

Planning with Reckless Abandon

By Rev. William Wrede

We pray: Gracious and loving Father, I am extremely thankful that You have called me to be Your child. You sent Your Son Jesus to be my Savior. You also permit me to tell others about Your great love for them as well. Now, Lord, I ask that Your Holy Spirit would open my eyes to know Your will as I continue to plan how I can be about sharing the Gospel. Help me to become a more bold witness for You. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

T.G.I.F. Thank God
I'm Forgiven.

An early walk and talk with
the Lord will last all day.

Don't let troubles get you *down*
— except *on your knees*.

Introduction

On your way to Bible study today, did any bumper stickers catch your eye? Share briefly with the group.

I don't much care for most bumper sticker philosophy or, even worse, bumper sticker theology. Most of the time, the phrases we see printed on bumper stickers are clever and make their point rather well. Still, I don't often agree with what I read! Take this one for example: "We plan. God laughs." Perhaps it would be better to say, even if it doesn't sound quite so clever: "We plan. God gives success."

Read what Paul says to the "foolish Galatians" in **Galatians 3:1–5**.

Being foolish has nothing to do with going to the right school. Also, being foolish has nothing to do with ACT or SAT scores that get students into college or whether or not you have been able to figure out how to use a computer. Rather, being foolish means the people of Galatia — to whom Paul wrote this letter — and we today sometimes miss the point. For this reading, the goal is salvation in Jesus Christ. It's the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus that brings us to the goal of being made righteous in His sight. This does not happen because we are such great people or because we planned for that to happen!

Goal Setting: The Spiritual Compass

Perhaps Paul's words to the Galatians can also shed some light on another type of goal. In our efforts to keep the law and to do what is right, we forget the One who created in us the ability to do anything at all! Again, I have a bumper sticker in mind. I've never quite understood why someone thinks "God is my copilot" holds any hope for us at all. Perhaps we remember the One who blesses us, but we do indeed treat Him as the copilot. What tremendous hope and confidence we have when we finally under-

stand that God is the One who faithfully flies the plane *as the pilot* and permits us to be His copilots. Any power, any authority we have comes from God himself!

What's on your to-do list for today? Take a moment to share your answers.

When you started your computer this morning or when you pulled out your PDA or when you checked your "to do" list, what was your plan for today? For me, and I'm hoping for you, it's not so much what's on those lists as how I approach them that is the most important business of the day. It may sound like a foregone conclusion that each of our days will begin with prayer. But, if you are anything like me, it's easy to postpone or even forget a devotion at the start of the day. That being the case, I write "devotion" on the very first line of each day's list. I look at devotions as the time when God sets my spiritual compass. Once that compass is set, we can move forward boldly — might I even suggest with reckless abandon — allowing for creativity and new ideas to flow freely. I'm not suggesting carelessness but perhaps a "sanctified recklessness" where we need not worry about unimportant matters but dream bigger and more boldly.

Read **Psalm 27:3–7**. What do these verses say about how to go about setting a spiritual compass? List all the verbs you can find in the passage.

Adjusting the Focus

Ready for another bumper sticker? "What would Jesus do?" Not a bad question to ponder. My suggestion is that we adjust the wording just a bit and see what God has already done in us and now through us. This prayer from K.B. Ritter's *Gebete für das Jahr der Kirche, 2nd Edition* comes to mind since it makes beautiful use of the passive; that is, we are the recipients of the action which God does on our behalf, and it doesn't depend on our doing. The bold and italicized words are what we ask God to do in us:

Lord, *prepare* us for thy service. Let us come before thee with eager and humble hearts and disciplined mind. *Cleanse* us, *enlighten* us, and *kindle* us. *Bind* us together in love, obedience, and faithfulness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Have you ever second-guessed yourself? Have you ever wondered if you are truly qualified to do something? Having been prepared, cleansed, enlightened, kindled, and bound together in Christ, we can more fully comprehend how we can move forward with new-found reckless abandon and with a new level of trust having been prepared for this by the Master Himself!

Plugging In, Then Plunging In

Discuss your favorite ways to wind down after a job well done.

At the end of the day, when we are weary and in need of refreshment, we each have our way of becoming recharged. Perhaps it's a "power snooze" for some, whereas oth-

ers need only sit for a few minutes. Some might enjoy an afternoon cup of tea or grab a tall glass of a power drink. Others reach for the phone to connect with a cherished friend or family member. Anyone who owns a cell phone knows it will be worthless if it's not plugged in each night. Even these electronic things need to be recharged! Just as we know we must be physically refreshed to carry on, we also know that our faith is made stronger when it is connected and refreshed through His Word.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105). The *Concordia Self-Study Bible* adds just the right clarification, "Apart from which I could only grope about in the darkness."

In our personal lives, in our jobs, and in our churches, we plan. We commit our ways to the Lord; we trust His Word, and God does amazing and powerful things in us (gave us faith) and through us (freed to serve). When I become troubled (probably because I'm concerned everything depends on me) or question my ability to serve well, I remember the parable of the sower, a farmer going out to scatter seed:

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown (Matthew 13:23).

The sower plunges his hand into the bag of seed and throws that precious seed out to the waiting soil. He literally throws that seed with reckless abandon, not fretting where it might land. Some of the soil accepts the seed; it grows and produces more seed. Other seed produces nothing. It's not the sower's job to worry about the harvest. His job is to throw out seed. I rest knowing the Spirit is working in and through me just as He always has.

Well connected to and fully charged by His Word, we reach deep inside that Word and throw it out to ears so in need of hearing that message. How might our plans and dreams do this?

Closing

For some, planning with reckless abandon will cause their Mite Box to bulge with more coins than ever. Still others will head off to the hospital or a home, to a soup kitchen or a mission field where someone will gladly welcome them and the message they bring from God. Each of us has an overflowing cup to share with others.

We pray: Lord, *prepare* us for Thy service. Let us come before Thee with eager and humble hearts and disciplined mind. *Cleanse* us, *enlighten* us, and *kindle* us. *Bind* us together in love, obedience, and faithfulness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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