

CHIEF MINISTRIES

December 2022

Wow, can you believe it is already December 2022! I want to close this year with some thoughts on planning for 2023. I realize more than most how we are not guaranteed tomorrow. The Word says in Proverbs 16:1-9;

The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. v2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. v3 Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. v4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. v5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished. v6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil. v7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. v8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice. v9 The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. (ESV).

When I am working with a new believer, I always tell them the importance of reading the word, and to start first with a Bible that is written so they understand what is being said, second to start with the Gospels, and to read a Proverbs a day (there are 31, one for every day of the longest months) and at least 2 Psalms a day (there are 150, some are very short, some very long). The point is to get in the word and do it daily, disciples (someone teachable for a cause) require discipline! Many times, people who have difficulty with discipline are so because they are not teachable. Regardless of your chronological age, we ALL need to remain teachable, ALL our lives. The saying “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” is a lie from the pit of hell! And we are going to address peripherally, how our “stinkin thinkin” is something we have control of and really does influence our present and certainly our future. Therefore, the plans we make for our future.

The above verses talk about how we can plan and plan, but God is the one that should be directing our steps. If not, then your plans will burn up like chaff. But when OUR plans line up with God’s plans, He will not only make them come to fruition but will also have our enemies be at peace with us. So, where, and how do we start?

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (NIV). God wants you to be like him. So, if God makes plans, then you should make plans too. But there’s one thing God is not: “God is not a God of disorder” (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV). Do you have any plans for 2023? The next 10 years? If you haven’t made any plans for your life, then it’s likely your life is out of order—and that’s not how God created you to live, and yes I know I am writing to those incarcerated, but are you taking classes, getting educated (OJT, classroom), living right in the sight of the Lord, to make your transition back into society an easier one, so whatever activities that lead you to prison is NOT the only tools you have in your toolbelt of life skills when you leave? If not, I am here to tell you, IT IS TIME!

God expects you to plan because it is beneficial to your life. Throughout Scripture, particularly in the book of Proverbs, the Bible talks about the value of planning your life. Proverbs 4:26 says, *“Mark out a straight path for your feet”* (NLT). That’s just another way of saying, “Make a plan.” God tells you to plan because he doesn’t want you to live a life of confusion as you muddle through each day. The Bible says, *“Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way”* (1 Corinthians 14:40 NIV).

Planning is a matter of stewardship. Your life is God’s gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God. Ephesians 5:15-17 says, *“Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as [those] who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don’t be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God”* (PHILLIPS). The old cliché is true: If you’re failing to plan, you’re planning to fail.

When you make your life plan, God’s contribution toward its success is far greater than your own—but your contribution is still vital. In the Old Testament, Nehemiah offers a good example of someone who knew that his plan depended on God. When Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he heard his hometown of Jerusalem had been destroyed and lay defenseless. This troubled Nehemiah, so he decided to go home to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls. But he knew he wouldn’t get very far without a plan. The Bible says, *“We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps”* (Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)).

Nehemiah’s plan for how he would get to Jerusalem gives you seven steps in developing a life plan. Here are the first two:

Step 1: Ask God for favor on your life.

Nehemiah knew he couldn’t just impulsively suggest that the king let him go home to rebuild. So he prayed, asking for God’s favor: *“O Lord, please hear my prayer! . . . Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me”* (Nehemiah 1:11 NLT).

God’s favor is God’s grace, and you need it to make and fulfill your plans. Notice Nehemiah also prayed, “Please grant me success.” Sometimes you might think you shouldn’t ask God for success. But there’s nothing wrong with praying for success when you’re trusting God to do the work.

Step 2: Prepare for an opportunity, and then wait.

Nehemiah had to wait before he was given an opportunity to present his plan to the king. Then one day, *“four months later, when Emperor Artaxerxes was dining, [Nehemiah] took the wine to him”* (Nehemiah 2:1 GNT). Because Nehemiah had plenty of time to prepare, he knew exactly what he wanted to say to the king. When you begin praying about a plan, vision, or dream God has given you, he usually doesn’t answer right away. God often waits to see how serious you are about it. Are you going to keep praying and planning while you wait? If so, you’ll be prepared to open the door when opportunity knocks.

Step 3: Expect fear, but don’t let it stop you.

