

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

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2 Timothy 2:2

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.



Do You Have A Good Plan?

In June I had the privilege of preaching a sermon as part of the commencement service for our graduating class of homeschoolers. The text I chose was James 4:13-17 and I simply posed the question to both our graduates and the congregation, “Do you have a good plan?”

The book of James addresses a number of subjects that were real-life issues for his readers; issues like trials and temptations, personal relationships and even life goals and dreams. Today, the questions might be along the lines of: “What do I want to do after I graduate?” Or, for others, “What plans do we make once the kids move out?” Simply put, “What is your plan?” We all have dreams. We all have hopes. We still make plans. And whether we are aware of it or not, there is always something that motivates us; a guideline, a principle or a value that shapes our

choices, influences our decisions, and directs our wants. And so, the question is not simply, “What is your plan?” but, more pointedly, “Do you have a good plan?”

James calls for his readers’ attention in 4:13 and notes that everything seemingly necessary for a good plan is present. There are specifics; a destination or location has been selected: such and such a city. There is a specific length of time determined, in this case a year. There is a plainly stated objective: we will engage in some business. And then there is a pursued outcome: to make a profit. This is what we will do. This is what we will accomplish. It is all very positive to this point.

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What could be wrong with such a well-developed plan? Yet James considers it presumption; and presumption, the art of assuming you can always expect certain things to happen a certain way, equates to poor planning in James’ thinking.

So what is wrong with the plan of verse 13? It seems “good,” but we have to ask, “What makes a plan truly good?” For James, a good plan may indeed contain all the elements mentioned in verse 13; but there is one more ingredient, one more thing necessary to make this plan good. Rather than saying, “What is the plan?” we ought to be

asking, “Who is in the plan?” For the addition that makes every plan good is God. God and His will are to be the very center, the focal point, and that which drives every ambition and every decision. In verse 13, and too often in many of our own plans, there was (and

is) no God in the equation. There is no looking to the providence of God, no showing deference to what God may want, no awareness of or submission to God’s greater purpose and His sovereign right to change anything about our plans whenever and however He likes.

This is not to say that we ought not to plan. We need to be thinking about what we want to do and to plan for it. This is not what makes a plan good or bad. Additionally, we sometimes begin our plans with God, which is good. But then, somewhere in the working out of the plan, we put God on the back burner and “His will” becomes “I will” or “my will.” We begin to think and say to ourselves, “I will do it; I will accomplish it.” What makes a plan bad, then, is when we exclude God from the plan anywhere along the way.

Somewhere I have heard it said that the four most dangerous words in a believer’s vocabulary are “I can handle it!” Or, in the context of James 4:13, “I will do it!” But if your God is not part of the plan, or part of the process, then how will the final product be anything that brings you lasting benefit or brings God glory?

In verse 13, each of the verbs should literally begin with “we will”: “we will go”; “[we will] spend”; “[we will] engage in

business”; “[we will] make a profit.” James’ repetition makes the point. And the point is that we tend to say repeatedly, “This is my will...”; “This is what I will do.” This is why James will offer the correction in verses 15-16 saying, “Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance [your pretensions; your “pre”-assuming of the circumstances] all such boasting [bragging that you know such things] is evil.” [brackets mine]

Proverbs 16:9 reminds us of this, “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.” This means that we may start in a certain direction, but as most of us have experienced, we rarely see the twists and turns, the ups and downs that come from the hand of God. And when such unforeseen or unplanned-for events come, we tend to complain about them rather than see them as the Lord’s guidance and direction. Anything difficult or course-changing

we tend to see as a setback or a roadblock that keeps us from accomplishing “my will.” When God puts someone in our way, we can so easily see that person as a hindrance or as an enemy that needs to be defeated, rather than as someone put on our path by the good providence of God to teach us something.

The truth is, we can plan and plan, but in the end we must never forget that God is in control, that He will accomplish His purposes (often through means we might never consider), and that His agenda is both bigger and better than our own. Our plans need to begin with God, continue with God and end with God. This is what will make a plan good. If you believe He loves you, then there is nothing that comes across your path that is intended for anything but your benefit, not matter how hard it might seem. It may be nothing else but to keep your eyes and heart fixed on Jesus.

- Ed Godfrey



Book Nook

What is the Mission of the Church?

By Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert

If you were to sit down with church leaders from biblically-centered evangelical churches

across the country and around the world and pose the question, “What is the mission of the church?” you would undoubtedly receive a vast array of different answers. You might find on one end of the spectrum that there are churches who have not even considered the question, and on the other end of the spectrum are churches who have so broadly defined it that it has lost any meaning. There

is, unfortunately, great confusion amongst churches as to what they really ought to be doing as Christ’s church, but instead of turning to Scripture many are turning to purely pragmatic answers or the latest fad. In their book *What is the Mission of the Church?* Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert bring wisdom and biblical insight to bear on an issue that is “deceptively complex and potentially divisive” in such a way that brings clarity, honesty, solid biblical exegesis, and understandability.

One of the first noteworthy aspects of the book is the meticulous labor the authors go through to provide clear, meaningful, biblically-based definitions. DeYoung and Gilbert begin the book by defining terms, and because of that they set the stage at the onset for understanding exactly what is meant by a word that is used and misused

frequently in evangelical circles today: *mission*.

“At its most basic, the term mission implies two things to most people: (1) being sent and (2) being given a task. The first point makes sense because mission comes from the Latin word (mittere) meaning “to send.” The second point is implied in the first. When sent on a mission, we are sent to do something – and not everything... Even in the world around us, everyone understands that a mission is that primary thing you set out to accomplish.” (19)

The clarity they use in helping to bring understanding to what is, or at least should be, meant by that word is the same clarity they bring throughout the entire book.

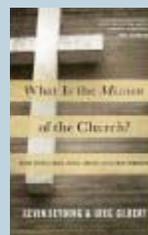
The most important aspect of the book is the constant looking to, and proper exegesis of, God’s Word on the part of the authors in order to answer the question of what the mission of the church truly is. The book is saturated with solid scriptural backing for the points they make and it becomes very evident that the Bible is the source from which all of their conclusions are drawn. One of the natural results of their diligent focus on Scripture is that an issue which can be seen as complex becomes much more clear and simplified. When talking about the mission of the church, it is easy to overcomplicate it and get caught up in secondary issues, all the while losing sight of what Jesus Himself laid out as His church’s primary mission. This scripturally saturated simplicity is best seen in their summary of the mission of the church:

“The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.” (62)

All that comes before and all that follows after this definition in the book is meant to explain, in detail, the “theological bricks” upon which that definition is built, as derived from God’s Word rather than from man’s opinions.

With that being said, DeYoung and Gilbert do not make the mistake of erroneously over-simplifying the matter either. In fact, if I could describe the book with one word, it would be *balanced*. They avoid either extreme on issues pertaining to the mission of the church, while presenting the balance between the extremes well (which is again the fruit of sticking close to Scripture). An example of this is that they do not emphasize the mission of the church, as quoted above, to the point that all other matters of the church are excluded or are labeled unimportant, nor do they get caught up in all the peripheral matters in such a way as to lose focus of the central mission. With care and balance they address sensitive and difficult issues.

Overall, I found the book to be helpful and encouraging. The progression in the line of thinking and the format are well thought out and make the book easy to track with and easy to read. Even the epilogue is filled with good, practical, sound wisdom for those who are wrestling with what it means to be a “missional” church. I recommend that church leaders take the time to read through this book because, if nothing else, it will confirm that your priorities and purpose as a church are aligned with the counsel of God, which He has given to us in His Word.



Reviewed by Billy Freels ~ Youth Pastor at Living Grace Community Church of Bakersfield, CA



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**2013 XL Intern Training
February 21-22, 2013**

The focus of our annual intern training is leadership development for those in, or in training for, full-time ministry. The 2013 XL Intern Training is Thursday and Friday, February 21st-22nd, immediately prior to the 2013 Essentials Conference hosted by Countryside Bible Church in Southlake, Texas.

There is no charge for the intern training sessions, but we do request that you register in advance. [Registration](#) is now open. We invite you to join us for any of the training sessions we offer, whether you are a volunteer in ministry, an intern, or a pastor.

Session Details - 2013 Intern Training:

Wednesday evening, February 20th:
XL Ministries Open House Dessert Fellowship

Thursday, February 21st:
Church Discipline (Rocky Wyatt, 1:00 pm)
Hospital and Funeral Etiquette (Eric Ellis, 3:00 pm)
Success in Ministry Defined (Tom Pennington, 4:00 pm)

Friday, February 22nd:
Missions in the Life of the Church (Brian Murphy, 9:00 am)
Training Men for Eldership (Chris Riser, 1:00 pm)

Location for all sessions: Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

The Essentials Conference Series, which is hosted free of charge by Countryside Bible Church, examines six core biblical priorities that are essential to spiritual health and growth. There are sessions for adults as well as a special eKids Program for preschool and primary children. Visit their [web site](#) for more details. Registration will open soon for the 2013 conference.

