

The Importance and Value of Planning

Planning to Grow

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Bible Text: Proverbs 6:6-11

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Well, if I asked you to paint a picture in your mind of whom you emulate or who you want to be like when you grow up, whose footsteps you want to follow, what kind of a picture would you create in your head? I want to be like that.

Well, let's say we turned you loose on Google images or some similar program and said, "Select some pictures of your examples, of you mentors, of your models," what would we see? How about this? Oh, there it is or that or those guys. When was the last time you thought that you ought to be more like an ant?

Believe it or not, for many of us that is exactly what the Word of God would say.

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to Proverbs chapter six. And if you don't have a Bible with you, just pull out that one from under the chair in front of you and turn to page 459. That is in the front section of the Old Testament. That will bring you to Proverbs chapter six this morning.

Our church's theme this year is planning to grow and last Sunday we talked about how we hope to emphasize this theme this year in three key areas. You are going to hear me talk about this over and over and over. First of all, talking about planning to grow, we are talking about continuing to discuss and refine and implement our discipleship process. In other words, how do we grow deeper, all of us, in what it means to be a follower of Christ. We are planning to grow in that way. And then, secondly, by organizing and launching our new cluster of ministries at Faith West. And that is part of the growth that we anticipate God giving us this year and we are pretty fired up about that. And then, thirdly, working together as a church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan together. We really believe if we get that much done this year, that with all the concepts that come under that important heading, we will have taken significant steps of growth, planning to grow as individuals and as a church.

Now I didn't have time last week to talk about the preaching schedule for the coming year, but we are really excited about what we are hoping to study together. Of course, it is a bit more complicated because, Lord willing, when Faith West comes online in the fall we will actually have six worship services. And so the working plan is to install the kind

of technology where we would have a live worship team at each one of those six venues along with either a live or high definition broadcast of the preaching section so that we are going to continue to work that out, but it is going to get a little bit more complicated. We are even looking at ways to maybe stream some of this on the internet and we will work that out as we go. But what really excites us, whatever form it happens to take from Sunday to Sunday is the various topics we are going to be able to study together.

Now for our first quarter we are going to be talking about becoming a person with a plan. You have heard the phrase, "He is a man with a plan," well, we are going to try to make the case that that should be true for all of us, a man or woman, a person with a plan. And so we are going to study and illustrate biblical principles about the various steps in actually making that happen. And what is the deliverable? What are we trying to accomplish here? Well, we hope every person attending our church will have taken the time in one way, shape or form, it will differ, because we are all in different places, but will have taken steps to create a series of plans.

I mentioned last week a PIP, a personal improvement plan, the specific ways you believe that God wants you to change this year. Now along with the specific steps you intend to follow in order to make that a reality, a PIP. We are encouraging everybody to do that. We are also encouraging you to make a personal ministry plan. That might be part of your PIP. We are not going to argue about the terminology, but thinking about the ways that God has gifted you and how you intend to steward those gifts in this particular year for Christ. And that might involve planning to receive addition training or equipping. It might involve you volunteering in some specific way. For example, there is a hand out in the bulletin today about some ways you can serve in our upcoming biblical counseling training conference and you may plan to do that. It might involve seeking someone to mentor you into serving Christ in your church. But none of that is probably going to happen unless you plan for it to happen. Thirdly, many of you are involved actively in some kind of ministry here and we are encouraging everybody at every level to be doing ministry planning. So if you teach two year old Sunday school, what are you plans and what are your goals for this year? And for all the reasons we are going to be studying this morning, we want to be purposeful and proactive in everything that we do around here as individuals and as a church.

And then, of course, we are in the process of developing our five year strategic ministry plan together along with the corresponding facility and sight master plan for our 42 acres of property here along with the 90 acres of property that is directly contiguous to us to the east and to the north along with the 100 acres of property that was given to us out at Bethany Farms. So you put all of that together, the personal improvement plans, the personal ministry plans, our strategic ministry plans for the church that is a tall order. So we intend to spend this first quarter of the year just studying principles from the Scripture that can help us in each one of those endeavors.

