

Heart Plans

A Bible Message by Bayless Conley

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In Psalm 45, King David said, "There is a good theme in my heart." He then said, "I will recite my composition before the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." He first talked about a good theme flowing through his heart. During some seasons, there are themes of the heart that God wants us to pick up on. I am going to talk to you today about heart plans. I really believe it is what the Holy Spirit wants me to bring to you.

GOD HAS PLANS FOR US, CORPORATELY AND INDIVIDUALLY

God said in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." That was spoken to Israelites in Babylonian captivity, but it certainly has an application to believers in every generation. God has plans for us, both corporately and individually, and He says, "I know what they are." You might think, "Well, that's great, God, You know what they are, but that really doesn't help me." I think some people look at these things like God is saying, "All right, your destiny is behind Door Number 1, Door Number 2, or Door Number 3. Choose wisely because if you get it wrong, you will be punished." Some people look to the future like it is a gamble and they can never know what it is.

GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW THE PLANS HE HAS FOR YOUR LIFE

Friend, **God wants you to know His will and His plan for your life.** I want to talk to you about some thoughts regarding the heart plans of God. The first one is that He does want you to know, and you can know. We can know the plans of God for our life. Look at Ephesians 2:10. It says,

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

If we go back to Ephesians, chapter 1, we find that the "**beforehand**" refers to the fact that **before the foundation of the world God prepared good works for us to walk in.** I love the word "workmanship." It can be translated "poem" from the Greek language. God is saying, "Your life is not to be without rhyme or reason, without symmetry and balance, without purpose." We are His workmanship, intricately created and crafted by God. The psalmist said, "The Lord looks on all the inhabitants of the earth and He fashions their hearts individually." **God has wired each of us in a specific way, and that wiring and inward gifting is fitted for those works that He has prepared for us.** The Amplified Bible of this verse in Ephesians 2:10 speaks of pathways that God has prepared before for us to walk upon. He has prepared pathways for us before the foundation of the world. Friend, you are not an accident. God has created you with purpose. Look at Ephesians 5:17,

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

God does not want us unwise, uninformed, and ignorant concerning His will. He wants us to know His will and His plan for our life.

When they came to John the Baptist in John, chapter 1, they said, "Who are you? Are you the Christ?"

He said, "No, I am not He."

"Are you Elijah?"

"No, I am not him."

"Are you the prophet?"

"No."

"Who are you? What do you say about yourself," they asked him.

Those are profound questions. Who are you? What do you say about yourself? John had an answer. He said, "I am The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

If I were to ask you today, who are you? What do you say about yourself? Would you have an answer? We can. I believe we should be able to answer just as confidently and clearly as John answered. John not only knew who he was, he knew who he was not. He said, "No, I am not Christ; I am not Elijah; I am not the prophet. This is who I am." **When we do not know who we are, other people will try, whether on purpose or unconsciously, to form and fashion us into their image and likeness.** You will end up spending your life trying to be someone you are not if you do not discover who you are.

The way that John found this out was from the Holy Spirit. That is the same way we find out God's plans for us. I love the verses in First Chronicles, chapter 28, where David gave to Solomon the detailed plans for the temple. It says that David gave Solomon the plans that he had by the Spirit. **The Holy Spirit gives us plans.** In fact, in that same chapter, David said, "And the Lord made me understand these plans, in writing, by His hand that was upon me." "His hand," again, refers to the Holy Spirit. It was not some automatic writing thing where David got done and said, "Hey! Look what I did!" I believe that the impressions, the whisper or voice, of the Holy Spirit were so real to him that he was able to write it down.

As I worked on this message, I felt the Holy Spirit speaking to me, and I was writing things down. Perhaps nothing spectacular, nothing over the top, yet supernatural all the same.

However, there are people who are convinced that we can never know God's plan. They might quote something from the Bible like the verse in First Corinthians, chapter 2. They will say, "Well, the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, nor entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. So, see, you can't know. No one knows what God has prepared."

Well, read what comes next: **"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." In other words, you don't get it through your natural senses. It comes into your spirit by the Holy Spirit.**

That verse I just quoted speaks of salvation, but it is true of everything that God prepares for us. It is true of the good works He has prepared for us to walk in. Though some have very profound and unusual experiences with God communicating to them, I think most of the time when the Holy Spirit communicates to us concerning God's plans, it is far less spectacular than the occasional story that we hear.

Here are some common methods the Holy Spirit uses to communicate with us about the plan of God for our life. These are the signposts, if you would, that point to the pathway that He has for us to walk on; a signpost that points to the good work that He has individually called us to do.

