Plans That Work

The LORD shatters the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes. But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken. What joy for the nation whose God is the LORD, whose people he has chosen for his own. The LORD looks down from heaven and sees the whole human race. From his throne he observes all who live on the earth. He made their hearts, so he understands everything they do. (Psalm 33)

Somebody once said that life is what happens while we are making other plans. The above verse from the Bible reminds us that God's plans stand firm forever, but our human plans are constantly challenged. God sometimes challenges our plans as well, not to confuse or irritate us but rather to remind us that the plans we make on our own, without consideration of God's will, are plans born of our short-sighted and sinful nature. They are plans that cannot succeed. God's word is never wrong and when we can listen with peace and joy to what the Lord requires of us, we will understand that all God's commands and plans are for our own good.

The Bible does not suggest that God is not "on our side," but schemes born of human desire rather than faith in the Lord are bound to fail. We may not see the failure. We may even think we have succeeded, just as children who cheat to get an A on a test might feel successful. Yet we would not say that the children have done well merely because they achieved the goal of a good grade. When we lie, cheat, steal, manipulate and con to get what we want or what we sometimes even think we need, we may feel we've won. But it's a short term solution with a poison hook on the end. In spiritual terms, every plan is a failure unless it is built on obedience to God's word. When we leave God out of our planning, we are planning for spiritual disaster.

God's plan is for us to seek what we need by first offering our lives to God and walking daily by spiritual principles. We often find ourselves in problem situations because we've walked by our own ideas rather than God's ways and then we blame God and tell God how to "rescue us" or "fix our problem." God wants to change us, change our focus, and change our way of doing things so we are able to avoid the problem situation altogether. For example, we can and should seek a doctor for health problems, but if they are caused by drinking and drugging,

that's what needs to be fixed first. The doctor can treat symptoms but as long as the disease remains, the problem will worsen. We have to deal with the source of the problem. Also, we can become a "dry drunk" or not use for a while, but if we haven't dealt with the pain and loneliness, hatred, and ultimately self-centeredness under our skin, we are the next drink or fix waiting to happen. Other examples include: We may not have acted violently in recent days but if we haven't dealt with the underlying rage and frustration, we are an assault charge waiting to happen. We may think we have dealt with our loneliness and our desire for intimacy by being sexually active with someone we care about or even establishing a live-in relationship with them before we are married. God's good plans are to contain sexual intimacy within the commitment of marriage. In the short term we may experience the flush of "being in love" but in the longer term, the relationship will bring heartache and woundedness to our soul.

"Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked God's protection and care with complete abandon The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." (Big Book of AA p.60)

God gives us clear direction when He warns us that, "***The wages of sin is death.***" In the same breath, however, God also states the rewards of following His good ways, "***But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***" When we live the life that Jesus taught & demonstrated, we will experience life. The foundation of that life was Jesus' completely loving & obedient relationship to His heavenly Father. Without that relationship we can never live spiritual principles successfully. Good intentions may be there but we'll not have the power to carry them out. As Step 11 reminds us: ***We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.***

If the Lord's demands seem too hard, perhaps our own sinful desires are preventing us from seeing that God knows best. However, if we make our plans on God's terms, our hearts will be right and we will succeed.