And let me also make this clear that we want to be making resources available to you to help you get that done. So even if you say, "I have never done any of that before, if I get anywhere, it is probably going to be on a half sheet of paper." That is fie. We want to be

sure we are providing resources to help you. So if you are a member of the church, your deacon would be happy to talk with you about any of this this year. And if you are in an adult Bible fellowship your teacher or team leader would be more than happy to come alongside and help you as you think all of these things through. Maybe you are not a member. Maybe you have not been part of an ABF yet. If you contact the church office, we will match you with someone who can get a cup of coffee with you or just whatever, but can help you with this, because we believe in being an equipping church. That is important. I don't think God simply cares about what we ought to be like. He cares a lot about the how tos. And so churches have to be equipping churches, I think, providing resources to help us get to a better place.

So that is the first quarter, becoming a person with a plan. And then this spring we are going to be studying God's plan for redemption. Now, obviously that is a central aspect of what God is carrying out through the death, burial and resurrection of his Son. That is why redemption, the Bible is so filled with phrases and words that are power packed. So we think it would be wise for us to understand more of what God is planning to do. It is the doctrine of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. And we believe in a year devoted to planning. It would be wise for us to spend time thinking about great words like adoption and regeneration and justification and sanctification. What does all that mean and how does it fit together into God's comprehensive, redemptive plan? How should that change us in practical ways?

So, Lord willing, this spring we are going to talk about soteriology. We are going to talk about God's redemptive plan.

Then this summer we are going to study God's plan in Scripture and we are looking forward to that particular series, because we are going to attempt this summer to answer the biggest questions regarding what is the Bible all about in its entirety? What is the big plan? For example, I am preparing a message to kick off that series that teaches the message of the entire Bible in one Sunday. You might want to bring a lunch, but we are going to do that, the Bible in a Sunday. And then we are going to trace the message of the Bible in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament in one Sunday. Then the overall message of the Bible in the historical books on a Sunday and then on the poetical books, et cetera, et cetera. So over the course of 11 weeks we will have done a complete overview of the entire Bible from the perspective of God's overarching plan in the Scripture. I think that is important.

And then in the fall corresponding to the launch of our two new worship services over at Faith West, are you getting excited about that? We want to talk about God, our decision making in the will of God. In other words, how do I discern God's specific plan for my life in any given period of time. And we may jazz up those titles a bit by the time it is all said and done, but the basic idea is we believe those studies are going to help us move the ball forward as we plan to grow together this year.

Now a couple of other details. We are going to continue our service pastor concept and even strengthen it where a specific pastor has the privilege and the responsibility of

shepherding the folks who are attending that particular service. Now, obviously all of our pastors are available to you whenever there is a need. I am not suggesting otherwise, but we want to create a way for you to feel like you especially know one of them and that is going to become even more important when the fifth and sixth services come online over at Faith West. And so from time to time on Sunday morning your service pastor will be speaking only to you particular group to try to build certain mentalities, certain ways of thinking about what we are trying to accomplish in you particular service.

So in our eight o'clock services pastor Garner is serving as the service pastor and then in this particular serviced pastor Folden is doing such a great job shepherding you and then in the 10:15 service pastor Open and then the 11 o'clock service pastor Green and those will be adjusted as we launch our services over at Faith West, but you can expect that to happen from time to time where your particular service pastor is simply a... this becomes like a church in a lot of ways. And so that is the point of all of that.

Something else. Just a head's up about. We have selected a couple of Sunday mornings this year where we are going to be celebrating the Lord's table together as part of our morning services. And we will explain the rationale and the process for that when we get a little bit closer to that time, but I am real excited. I am very excited about what God has for us to study and learn together.

Now for our purposes today we are beginning this discussion of becoming a person with a plan. What is the starting point for the development of a personal improvement plan or a personal ministry plan? What is the starting point? And the answer is understanding and being convinced of the value and importance of planning. See, that is where the ant comes in according to the Word of God. Let's look at Proverbs chapter six and we are going to try to find six reasons planning is important for the people of God. Proverbs six beginning in verse six which says:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest" — Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.¹

What a great passage of Scripture, six reasons planning is important for the people of God that flow right out of this text. The first one is this. Planning is an antidote to laziness. The text says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." And the overall point of the text is pretty obvious, isn't it? God's people can learn a lesson from little ants, because they are known for planning for the future.