Through Desires

I believe that God works with and through desire. Psalm 37:4 says, **“Delight yourself, also, in the Lord. He shall give you the desires of your heart.”** I personally do not believe that means that if you are just happy and love God that He will give you whatever you want. **The word “delight” in the Hebrew language means to be soft or pliable.** It is the same as if you took clay and put water on it, causing it to become soft so you could work it and form it however you wanted to. That is what he is talking about. I assume a pliable posture before God, and He begins to give me desires. The reason He gives me the desire is so that He can give me the desire. He puts desires in us and guides us through desires. It is those things in your heart that do not go away, sort of like the birthday candles you can't blow out. The desires are not a selfish thing. They just won't go away. God guides us through desire.

I think that there are a lot of things that rattle around in all of us. I mean, it would be cool to be on the professional golf tour and be a professional bass fisherman. That would be a great job! However, when we lay those things on the altar and say, “God, I have a lot of ideas, but here I am. What are Your plans for my life? What have You wired me up to do? What have You called me to do?” As we assume that posture, God begins to plant desires in our heart, and then He guides us through those desires.

I have shared many times about coming back to California. Desires kept erupting in me. Yet I was resisting the devil because I was convinced it could not be God. Then, out of the blue, a friend called one day and said, “Bayless, I don't know what this is about, but God says stop squelching those desires. They are from Him.” I suddenly realized that God was trying to guide me into His plan through desire.

Through Frustrations

I believe that God guides us through frustrations. **Many times the Holy Spirit will use the things that frustrate us as a signpost.** In Acts 17:16, Paul is in a city that is completely given over to idolatry. The Scripture says that he was provoked. He was frustrated and angered in his spirit. Therefore, he did something. His frustration was a signpost to his calling. It was an indicator of something God had gifted him to fix. So it is with you. You can sit in someone's house and everyone is engaged in conversation in the living room. But you can't hear a word they say because the picture on the wall is crooked! And you are thinking, “Why can't they see this?” You see their lips moving, but you are thinking, “The picture is crooked! For some of you, the first time you are in the house you will walk over and straighten the picture. That's not normal. It is a signpost to your calling. You are an arranger, an organizer. There is a place for everything and everything in its place. The rest of us, we just sort of shift around our piles of stuff, but you have this gifting, and it just drives you crazy when things are out of order.

You know what makes me mad? When I hear a preacher preach or a teacher teach and they are not saying anything. It is like they are trying to feed giraffe food to the sheep. I'm thinking, “Don't you get it? The idea is to help people and get them connected with God!” I just want to break my chair and start a bonfire right in the service. It makes me want to pull my hair out. It makes me so angry! It drives me crazy! You know why? It has to do with my gifting and calling. The thing that frustrates me is a signpost to the pathway that God has for me.

Through Satisfaction

The next signpost is satisfaction. **The things that satisfy you and fulfill you in your heart.** I have a friend who was president of Capitol Records as a young man, in his early twenties. Although it was crazy, he actually went and turned in his resignation. He had a young wife, a brand new baby, a brand new house, and he resigned from being president of Capitol Records. You know why? A verse came alive to him... Isaiah 55:2, "Why do you labor for that which satisfies not?" He thought, "I am deriving no satisfaction from this." He went on and has done some marvelous things in his life and has been a great influence in the body of Christ. **I don't believe God wants or has called any of us to work a job we hate for our whole life. I believe the things that bring inward satisfaction and fulfillment, as natural and non-spectacular as that might sound, can be a very real indicator from the Holy Spirit concerning God's plan and pathway for our life.**

Through Fruitfulness

Finally, there is fruitfulness. Jesus said in Matthew 12:33, "A tree is known by its fruit." There are certain areas in which you are fruitful. Although there are other people on our team that are used in the area of healing, I think that Pastor Tom stands out. It seems like every week someone is getting healed of cancer when he prays for them, or somebody who has a detached retina has it reattach, things like that. It seems to happen all the time. There is fruit, and it is a signpost of the fact that part of his gifting and calling in life is to pray for the sick. As believers, we are all called to do that because Jesus said believers will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. If we have hands, we are responsible to fulfill that. Yet there are others that have a specific ministry in this area. **The things that we are fruitful in point to our areas of calling and gifting.**

GOD'S PLANS MUST MOVE FROM YOUR HEART TO YOUR HAND

The second thought is that God's plans must move from your heart to your hand. Do something with it. You may have genuinely picked up on the pathway you are to walk, what your gifting and calling are, the works that God has designed for you. But it must move from the heart to the hand. I quote to you **Proverbs 21:5, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty." Diligence speaks of putting your hand to the plow**, of working, being engaged, and doing something. It is not the plans of the wishful, not the plans of the hopeful, but the plans of the diligent. **We need, with the help of God, to plan our work and then work our plan.** Most dreams never see the light of day and it is not because of an inactive heart. It is because of an inactive hand.

