



THE STEWARDSHIP OF PLANNING • Eric Swanson

There is a land where dreams are born
Where time is never planned;
There is a land where dreams are born
In Never, Never Land.

These lyrics from the musical “Peter Pan” remind us that only in “Never, Never Land” are dreams realized without the aid of a plan.

But sadly, this lesson is generally ignored. The discipline of planning under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is too often undermined by charges that it is an “unspiritual and rigid” exercise, more related to the corporate office than the Kingdom of God. Instead, we are told to adopt a sort of “fly by the spiritual seat of your pants” mentality and “follow the Holy Spirit’s leading of the moment.” Planning is even accused of fostering an attitude of unbelief and hindering the Spirit’s work. Few of you would adopt this extreme attitude, but the subtle effects of this thinking are prevalent—a tendency to plan for a week or month at a time, and commit the rest of the schedule to the grace of God.

Coupled with a tendency to “just do what worked last year” or to bow to the lure of convenience and “just go with the flow”, the concept of strategic planning has fallen on hard times in the church and Christian organizations. The truth is that too often we are content to leave things to chance—under the sovereignty of God, of course. But as Louis Pasteur observed, “chance favors the prepared man.” And so, we will see, does the Lord.

Before we go any further, let’s make one thing clear. The kind of planning we are about to discuss is linked inseparably to the leading and power of God made evident through the Holy Spirit. The moment by moment leading of the Holy Spirit is a crucial element in such a plan. A plan does not shift the focus of our trust from God to ourselves. Rather, it is a reflection of our trust in God to lead, provide and work powerfully on our behalf. We are planning (counting on the certainty) that God, according to His promises, will work.

No, a plan does not ensure the success of our efforts. God must bless. The Holy Spirit must lead. The Lord Jesus must be the beginning, means and end of our plan. We want nothing less than to work God’s plan in His power; to take our dreams for fulfilling His purposes and turn them into the reality of changed lives for His glory.

Stewardship and Planning

While the Bible doesn’t say much about planning (though planning is evident), it is deeply concerned with the concept of stewardship; the wise use of God’s possessions and gifts. Passages like the parable of the stewards and their talents (Matthew 25:14-30) remind us that we must use our God-given resources wisely and strategically, in light of His return. The message of this parable is that stewards are accountable to “use them or lose them.” Hebrews 13:17 reminds us that “we will give an account” for the development and well-being of the people God places under our care. Paul says he is “simply discharging the trust committed to me,” as he describes his stewardship of a gospel ministry (1 Corinthians 9:17).



Consider the stewardship of your time, gifts, and abilities, and consider the stewardship of your opportunities. You serve on a mission field of thousands; one of the most strategic and open mission fields in the world; a mission field with a proven track record in sending resources to the world.

Strategic Planning

Your resources, vast though they may be, are far outdistanced by your even loftier dreams. Great challenges confront you. Your enemy not only schemes against your success, he plots your demise. The hour is urgent. Time passes though your hands like sand. The stakes are inconceivably high. In short, you are at war. There is no peace in sight. But there is great hope, yes, even the certainty of victory. Such is the daily experience of a committed Christian on a college campus.

The challenges of war, and the promises of victory, set the stage for an appreciation of Spirit-led, strategic planning. Strategic planning means simply “the long term, focused, and wise use of resources to accomplish a desired end.” In war time, governments are compelled to make use of strategic planning to focus and maximize their nation’s resources and efforts to defeat the enemy.

The Germans, notorious for their ability to mobilize the entire nation for war, operated on the maxim, “The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing.” In World War II, all the nation’s resources were orchestrated to accomplish their supreme goal of European—and eventually world—domination. Only after the British and Americans learned this lesson, and began working out their own strategic plan, was the balance of power tipped in favor of the Allies. A nation at war understands that precious and perishable resources must be exclusively and wisely utilized for the cause of victory. In time of war, the margin of error is always thin.

The lesson of war time is this: when your goals far exceed your resources; when your purposes are vigorously opposed; when your front line people are desperate for clear direction; when the success of your mission is dependent on the wise use of resources; there you will find the need, yes, the necessity for strategic planning. Strategic planning is an ally that makes a difference. It will find an honored place among those intent on attaining victory, and fulfilling their dream in the face of seemingly overwhelming opposition.

Of course, this aptly describes the situation of the local Campus Crusade for Christ leadership and team. The pressing question isn’t so much whether to plan, but whether to be a wise steward of our resources in time of battle. Only a strategic plan will enable you to maximize the God-given resources at your disposal for accomplishing His purposes on campus. Only a strategic plan will enable you to lead with confidence, for “If a trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will go forth into battle?”

Strategic planning is too often the missing link between our long term vision, and daily reality. Our dreams need feet. For if they aren’t realized in the lives of flesh and blood people, living in the real world of daily pressures and overloaded schedules, they are of no earthly—or heavenly—good.

The Call to a Stewardship of Planning

Just as you trust God for your vision, trust Him to tell you how to see it fulfilled. Ask God to give you His plan to best use His resources. It’s not just a question of success or failure, though it is at least that. Rather, it’s a matter of fulfilling your calling as stewards of the gospel.

John R. Mott, a long time leader of the Student Volunteer Movement, insisted that leadership was a matter of “getting a few things done and leaving the rest undone.” He believed that strategic planning was essential to make this happen. He said, “in any work abounding in pressing needs and great opportunities, we must make a study of priorities. We must plan the use of our time. No man can do:

- a. all the good that needs to be done;
- b. all that others want him to do;
- c. all that he himself wants to do.”



Therefore, we must acquire the habit of putting first things first. Every ambitious worker should form the habit of planning each year, month, week, and day. Each day we should be asking, “What does Christ want me to be and to do today?”

This is the question of the hour. Lord, as a steward of your gracious gifts to me and my campus, what do You want me to be and do today?

End

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org