I assume we have all seen a colony of ants carrying something that was very large together, at least large in comparison with their size. You saw that even in some of the pictures I showed a moment ago. Well, they were doing that because of some plan they

¹ Proverbs 6:6-11.

had made and now they are carrying it out for the future. And the God who made both ants and human beings would say to you and me, “Look at them and learn from them.” Why?

You really want the answer to that question? Ok, here it is, because you and I to one degree or another are prone to being lazy. You asked.

And that doesn't mean that you are lying around the couch all the time. In fact, the verses before and after this particular passage make it clear that some lazy people are quite busy doing wasteful, unproductive things. But the way you get around being a lazy person is by learning to develop and carry out effective plans.

Now we probably just need to be sure that we get set, because this is going to balance out, I think, must of the emphasis of this year. There is a paradox in the Bible of both rest and work. No question about that. The followers of Christ are resting in him, positionally. In fact, I am resting right now. Did you know that? That is true theologically. I am at rest. No question about that. And I want to be sure that we avoid what author Jerry Bridges refers to as the treadmill of performance. We are not talking about that this year. That is why we would read in places like Hebrews chapter four.

“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”²

And you understand that has nothing to do with the day. Following some sort of a day as the sabbath is not found in the New Testament. The sabbath in the New Testament is a condition.

“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works...”³

That is talking about a follower of Christ as God did from his. And time doesn't allow us to unpack all of those concepts, but in its context this passage is teaching us that in Christ we can rest from a desire to earn righteousness by human effort. We can rest from somehow trying to maintain our stand in him or before him simply by what we do. And the new can talk about a family of concepts in the New Testament that would be similar, like abiding in Christ. So this year has nothing to do with pouring on more rules or pouring on more regulations or even pouring on endless activity, especially if that would cause us to violate biblical priorities. When we talk about planning to grow, we are not talking about violating biblical priorities and being out of balance in the way that we are living. So the Word of God makes it clear that positionally in Christ you are at rest. That is a condition that allows you to live a priority oriented life.

Now what is the other side of the paradox? Here it is. Followers of Christ are working for him practically and simultaneously. And we can prove that all over the New Testament, but exegetically one of the best places to prove it is right here from the same book that we

² Hebrews 4:9.

³ Hebrews 4:-10.

just read from in Hebrews chapter four. He talks about rest. Yes, he did, but here is the other book end, Hebrews chapter 10.

“...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”⁴

Both of those require effort. Both of those require work.

“...stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”⁵

See, one of the reasons we get together on the beginning of each week, on the Lord’s day, is to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

You say, “You are going to be getting on me about laziness, aren’t you?”

Yeah. And I am going to be resting while I do it. Isn’t that interesting? Could someone get me a chair? So for the Christian there is a paradox. It is possible to have a restful heart and busy hands simultaneously. There is what it is.

Now what about the argument of this proverb? Go to the ant, thou sluggard. Well, why? Here is why, because laziness is one of the Christian’s enemies. Do you believe that? Forget the excuses, because if you start making a bunch of excuses you are going to be in trouble later in this text. This is just get rid of all of the excuse and get rid of all the defenses. That is a fact. Laziness is one of the Christian’s enemies.

Do you remember that great stewardship parable in Matthew 25 where one servant is given five talents, another one is given two and another one is given one and the master goes away on a journey? Do you remember that? And both the servant who had been trusted with five and the servant who was entrusted with two did what? They got busy working. They got busy investing. And if you go back and read that text in both cases, one of the things that is very interesting about it is the text says they did it immediately. Forget all the defenses. Forget all the lame arguments, excuses, blah, blah, blah, get around to that some day. That is how lazy people think. That is how lazy people talk. They got at it immediately. And it is interesting that when the master returned he had the same commendation to both, even though one is standing there now with 10 talents, the other one is standing there only with four. Comparatively it is only four, but it is compared to what they were given they both doubled what they had been entrusted with. And that is why the master said, “Well done, good and faithful slave.”

