

MYTBUSTING – *God's Plan*

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

These books were a staple in my youth. They were a series written from a **second person point of view**, where the reader assumed the role of **protagonist** through a series of decisions at different points within the book. Based on your choice, you'd skip around the pages of the book as you created your own plot, determining the character's fate. Most had over 20 different endings.

250 million copies were sold in the 80's and 90's. No doubt part of it is because they were quick and fun reads. But perhaps their popularity also was due to the fact it is more fun to make wild decisions and potentially screw up your life in book form than reality.

If we're brutally honest, many Christians have applied choose your own adventure to the Bible. Thinking about it practically – many reading plans take different paths through its pages. Many devotionals and short reading plans have a Choose Your Own Adventure feel – “Stuck in suffering? Turn to...” “Struggling with forgiveness? Turn...” “Looking for peace? Turn to...” There's nothing wrong with this practice.

The Bible is a book people take many paths through, sometimes skipping portions and pieces altogether. We find our favorite pathway through the text and arrive at different belief systems and ways of life at the end. It's how we have people who hold to very different beliefs and practices can claim to hold the same Bible as their influence and authority.

The problem we find in Church culture is that we read verses but we don't read the Bible. Only **30%** of believers will read it cover to cover. So the Church practices a **copy and paste theology** taking bits and pieces from here and there, sermon quotes and social media, but never take in the greater content and context of Scripture.

We arrive at the point where our greatest issue isn't what we don't know. It's what we think we know that is just a little off.

GALATIANS 5:9 (AMP): *“A little leaven [a slight inclination to error] leavens the whole batch [it perverts the concept of faith and misleads the church].”*

Satan likes to copy and paste bits and pieces of God's words too. It's how he tempted Adam and Eve, and it's how he tempted Jesus in the desert.

But the enemy's use of scripture shouldn't make us wary of scripture. It should awaken us to a reality: **Scripture interprets scripture.** The best commentary on any given passage of the Bible is the rest of the Bible.

Jeremiah 29:11 - *“For 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.”*

It's repeated three times for emphasis sake: **God has plans.**

God has a plan for you. God has purposes for you. There's a destiny and calling on your life.

Psalm 139:16 – *“all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

Ephesians 2:10 – *“He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”*

God has a plan for you. Only a fool would ignore this reality.

But in church culture, His plan for you often looks like the following:

God has a specific path forward into your future.

God knows it and has laid it out for us like a blueprint..

Our task is to find this pathway and walk in it.

Choose rightly- find happiness, favor and destiny.

But choose wrongly and you'll miss God's will for your life and end up lost in a meaningless maze.

The question that creeps up in the back of our minds:

If God's will is important, why is it so hard to find?

It's because we're looking for the wrong thing. A lot of times when we think about God's plans for us, we think of it in terms of a **MASTER PLAN** – it's comprehensive, down to your home, your car, your spouse...

God has one picked out for you as a part of his plan for you, and He spells out every detail.

Now, let's recognize that we see very specific plans of God in scripture:

He told Hosea to marry Gomer. He told Jeremiah to buy a specific plot of land. Etc.

But terms of the greater context of scripture, these are exceptions, not the norm.

More importantly, these are specific to moments in their life, not far reaching to every detail.

When I was younger, the idea of finding “the one” was paralyzing. How could I commit if I'm not sure this is the one person out of the billions on the planet for me? How can I know when I know maybe a couple thousand of those billions? How can I ever be sure it's God's perfect will?

I used to wrestle with this idea of finding God's perfect will and not settling for what's merely permissible. But I was confusing God's omniscience with his divine will.

And if you look at the context of scripture, beginning to end, very few people God called got a blueprint, map or itinerary up front. Abraham – “Leave everything...” with no detailed plan, just God's promise. Gideon – “Go in the strength that you have and free your people from oppression.” Jesus to the disciples – “Follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men.”

In scripture you see far less of a **Master Plan** and more of a **Game Plan**. What's a game plan?

In sports you have rules to play by, you have boundaries, you have a goal, and you call plays to get there. But what goes down on the field may vary wildly play to play and game to game.

Choose your own adventure is terrible practice with the Bible.
But God gives us the Bible, and he gives us a brain, and he invites us forward.
Why? **To make choices.** To take risks and step forward in faith.
When it comes to life choices, some are black and white no brainers that take nothing more than sanctified common sense. Other decisions are big. They take risks.
Some of us shrink back in these moments. God invites us to step into them, while the enemy would absolutely love for us to be paralyzed by them.

I'm convinced one of the ways he does that is to cripple us with the thought –
what if I miss God's plan and each of the details he's dreamed for me?

The enemy loves for us to adopt a portrait of God that's stern and ready to terminate us at a wrong turn, or leave us wandering in a labyrinth when we miss his divine will.

But I want to disarm some of his half truths tonight...
first by looking at two principles scripture gives us,
then by looking at two gifts He gives us.

PEACE

"If it's God will you'll have a peace about it"
"I have a peace about _____"

We treat peace of mind like God's permission slip. In a culture that keeps objective truth at arm's length, it shouldn't surprise us that we're drawn to a subjective measure for our walk.
Our peace or lack of it often doesn't tell us when we've broken God's standards.

It tells us when we've crossed our own.

It's a practice that- if we aren't careful- puts us in a place of self-sovereignty, which is a dangerous place to be due to things like our sin nature, flesh, blind spots, and alike.

