

Plan like a mortal

Whenever we plan, we are guessing about what we need to do now to reach certain goals in the future. What are our chances of success, when we "do not know what tomorrow will bring" (James). We are "a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (James 4:14). We are mortal. As we mortals sketch out our plans, our sketches need to be rendered in pencil, not in permanent ink. We need to have one of those large pink erasers nearby to make changes. And always upon our lips need to be the words: "If the Lord wills... we will do this and that" (James 4:15).

Plan like a child

Pride easily often undermines our planning. Pride says, "I can handle this; I don't need to pray. I'll rely on my own reason and common sense. "Common sense isn't bad; all you have to do is look at the Book of Proverbs. But if we think we can master this complex world just by a perfect list of pro's and con's, we are deceived. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8). We are more like children than we would like to admit. Our wisdom and our perspective are both limited. Never underestimate how prone we are to wander into folly. Knowing all our limitations, we saturate our planning with prayer, which brings us into the presence of God and makes available to us wisdom and power from above to help us. Best of all, the Holy Spirit will give us what is best: the love of God in Christ that needs to animate all our thoughts and actions (Philippians 1:9- 10).

Plan like a worshiper.

Praying is part of God's strategy for guarding us from pride in planning. We can make every day a holy day, a day of worship (see Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment). Worship reorients our priorities. Worship helps us to say "no" to some activities, but it also helps us to pay attention to the "one thing [that] is necessary" (cf. the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:42). Scripture is filled with other examples of "laser focus" in the prayers of God's people. The Psalmist says, "One thing have I asked of the Lord," namely, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Psalm 27:4). Paul is intent on doing "one thing" (Philippians 3:13), forgetting the past and pressing forward to the goal of eternal life. A worshipful planner daily prays this ancient Anglican prayer: "O dear Lord, three things I pray: To see Thee more clearly; to love Thee more dearly; and to follow Thee more nearly... day by day." Pursuing God in worship, we won't take ourselves too seriously. We will rest in God's unshakeable love and mercy. We will receive the gift of discernment from the Spirit and adjust our priorities whenever necessary.

Plan like a dreamer

One of our hymns on prayer says: "You are coming to a King./ Large petitions with you bring./ For His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much." Since God created us "in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10), we are bold to attempt good works for the Kingdom of God. We may attempt what Hubbard calls "wonderfully audacious" works for God, works that may take longer than all of 2025 to accomplish, but we do so with the promise echoing in our minds and hearts: "With God, all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

Our prayerful, financial help for seminarians at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is a good example of planning for the future of the church which may or may not benefit us directly, which will take some time to bear fruit. Hubbard says that there are many other ways we show our willingness to

"embark on a path whose end lies over the horizon": when we plant a mission church, when we take part in the Seaford Festival in hopes of evangelizing Seaford, when we get involved in bringing up grandchildren and nieces and nephews "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Plan like a Sub-Planner

How do you react when you find out that God's plans were different from your own? Proverbs 19:21 reminds us: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." We can be glad that God sometimes overrides our plans, that for our own good He sometimes "frustrates the plans of the peoples" (Psalm 33:10). God has given us the freedom and dignity to dream. Sometimes, God even lets us see our dreams come true. But God also wants us to know that when we fail, He is such a God of grace and mercy for Jesus' sake that He will cause even our failures to work together for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28).

Love in Christ,
Pastor Ray