

Title: **What's The Plan?**

Text: Proverbs 13:16 and Proverbs 16:9

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Theme: Unleashing Our Potential

Resource: "Here Today, There Tomorrow" by Gary McIntosh

Happy New Year! It's the first day of the New Year and we want to start it off right.

1. We came to church this morning.
2. We want our families to love the Lord.
3. We want to make 2012 the best year of our life.

Congratulations on starting the year off by joining your church family in the house of the Lord. It is the right thing to do. You have made a wise decision.

Proverbs 13:16

Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.

* In his book [Future Babble](#), journalist Dan Gardner explores our obsession with "experts" who claim to predict future events. From a massive 20-year analysis of 27,450 predictions from 284 experts it was observed that as a group the experts did little better, and sometimes considerably worse, than "a dart-throwing chimpanzee."

Gardner's book lists a number of examples of these inaccurate predictions:

- In 1914 the British journalist H. N. Norman proclaimed that "there will be no more wars among the six great powers."
- In the late 1960s, the political scientist Andrew Hacker predicted that race relations in America would soon get so bad that they would lead to the

"dynamiting of bridges and water mains" and the "assassinating of public officials."

- In 1968 the president of Anaconda Copper Mining Company predicted that his company would be successful for 500 years. Less than ten years later, fibre optics trumped copper and Anaconda was out of business.
- Also in 1968 Paul Ehrlich predicted that overpopulation would produce a total collapse in the world's food supply. Instead, the world's food supply has increased dramatically.
- In 1974 Ehrlich confidently asserted, "If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000."
- In 1990 the MIT economist Lester Thurow declared that Japan was "the betting favorite to win the economic honors of owning the 21st century."
- In 2008 experts at Goldman Sachs predicted that oil prices would surge to over \$200 per barrel within six months. Instead, the price for petroleum fell to \$34 per barrel.

So why do we keep listening to these expert predictions even when they're wrong? According to Gardner human beings hate uncertainty... We want to believe. And so we do."

We don't want to be fools so how do we pursue loving God and helping our families to buy in? How can we begin to make 2012 a great year?

Proverbs 16:9

In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

I've heard it said so many times I don't even know who to give credit. "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."

What's our plan and what steps does the Lord want us to take?

* Gary McIntosh wants us to be aware of several aspects of church ministry that challenge us.

I. **Three Challenges**

- A. Churches and people tend to function day-to day, week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year doing pretty much the same things.
 - aa We assume that existing ministries continue to be sufficient for today's need and tomorrow's opportunities.
 - ba Keep doing what they always have done.
 - ca Keep getting the results they have always had.

*If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always gotten."

- B. Churches often try to do too much.
 - aa So many good things to do.
 - ba So many things we should do.

* McIntosh says that many tie themselves into proverbial knots doing very little.

- Where do we start?
- What is our priority?
- Where do we invest our limited resources?
- What should we leave undone?

Ephesians 5:15-17

Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the

days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

- C. Church leaders instinctively know that designing a plan and working from a set of clear goals is important to fruitfulness.
 - aa How should we best go about planning?
 - ba The world changes so quickly our plans seem out of date before they are put into action.

* It's in the news about the Post Office making some cutbacks due to a loss of income. Has their recent plans created a change or maybe a postponement of the inevitable?
 Just a thought...should the U.S. Post Office host an online networking site like myspace or facebook?

Matthew 10:16

*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.
 Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

*Ed Dayton and Ted Engstrom from World Vision International said that churches are often prone to...

II. Down in the mud disease

- A. Churches tend to get bogged down when committees, departments, and boards are organized around what they do rather than what task they are trying to complete.
 - aa The original goals have become fuzzy.
 - ba Every year new budgets are approved which are just an extension of "What we did last year."
 - ca The tendency is to replicate what has always been done and it usually results in a church that is bogged down in the mud.

* Statistics indicate that 80-85% of churches are running in mud. Taking steps forward is difficult but running in mud is impossible.

Matthew 26:31-32

Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

- B. How do churches and people stuck in the mud get moving again?
 - aa Define their basic purpose
 - ba Determine the goals that will fulfill that purpose
 - ca Align its resources in a way that will empower the accomplishments of its goals

III. Planning is our attempt to understand the will of God

- A. What does God want to do in our church?
 - aa God is working in our lives right now.
 - ba Our job is to discover what he is blessing and mold us to fit his plans.

Romans 13:11-12

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

- B. By choosing a course of action for the future, we respond to what God is already doing.
 - aa Start moving the direction God points.
 - ba Trust Him to fill in the details.

*All congregations are involved in planning, whether or not they call it that. Someone makes decisions about...

- Financial resources
- Buildings and grounds
- Sets the schedule for worship
- Organizes the children's programs
- Assigns volunteers to various ministries

* The question is does our plan focus on a common mission and vision that aligns with our understanding of the will of God?

2 Corinthians 2:11

In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Conclusion: There is a story of an airline pilot who announced over the intercom system: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that we have a tailwind, and we are making excellent time. The bad news is that our compass is broken, and we have no idea where we are going."

- We run a lot of programs, but are we doing the right things?
- We are putting out a lot of fires, but are they the essential things?
- We are making excellent time, but are we going anywhere?

1 Tim. 6:11-12

But you, man of God... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which

you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

This is a year for re-evaluation, re-tooling, and revival. Will you join us in the journey? How much are you willing to invest in the makeover?

* On TV the whole community turns out and pulls together. Can I, can church leadership, can the Lord count on you?

James 1:12-16

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.