Please tell me you want to hear that from the mouth of Christ some day. Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

⁴ Hebrews 10:24.

⁵ Hebrews 10:24-25.

Do you remember the other guy, the guy who was given one? What did he do? He buried it in the ground. He made nothing with what God had entrusted to him. What did the master say to him when he returned? And you remember the guy had all sorts of lame excuses and here is exactly what the master said to him and don't get mad at me. I am reading from the Bible. Getting mad at your pastor for reading from the Bible is really not a good thing.

Here is what he said. He said, "You wicked lazy slave." And there is no way to sugar coat that. And one of my jobs as your pastor is to keep as many of us as possible out of Matthew 25:26. True? True that. And what does that have to do with planning? Well, according to Proverbs six God knows that people who plan are less likely to be lazy compared to people who don't.

One of the questions you might want to ask yourself right now is: What does the way I tend to plan for things that matter spiritually? Now hear that. I am not talking about all kinds of other plans you might...I am not talking about the plan you are going to make to rehab your basement. I am not talking about the plans you are making for upgrading your {?}, blah, blah, blah. I guess that is planning. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about things that are going to matter, that 100 years from now are going to matter. I am talking about spiritual issues. I am talking about eternal matters. And I am asking you: What does the way you tend to plan for things that matter spiritually say about your degree of spiritual laziness? In fact, if God and others were going to rate you at that area on a scale of one to 10, solely on the issue of the way you plan for things that are going to matter 100 years from now eternal issues... what rating would you receive? And what does that say about whether or not you need to look in the mirror and say, "You know what?" Part of your problem is, dude, you are lazy. There it is.

Here is another reason. Planning is a path to wisdom. Did you see that in the text?

"Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise."⁶

That is one of the fundamental purposes and blessings of the Scripture. See, regardless of what you are bringing to the table this morning in terms of your past, in terms even today of some of the things that you might be struggling with that are just downright foolish, God's Word, over time, can make you a man or a woman who is wise. Is that right? Absolutely it is. Psalm 19:7.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul."⁷

Now, by the way, if you are saying: You know, this is starting to make me a little bit uncomfortable. In fact, I am getting a little bit {?} at you right now. I slept really well last night, so I won't get too wound up, but I will tell you this. You see the converting the soul? That is what the Scripture does. It helps us repent. It helps us face who we are. So don't be upset about the process that God might use to help you become what he wants

⁶ Proverbs 6:6.

⁷ Psalm 19:7.

you to become. Converting the soul, listen to this. The testimony then of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. Friends, there is a direct relationship in Scripture between a person who plans and a person who is growing in wisdom and conversely there is a direct relationship between a person who fails to plan and a person who is living foolishly. And the good news is we don't have to be latter.

“Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise.”⁸

By the way, doing this helps us be more like our God who is the consummate planner. Do you agree with me on that? Remember that our mission statement, we talked about it last week a little bit. It begins with the words... the mission of Faith Church is to what? Glorify God. What does that mean? It means to give others the right opinion of him. It means to live in such a way that others can watch us and say, “I now understand more of what God is like because I know that person better.” Well, what does the way you plan and the way others observe the way you plan communicate to folks around you about the nature of our God? Because would you agree theologically that God is the consummate planner? And that is one of the evidences that he is a God who is wise. Right? Sure. We could prove that all over the Bible. For example, this great text, Romans nine, 10 and 11, by far the most comprehensive discussion of God's future plan for the nation of Israel anywhere in the New Testament. And Paul, as a Jewish man, was very interested and concerned about that. So he has a very extended discussion of it in that great book. And after Paul is talking about God's plan for the nation of Israel, what does he just spontaneously say as that part of the book concludes?

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For
WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME
HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT
MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through
Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.⁹

And if time allowed we could see that exact same emphasis in the book of Ephesians chapter one which is such an important passage for New Testament Christians to understand. But it is where the concepts of planning and wisdom are often intertwined. Honestly, what has distinguished some of the wisest people I have ever known is that they have been careful consistent planners and over time that has resulted in wise living.

