

MONDAY MANNA
DEC 27, 2021

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Robert J. Tamasy

With another calendar year about to end, it is time once more for reflection and expectation, looking back over the past year and looking forward to the one about to begin. How has this year been for you – all you expected, better than you had hoped, or totally unlike whatever you had anticipated?

As the global pandemic has continued to hold many of us in its grip, life as we know it has changed in many ways. “Normal” has taken on new meaning. For many, “business as usual” has ceased to have any meaning at all. So as 2021 limps out and the uncertainties of 2022 knock at the door, many of us are scratching our heads, wondering how we can effectively plan for the future.

This is not the first time that people around the globe have been confronted with the unknown, of course. The future is always unpredictable, so we must plan accordingly. Expect the unexpected and you will not be completely surprised. Even with that, we find much wisdom from the Scriptures on how to plan and prepare for the future. Here is a sampling of the guidance we find in the Bible:

Do not waste time looking backward. We can learn from the past but dwelling on it – especially our failures – is unproductive. The apostle Paul had much he could regret; he chose instead to focus on the present and the promised future. “...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.... But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Do not become controlled by anxiety. Unexpected developments related to the pandemic have been unsettling but worry and fear of what the future might hold can paralyze our planning. Taking life – and our work – one day at a time is a solid strategy. Jesus admonished His followers, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?... Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:25-34).

由香港工商基督徒協會 (CBMC Hong Kong Ltd) 逢週一發放

地址: 香港上環禧利街 2 號東寧大廈 20 樓 2004 室 Tel: (852) 2805-1923

Email: enquiry@cbmc.org.hk

Web: www.cbmc.org.hk

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Do formulate your plans by committing them to the Lord. Often our planning and strategizing fails to take into account what God's intentions might be. King David of Israel, no stranger to severe opposition and formidable challenges, understood this. That is why he could write, "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun" (Psalm 37:3-5).

Do maintain your trust in God's direct involvement when plans become disrupted. Sometimes we make our plans, feeling certain they are in accord with God's will, and yet they do not work out as we had anticipated. Rather than give in to frustration or despair, we can trust His plans are better than our own. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

© 2021. Robert J. Tamasy has written Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship; Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and The Heart of Mentoring, coauthored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you assess the past year? What went as you expected – and what caught you by surprise? And how have you responded when the unexpected occurred?
2. In looking ahead to the new year, do you find yourself filled with optimism, pessimism, somewhat anxious, or a mixture of those and other feelings? Explain your answer.
3. How do you go about planning for the new year – or for the future in general? Do you make specific plans or general goals? What role, if any, do God and teachings from the Bible have in your planning?
4. Our turbulent times have caused many people to suffer from great anxiety and fear. What has been the effect on you? Have you found that faith and trust in God and His direction have served as sources of assurance and stability for you in spite of the chaos? Why or why not?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Psalm 23:1-6; Proverbs 16:3,4,9, 19:21, 20:24, 27:1; Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 9:57-62

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