I remember the first time that we took the youth paint-balling. We divided up into two teams. We were going to try and capture their flag and they were going to try and capture ours. We came up with a battle plan. We had three different groups. One was going to take the middle, one was going to take the side, and several teenagers said, "Okay, I am going to take the low ground. I am going to cover you so nobody will get around behind you. We will protect each other's backside." The first shot I hit a guy right in the goggles. It was awesome! I had some other guys pinned down and was gaining ground. All of a sudden I felt like I had two bee stings in my back. I turned around and there were two of the enemy guys standing behind me about ten feet away. They had just shot me in the back. My guys ran away! They didn't work the plan! They saw the enemy coming, and they scattered. **Friend, you have to work the plan. It has to be not just in your heart, but it has to move to your hand.**

Please look in Deuteronomy, chapter 1. Here Moses is reiterating the law and the history of Israel to the people. He talks about a particular plan that they had, one that never bore fruit, never came to pass; but it was a good plan. Look in verse 21, Moses speaking. Deuteronomy 1:21,

21 'Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'

22 "And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'

23 "The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from *each* tribe.

24 "And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out.

25 "They also took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought *it* down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, '*It is* a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

26 "Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God;"

They had a plan. Moses was pleased with the plan. It was a good plan. "We will go spy out the land, and they will come back and tell us the way we should go up and what cities we should encounter and engage." But there was no action. They came back and said, "This is the fruit of the land, which the Lord is giving us." I mean, they are saying, "God is giving it to us! But they never did anything, and they never got it. It is like a lot of believers. They have big dreams and big plans. They will pray, "Oh, God, open the doors. Oh, we are just trusting God to do it." They never go up. It never moves from here (heart) to here (hand), and, therefore, it is never experienced. The general result of that is in verse 27. Moses says,

27 "and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us...'

Some people get mad at God and say, "Well, God must hate me. That is why it has not happened. I prayed, I waited for God, and I have been trusting God for it to happen. I felt like God gave me the dream and put it in my heart." Wait a minute! **There has to be action.** It has to move from heart to hand for it to happen. I can't tell you how many times this has happened to me throughout my life. I will be with someone, and we will see some new invention or something for sale, or whatever it is, and they will say, "That was my idea! I thought of that 20 years ago. That is what I was going to do! I knew that would work. I thought of that way before they ever thought of it." Well, so? It may have been in your heart; but friend, if it does not move from heart to hand, you will take it to the grave with you unless somebody else gets a hold of that idea and moves it from heart to hand.

Perhaps you have amazing inventions and ideas, vast creativity. I think the richest grounds on planet earth are the earth's graveyards. **More dreams, wealth and ideas that have never turned into reality are taken to the grave with people because they never take a step.** A lot of them have prayed, "God, do it. God, do it. God, bring it to pass." But there has to be a point where we go up, which brings me to the next point. It is very closely tied to this one.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO ACT ON THE GLIMPSE IF WE WANT THE GUIDANCE

In Genesis 12:1, God said to Abram, “Abram, leave your city. Leave your family. Leave everything you know and go to a land that I will show you. If you will do that, I will bless you. I will make you a blessing. I will make your name great.” And Abraham went. The New Testament interprets it this way in Hebrews 11:8; it says that by faith Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. God said, “Here are your instructions. Leave your family.” **God did not give him a map. God gave him a compass.** God gives you a direction. All He said was, “Abram, leave the borders of the town.” That was the only direction he had. Pack up your stuff and leave. He went out not knowing where he was going. He went out by faith. When he did that, God showed him the next part. **When he moved on the glimpse, the guidance began.**

Proverbs 16:9 says,

9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

We have to prayerfully plan, yet realize that God is looking for faith. He does not give us a map of the whole journey, but He directs our steps. Steps are sequential. **The plans of God are both seasonal and segmented, and we have to be willing to act on one segment in its proper season for the next segment to be revealed to us.** The Bible says in Psalm 37:23, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” One step at a time. A glimpse. I have a step. That is all God shows me. When I take that step, He gives me light for the next step; and when I take that step, He gives me light for the next step. Sometimes I have an inkling of things beyond that, but I must be willing to act on the glimpse if I am going to receive the guidance. Parked cars are extremely hard to steer, even for God.