And some of the most foolish people I have ever known, including myself at times, are those who are not thinking five minutes ahead of what they are saying or doing at the moment. See, planning helps you become wise.

Also this. Planning helps you become a self starter. Let the Word of God get in your heart, friends, because this is coming right from the text. What does it say about the ant? This ant has no chief, no officer, no ruler. That is a crucial part of this discussion. It is

⁸ Proverbs 6:6.

⁹ Romans 11:33-36.

the value of not always needing direct supervision or oversight. A planner helps you become a self starting individual. That was Paul's point about developing a godly work ethic. He says:

“Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”¹⁰

Remember the old King James, some of you? Not with eye service. In other words, don't just do you job when your boss is looking. You say, “What does that have to do with this?”

Well, let's face it. A lot of things that belong on your personal improvement plan or you personal ministry plan are things that others are never going to know about and they are never going to bug you about. And you have to plan to get after it day after day after day on your own. That is it as a self starter. An ant is a self starter. He doesn't need a chief or an officer or a ruler. And that demonstrates that you understand that the most important person you are serving is the one who is unseen. That is how Colossians three continues:

“...not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”¹¹

It doesn't matter if the boss is looking or not. I am concerned about pleasing God. An ant doesn't have to be told to plan. Somewhere in that little head of hers she and her friends get that on their own.

By the way, when we are talking about the size of an ant's head, unless the excuse you are going to use to everything we are talking about is, well, I am not smart enough to plan ahead, how big of a brain could fit in an ant's head anyway? I would assume you are ahead of that.

No. Let's mention a concept at this juncture that is crucial, absolutely crucial for being a self starter. You want to be like an ant? Do you want to be like a self starter? Honestly ask yourself that question. Do you want to be a self starter who doesn't need somebody telling you what to do all the time? Here it is. Develop the habit of saying yes to God, because he so frequently says yes to you.

There is a fascinating vignette in the book of 2 Corinthians about the very issue of planning. You may know this context. It is where... you understand the book of 2 Corinthians Paul is opening up his heart wide to a church where some individuals were actually undermining his very apostleship when he was not there. And one of the issues was Paul had made a plan to come to visit the Corinthians and then he had to alter it. And then he had to alter it again because of circumstances. And so some of Paul's critics say they seized that as an opportunity to say, “See, you can't trust Paul.” And, because they

¹⁰ Colossians 3:22.

¹¹ Ibid.

were false teachers they even extrapolated that out to suggest you can't trust God or the gospel because none of them are true to their word. They don't say yes and mean it.

So Paul says, "Oh, really." Here is what he says in 2 Corinthians one.

In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time? But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us — by me and Silvanus and Timothy — was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.¹²

And the point of that is the people who were using Paul's slight change of plans as a means of undermining the gospel was our God has made clear plans for his people and not because he had to, but because he chose to. And his answer regarding his promises will always be yes. God has initiated that kind of a relationship with you because he is the consummate self starter. He made promises and he intends to say yes to his people. And I would just ask you this morning. Are you glad for that kind of a God who answers his promises with a yes? And I believe this strongly. I believe this way strongly, that frequently God wants his people to relate to him in exactly the same way. And one of the reasons some folks cannot plan and one of the reasons they will not plan is because they have no intention of saying yes to God. That is it. I am glad for those who know the word yes.

We just started our intro to faith class last Wednesday night and you can jump into that this Wednesday if you want to. For folks who are just new to our church considering membership, do you why some of them are there? Because they are contemplating saying yes. God is calling some of them into salvation and some of them have not yet trusted Christ. They would be very open about that, but they want to have questions. They want to study. They want to be in a position where they can say yes to God's call for salvation. Are you glad for that? Absolutely. And I am glad that God is continuing to draw men and women to himself. Others who are in that class they have made a decision to trust Christ already, but they have not been baptized, as the Bible very clearly commands. God has called us to obey him. And some of those folks say, "I have been saying no to God. Shame on me. And now I am in an intro to faith class because I want to be the kind of person who says yes to God. And if he tells me to do something in his Word, I am all about that yes." There are some others who are there. They say, "You know what? I have been saved. I have been baptized, but I have never joined a church and I am glad I live in a town where there is a lot of good churches, but I have never gotten around to it and now as I open the Word it is very clear. I need to fellowship with a particular church in a

¹² 2 Corinthians 1:15-20.

formal way for all sorts of biblical reasons. God has been telling me to do that and now I want to say yes to him.”