When the king saw Nehemiah approaching, he asked him why he looked so sad. In those days, it was a crime to be sad before the king, yet Nehemiah was about to ask for a leave of absence to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. Nehemiah did two things with his fear:

- **He expressed his feelings.** Nehemiah replied, *“Long live the king! How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins”* (Nehemiah 2:3 NLT). Admitting how you feel is how you grow.
- **He prayed quickly before speaking.** *“The king said to me, ‘What is it you want?’ Then I prayed to the God of heaven”* (Nehemiah 2:4 NIV). Sometimes prayer can just be quickly and silently saying, “Help!”

Another lie from the pit of hell; is that godly people are never afraid. That’s nonsense! Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is moving ahead *in spite of* your fear.

Step 4: Establish a clear target.

Nehemiah got specific in his request to the king: *“If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city”* (Nehemiah 2:5 NLT).

To establish a specific goal, you need to ask yourself three questions: What do I want to be?

What do I want to do? What do I want to have?

Make sure you let the size of your God determine the size of your goal. A God-sized goal honors God and shows him that you trust him to help you.

Step 5: Set a deadline.

Nehemiah 2:6 says, *“Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, ‘How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?’ It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time”* (NIV). Even though it was ultimately God who orchestrated the timing, Nehemiah still *“set a time”* so that he had a clear plan.

If your goal doesn’t have a deadline, then it’s not a goal. Ask, “How long is it going to take?” Then put it in your calendar. Remember, a dream without a deadline is an empty wish. It won’t go anywhere. I sense some of you saying, But Ms G, I am here for the rest of my natural life, or I don’t even come up for parole for 10 more years. I say to you, “That should be your goal, list the things you need to do between now and when you come up for parole, or what relationship bridges do you need to reach out and start the restoration process. Some need to put your pride and arrogance on a shelf and be the man God called you to be and take that first step in restoration. The re-building of your family relationships are more important than the rebuilding of a city to God. Yet He honored Nehemiah for stepping up and out to restore Jerusalem.

Step 6: Anticipate barriers.

Part of the planning process involves anticipating problems. Proverbs 27:12 says, *“A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them”* (TLB). Notice it says “meet” them not run away from them.

Nehemiah thought through all the problems he might face. Then he said to the king, *“Would you be willing to give me letters to the governors of the provinces west of the Euphrates River, so that I can travel safely to Judah? I will need timber to rebuild the gates of the fortress near the temple and more timber to construct the city wall and to build a place for me to live. And so, I would appreciate a letter to Asaph, who is in charge of the royal forest”* (Nehemiah 2:7-8 CEV).

First, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem. Then he asked for protection and provision. Nehemiah was a cupbearer, not a professional builder, yet because he had spent four months praying and planning, he was able to anticipate the barriers, determine his needs, and calculate the cost. In whatever your goals are there are going to be those that want you to

fail, But God is on your side, remember Jeramiah 29:11. Fear is NOT from God, 2 Timothy 1:7 says; “*For God gave us a spirit NOT of fear but of power and love and self-control*” (ESV).

Step 7: Trust God to meet all your needs.

Even when things don’t turn out the way we hoped, we can still trust God. A mark of spiritual maturity is when you recognize that God’s hand is behind the plans that go our way *and* the plans that don’t go our way. Godly goal setting says, “*If the Lord wants us to, we will live and carry out our plans*” (James 4:15 GW).

The king ended up giving Nehemiah everything he had asked for—and Nehemiah gave God all the credit: “*And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me*” (Nehemiah 2:8 NLT). Nehemiah didn’t say, “Look at what my planning did.” He said, “Look at what God did.”

What would you like God to do in the next six months, the next year, or the next five years in your life? A great plan starts with these seven steps that Nehemiah followed.

As CHIEF Ministries has done since its inception, I am enclosing the “Read the Bible in a year plan”.

I want to thank all of you that write to me and know I do read your letters and am touched that I can make a difference in your lives. I know I am not Chief, but I know the Lord told me He would lead and help me in the monthly newsletters, He is faithful, so I too will be.

Blessings, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year to all of you and your families. May His blessings and word light up your path and bring you to a deeper relationship with Him.

Ms. Chief (aka Ms.G)

If you want to know more about CHIEF Ministries or would like to be a part, please go to www.chiefministries.com

Christ’s Heart In Every Felon