You'll have people tell you they're at peace when it's clear they've settled into sinful lifestyles.
Why? Because they stopped going to war. They called a ceasefire.

Scripture tells us our flesh and the spirit are at war.

Galatians 5:16-17 -

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:4**

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the LORD who judges me.

Peace as we pursue it isn't the indication we often want it to be.

Sometimes- ironically- when we say we're waiting for perfect peace or God's direction we do little actual following, and we feel more spiritual the less we do.

TRUST

Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

The team building exercise to build trust: **THE TRUST FALL.**

The trust falls God calls us to fall forward.

Trusting God is leaning into him and not leaning on our own understanding.

That leaning more often than not carries us forward.

We shouldn't live on our heels dug in waiting for direction, but on our toes in anticipation.

Our impulse is start with **WAIT**, but God begins with **GO**.

God says to the Old Testament Judge, Gideon in Judges 6 – ***“Go in the strength you have”***

Gideon in his humanity wants to wait on more signs, and God in his grace gives them.

But there are times that we think we are waiting on God, and He's really waiting on us.

“Go in the strength you have.”

What does that require?

TRUST. In what? Not my strength. Trusting in God's strength.

God is often gracious to us as he was to Gideon.

Gideon requests not one but two signs and God grants them.

God gives us two gifts that are key so we don't have to wait for a sign:

THE BIBLE

Psalm 119:105 - ***“Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”***

Sometimes we want high beams to see what's a mile further or around the bend.

But we're given a lamp to help us with our next steps.

God doesn't give us a map.

God gives us a compass.

We need to learn how to live by **CONVICTIONS.**

Convictions are personal principles and beliefs based on God's Word that help us navigate life.

“Do what makes you happy” // “Do what makes you feel good.”

- Feelings are meant to be felt, not followed.
- Feelings should inform us, we don't ignore them, but we should follow convictions.

The peace of mind God wants for you doesn't come because you have achieved **certainty**,

It comes because you have **clarity** about your **convictions** and what's truly important.

Write your plans in pencil, but your convictions in pen.

God doesn't care where you eat lunch—but He cares that you steward your body.

God may not have a specific person for you to marry—but He certainly has wise principles for you as you go about choosing that person, as well as wise principles for a lifetime of intimacy. God may or may not have one specific calling for you, but He has given you talents and opportunities and wisdom to go about finding a faithful place to serve Him AND serve your neighbor well.

God may not have one specific car that is right for you to buy, but He does provide general principles about managing money well and leaving room to live generously.

When you work through the greater context and content of scripture, especially the New Testament, you'll find that there isn't much emphasis on the kinds of decisions we're commonly anxious about. Instead, the primary focus is on godly character and conviction as a daily pattern.

Micah 6:8 - *what does the LORD require of you:*

[find the right spouse, settle into the right house, and raise Holy kids]

But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

Jesus stripped it down even further: Love God. Love others.

Just like an athlete needs to master the basics to unleash a skillset of value on gameday, We need to master these basics. Without them we can't execute any game plan on game day. Athletes have fundamentals. We're called to have convictions made up of fundamental values.

While we don't have a treasure map, our values and convictions should form a moral compass. How do you construct this compass?

Identify the values in the Bible that should be in your life. Commands. Prophetic words. Virtues.

Include those values in your decisions – when a moment, a decision, or life in general seems grey and lacks clarity, consult those values.

Implement those values in your routines – it's easy for habits to evaporate when we make a big transition in life. But values transcend chapters in life and can survive those seasons!

Creating and working from that compass will enable you make a stand amidst controversy, face hard decisions, and not be paralyzed when God wants you to walk in faith on the path of purpose.

DEUTERONOMY 30:11-14

This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not beyond your reach. It is not kept in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go up to heaven and bring it down so we can hear it and obey?' It is not kept beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear it and obey?' No, the message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.

God's will isn't as elusive as we think.
We're just looking for the wrong thing.

God gives us his word not so that we'll have a road map, but so we'll have a compass.
It's a gift. Unwrap it.

Second gift that helps us tap into God's plans:

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The same way the word is a lamp unto our feet, speaking to our moment by moment walk...

“But I say walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...”

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit”

Galatians 5:16,25

We too often get fixated on finding “God's will for my life”

And forsake “The Holy Spirit's leading for today.”

Why is this so easy to do? Because meditating on what God may or may not want from you next year is way less demanding than asking what he wants from you right now. But what you do right now, what you do today, is what gets you to where you need to be next year.

How important is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is so important that Jesus followed up his command to GO with a WAIT.

He gives the Great Commission at the end of the Gospels – go into the world... then at the beginning of Acts – wait for the Spirit.

But when the Holy Spirit came, what accompanied him? WIND and FIRE.

Wind and fire are unpredictable, impossible to contain and put a bow on.

That fits life. Because life will be complex and unpredictable.

But we don't have to let complexities paralyze us.

God has plans and purposes for your life.

That's wonderful truth to reflect on daily.

But we don't have to wait for a master plan.

Life isn't paint by numbers. Which is a good thing.

You don't find many paint by number pieces in the local museum.

You find unique master works by artists who took risks and made bold choices.

That's beauty.

We can make choices and follow God into adventure.

That's what people come from afar to witness.

That's what gives God glory.