Are you glad for people around you who are in the habit or trying to get into the habit of saying yes? Absolutely.

We had another class start up this past Wednesday night for people who are considering becoming or at least allowing their names to be put before the church family in the future as deacons. That is a challenging responsibility and there are very clear, biblical qualifications for that. And that is a function of our congregation, our congregational government. But individuals have to decide. Am I going to say yes when that call comes? And I am glad that that room is absolutely filled with men who are attending this church or saying, “I want to work on my character. I want to get to a better place. I want to be sure I am growing in what God wants me to grow in so when my congregation says I want to suggest that guy’s name for deacon and somebody calls me and says, ‘Would you allow your name to be considered?’ that guy is going to be all about the yes.”

We all got that? God is about the yes and we need to be about the yes. Why am I even in the ministry? Have you ever thought about that? What is that? Here is why for reasons I don’t fully understand. God called me. You say, “Well, that was a bad idea.” Talk to him. I am 18 years old and I had a plan, baby. I was going to be rich and I was going to be retired by now. That was my plan until God called me. That is it. God called me and I am not talking about some call on the phone, but it was pretty doggone close. And it wasn’t purely subjective. I immediately submitted myself to the local church at the time and I said, “Do you agree with me that God is calling me to the ministry?” And they said, “Absolutely. You better decide how you are going to answer.”

And as an 18 year old kid I said yes, because if God is going to call me I am not going to wait around. Here is my plan. I am all about the yes. And I went off to Bible college not even knowing that the place I went off and no one was offering to pay my way. And so I had to get a job and sometimes two jobs. So why was my head in a toilet in Scranton, Pennsylvania as a freshman in college? {?}, because that was my job. My job was cleaning toilets at the local public school in order to put myself through school. And if you would ask me, Dude, what is your head doing in a toilet as an 18 year old kid? The answer is: Because this is part of me saying yes. Don’t confuse saying yes to God with it is going to be easy or it is going to be convenient or it is going to be blah, blah, blah. Forget all of those excuses. And I want my life to be all about the yes. And I have tried to stay on a trajectory where God had something for me to do. It wasn’t a matter of it was easy. It wasn’t a matter of it was going to be convenient. It is all about the yes.

Now I love you. Are you feeling it? I love every last one of you. Some of you are way to into the no. You get a call. Somebody asks you to do something, somebody to serve in some way, you have got a thing in your bulletin right now about needs that we have in order to serve folks at this missionary training conference, biblical counseling training conference and you are, bam, right into my excuses. Here is why I can’t. Some even plan

to say no to God. That is right. And you need to let me pastor you today. Some of you need to repent. And today would be a really good day.

Some of you recently have had somebody call you and say, "Hey, we have a ministry need around here. As we continue to grow we need you to serve." And you thought about it, blah, blah, blah, you came up with all of your justifications and you said no. And I am not talking about folks who have biblical priorities. I am not talking about getting outside of biblical priorities. But I am going to tell you. There is all sorts of people who will attend this church today who are really about saying yes to something sinful. They are really saying yes to something that is going to serve them and they have their plan and their life so centered about them that there is no time for yes to God.

And I am just telling you. If you are in that situation today, you need to repent. And today would be a really good. Are you saying, "Well, are you talking about next week?" I am talking about today. I am talking about for some folks picking up the phone today and calling that person who offered you a ministry opportunity and saying, "You know what? I said no a couple of weeks ago and the Holy Spirit has been working on me. I am loving his Word. I am loving the way he works on me and I want to change my answer. Can I change my answer? I want to be about the yes. I want to consider the ant. I want to be a person who is wise."

