

THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF A PLAN

Success is rare without a well conceived plan. God had a plan for your creation, and He had a plan for your redemption. He has a plan for each and every life. His plan may start at any time in your life, and it may adjust along your pathway. Some of the examples below show the biggest plan came later in life, but it came to people who had learned to make plans and who still had an unfulfilled goal in their hearts.

There was a woman, I believe in Australia, who heard a missionary talk about taking Bibles into communist Albania. This woman, I don't remember her name, was a timid person. She had never considered going to the mission field, and certainly not communist Albania. But she could pray. You know—**so many things begin with prayer**. Well, this woman prayed for souls to be saved in Albania. The day came when she learned that a team was being formed to take Bibles into Albania. She prayed for that team. One day the Lord began to stir her own heart to go with the team. This feeling within overcame her timidity and she signed up to go. I don't remember many of the details, but it was a dangerous, life-threatening experience. She was taken into custody, threatened, then released and God miraculously blinded the guards' eyes so the woman could take Bibles into Albania. What I remember from the story is that God protected this timid woman who responded to the call in her spirit, and those miraculous experiences were forever a testimony to God's faithfulness—**but the adventure began with prayer**.

Friends—you know what I am saying: **every successful plan begins with prayer**. Every ministry and adventure with the Lord begins with prayer. If you want your life to change—**pray!** If you want doors to open—**pray!** God knows who and where you are; and He knows just where you will fit into His divine plan for you—as well as His kingdom here on earth. So pray, and believe, and trust, and be ready when the call comes.

There is another story, and again I can't remember the man's name. I met him in Kenya several decades ago while conducting a soul-winning seminar. This man came from Tanzania. He was a soul-winner who wanted to learn more about soul-winning. He told this story. He was praying about how he could win more souls and the Lord impressed on his heart that he should go into the Zulu heartland. He had no car and there was no public transportation so he prayed.

The days passed and he made excuses to the Lord that he had no way to go to the Zulus. The Lord reminded him that **He** had said nothing about transportation—just go to the Zulus. The call became so urgent that he set out on foot. The journey took several days and led through dangerous lion country. The man said: *"I heard the lion roar, but I just walked along singing and praying. If God is sending me to the Zulu tribe then the lion can't harm me."* He heard and he saw the lion but the lion did not come near him. Then he heard the water buffalo, and again he sang and prayed. The buffalo charged at him then suddenly stopped a few yards away; it turned and went back a ways, then the buffalo charged again; and again it stopped, turned back, and then bothered him no more.

The man continued the journey until suddenly a band of nearly-naked Zulu warriors rose from the grass and surrounded him. One of them spoke and asked who he was and why he was in Zulu country. The man replied: *"God sent me with a message for your chief."* The warriors reasoned that if God sent him with a message for the chief it must be an important message so they escorted him right into the Zulu chief's village. The chief came out and asked the man who he was and why he was there. The man replied that God sent him there with a message. The chief thought to himself: *"If God sent this man to me he must have an important message."* So he told the man to wait until evening, if God had a message for him he wanted the whole village to hear the message. So the villagers gathered at evening time and the man proclaimed the Gospel to them. To his surprise the chief and most of the people readily accepted the Lord and great joy came to the Zulu kingdom. Again—this adventure began with prayer.

But another Bible principle emerges—**obedience**. We can have a God-given plan and purpose. We

can pray it into readiness. But the plan will never succeed unless we obey the Lord's call and let the Lord guide and direct us. **Prayer and obedience go together.** In my own life I have prayed long for some doors to open; other times doors opened without me doing much of anything. However, my life was ready for the call because of past decisions, past commitments, past preparation and past experience. When we make commitments to the Lord and faithfully follow where He leads—we never really know just where the journey will take us—but **prayer and obedience are essential to the purpose and plan.**

There are many success stories of people who launched great projects—even careers—late in life. **Colonel Sanders** is one. At the age of 75 he launched the **Kentucky Fried Chicken** chain of fast food restaurants. **Grandma Moses** began an impressive art career late in life. Look at what **Abraham and Sarah** accomplished after the prime of life (**Genesis**)—after 25 years of waiting Isaac was born. **Hannah** was late in bearing children but her son, Samuel, became one of the greatest prophets and priests in the Old Testament (**1 Samuel**). And the story goes on. Let me relate several stories I remember from the last Century.

Demos Shakarian was a California dairyman. He was a man with a great big heart for humanity and great faith in God. He didn't have the talent of a preacher, teacher or evangelist—but he prayed and God gave him a plan that has circled the globe and transformed the lives of countless businessmen. **Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship** simply invites unsaved businessmen to a dinner—and who can turn down an invitation to a free dinner? This ministry witnessing to businessmen began in one man's heart—and he turned to God in prayer until the plan was birthed.

Loren Cunningham was a young man with a missionary heart. He realized that methods must change with the culture and he organized short term youth trips to foreign countries. **Youth With A Mission** is a well known ministry today. **David Wilkerson** obeyed the call of God to take the Gospel to the street people and gangs of New York. It was dangerous, hard, often thankless and sometimes lonely. The work of **Teen Challenge** in drug recovery and the ministry of the Times Square Church is well known today. Was it **Billy Graham or Bill Bright** who launched **Youth For Christ**? But what a work that ministry has done in the past half century on College campuses. And the **Gideons**—placing Bibles in hotel rooms all around the world; a ministry started in 1899 by three traveling salesmen who saw a need and developed a plan to meet that need.

I believe some of you have entertained some new and different plans like a truck driver who has a trucker's ministry. Others have unique ministries like pantomimes on the streets of America and third world countries. Still others are providing food and clothing to the poor and needy. Cover those ideas with prayer. Make a list of things and people to pray for. Show acts of kindness to neighbors and those you meet on life's journey. Carry small pieces of literature to give here and there as doors of opportunity come your way. Visit the sick and needy with a Scripture, a prayer, an act of kindness.

In **Matt. 23:37** Jesus was weeping and praying over Jerusalem. What might happen if we would shut ourselves in a closet and weep for the lost all around us—or walk the streets and pray over our cities? I heard of a man living in a neighborhood where there were gang members. He walked the streets and prayed the demons away. Gang members moved out of the neighborhood—or in some cases wandered into churches and were saved—thus a neighborhood was changed. What is your gift? What is your experience? What is in your heart? **Prayer and obedience** were foundation stones in each and every ministry I have mentioned—and they are foundations for yours. Your future depends upon believing in **The Purpose and Power of a Plan**—and praying it through—and when God moves be obedient.

(to be continued)

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