Friend, I know that many of you, you know the yes and you get the yes and that has not been part of your life. I want to encourage you to consider the ant and be wise.

Now let's... I am a little warm. I am going to be preaching next Sunday in the Dominican Republic, by the way. It is 85 degrees there right now so I am just kind of warming up to what that is going to be like.

Let's land this plane. Planning prepares you for the future. That is what the text says. She prepares her food in the summer. And that is for your future needs. One of the implications if we had more time could be about just the way you are handling your finances. And, sure, it is hard to plan a budget and live by a budget that is restrictive, but that is what helps you be prepared for the future. A lot of it is future effectiveness. Most people taking that serving with honors class they are putting themselves in a position because of their wise planning where they will be more effective in the days ahead. And that was the point. You will be faithful to a few things or I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master. And, by the way, there is joy in the yes. If you are saying, "Boy, are you saying that you don't like the fact that you said yes to God in responding to the call for ministry?" Are you kidding? I can't believe that God would give me that privilege and that honor. Saying yes to God is an honorable thing.

There is also future reward. Paul made it very clear. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Do you believe that? And, friend, learning to plan, choosing to be wise, choosing to say yes to God, that will put you in the best possible stead to give a good account at the judgment seat of Christ. And do you realize, by the way, Hebrews 13

says that I will have to give an account for every member of this church? That is a fact. Some day I will have to do that.

So you can say, “What are you doing right now?” Doing my job to help all of us get to where God wants us to be so we can all give a good account at the judgment seat of Christ. I would rather be a little bit uncomfortable today if that is part of the repentance process in order to be at a better place tomorrow.

And, by the way, for those of you who would say, “Well, but the problem is I don’t want to take away time from kids. All of this will take away time from kids.”

Let me tell you something about that. I have watched a lot of people raise a lot of kids around here. When I came here my hair was jet black. I have drawn certain conclusions. Here is one of them. I don’t think the average teenager in this church needs another 100 dollar pair of sneakers, another iPad and another video game. I think they are way too entertained on average. What I think the average teenager in this church and any church needs is to see adults who are living for a cause, seeing adults who are living in such a way that they really believe that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned and there are eternal issues at stake and I absolutely believe that young people are looking for a cause and we can either give them a cause that is biblical, godly, right and eternal or they will select a cause that is foolish and wasteful. So I don’t apologize like at all for what it is that I am talking to you about this morning, because within the parameters of biblical priority you choosing to plan to say yes to God that is going to be best for you and for those in your family.

Planning forces you to face excuses.

“A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”¹³

Solomon is actually mocking people for their excuses. Just a little more sleep, a little more slumber.

And I would encourage you as you think about what I am saying right now: Beware of the excuses, because we all have a narrative. We do. We all have a story to explain our life that we tell ourselves over and over and others, and we tell others.

Now let me say something to you. This is hard. Many times our narratives are way off. Many times the way we tell our story and reality is not the same. And part of my job right now is to help us knock off any aspects of my story that are filled with excuses, but are not in line with the reality of God. And I would encourage us to think hard about what it is that we are seeing in this text.

Ultimately planning reduces your life of needless pressure if I don’t plan.

“Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.”¹⁴

¹³ Proverbs 6:10.

Ultimately a person's failure to plan will destroy his or her life. And it might be literal, financial poverty as a result of not planning. Or it might be familial poverty where there was no plan to help my family grow spiritually and serve faithfully. And now everybody is grown up and everybody is living for themselves and I am thinking. What in the world happened? I didn't plan for spiritual poverty where there was no plan to grow in Christ and now I am old and cold to the things of God and bitter.

Friends, planning is valuable. Do you believe that? I hope you do. And I hope you are going to say regarding a personal improvement plan, regarding a personal ministry plan, regarding planning in your sphere of ministry and certainly participating in our church's planning process that you will say, "I want to get after that on all levels. And I will get help if necessary, because I want to be like the ant."

¹⁴ Proverbs 6:11.