“Well, what if I make a mistake?”

“You will.”

“What if I fail?”

“You will. So what?” You make a mistake, you know what that does? It causes you to learn; it causes you to grow; it causes you to change. **Some people are so afraid of making a mistake that they never do anything.** They live nice little contained lives. Friend, life involves risk, and sometimes we will get it wrong, but God wants us to step out.

Think about the Apostle Paul. He knew he was called to bring the word to the Gentiles. So what did he do? As we read in Acts, chapter 16, he tried to preach the word in Asia. The Holy Spirit forbade him. He tried to go into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit would not permit him. One night he had a vision. A man from Macedonia said, “Come to Macedonia and help us.” That was God's plan. He was not sitting still saying, “Oh, God, open the doors. Oh, God, show me what to do. Oh, God, lead me and guide me.” No, he had a glimpse, and he was acting on it. Yes, he got it wrong a couple of times. But you know what? God had all of that covered. **The guidance came when he was in motion, not when he was sitting still. We need to pray before we start, we need to pray while we are going, and we need to pray when we are done.** It all needs to be bathed in prayer. But the fact is: Guidance comes when we move on the glimpse.

I remember sitting in a meeting many years back. There was an evangelist sharing, a man who has given his life to reach the un-reached people of the world. He had a time for questions and answers. I will never forget a couple that stood up and said, “You know, we really have a heart for Vietnam. We feel like God wants us to preach the gospel in Vietnam, but no doors are open, and we don't know what to do.” I will never forget his counsel to them. He said, “You know, we have a fairly large Vietnamese population in our own town.” He said, “Start with them. I have some films that have been dubbed into Vietnamese. I will give them to you. Why don't you take

those into the community? Go show them in somebody's yard and try and reach your own neighbors." I thought, "What brilliant advice!" I don't know if they ever did it, but I tend to think that if that advice wasn't followed, I doubt the larger doors would have opened up. I think sometimes we are waiting for this titanic door with creaking hinges to open, and on the other side there are bands playing, and the people are clapping. They are saying, "We were waiting for you!" But I think that generally it is the little steps that we take. God gives that little bit of guidance. When we take that little step the guidance opens up, but we must be willing to act on the glimpse. God requires faith. I think many people who were destined to do great things for God have spent their life never doing those things because they were not willing to act on the glimpse.

Have you had a glimpse of something? What have you done? Has it moved from your heart to your hand? **You need to be faithful in the little things, and He makes you ruler over much.**

GOD WANTS US TO THINK GENERATIONALLY

That brings me to the fourth thought. Once we are in the main flow, God wants us to think generationally. By the "main flow," I mean that you feel like you are finally in the main channel of what you are supposed to be doing with your life, and you realize there are going to be changes and adjustments up ahead, that God will have different detours at different times. But you are in the main flow. Once you hit that main flow, God wants you to think generationally. In fact, I think **God entrusts much more to those who think and act generationally than to those who do not.**

Look at Psalm 33:10,

10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

The American Standard Bible says, "The plans of God's heart go from generation to generation." That which comes from the heart of God is generational. How does He pass it from generation to generation? Friend, we are His messengers. **He expects us to take what we have of His heart and to pass the baton, to encourage and to inspire and to train the next generation, to equip them, and to give them wings to fly.** Whatever it is we understand of the heart plans of God, we endeavor to put that and download that into their hearts and entrust them to carry it and then to communicate it in the language of their generation, which is going to be different than the language of our generation.

You know, my dad is sitting in service today. He comes from a different generation than me... different styles, different tastes, different music, different way of talking. My generation is different. My son is in the service. It's a new generation. And you know what? The next generation is going to be different still. Sometimes we cling so tightly to the culture of our generation. We don't build any bridges: "Well, I don't like this new music... this and this and this and this. Why do things have to change?" If they don't change, the church will grow old and die. It's not just about me; it's not just about you. **It's about forging bridges to the next generation** and thinking generationally. The things we are doing are not just for us. The campus we are building is not for us! It's for those who have not been saved yet, and it's for our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren should Jesus tarry. Yes, we are going to do all we can to download a heart for the world into them and to show them what integrity is about; but

they are going to have to do it with their methods and with their language. **The message remains the same. The methods, the packaging has to change to be culturally relevant to every generation.** I know I am a bit old-fashioned. I have people open up their Bibles. Some places you go, all the verses, everything is up on the screen. Who knows what the next generation is going to be? But I know what we are not doing. We are not using candles and unrolling scrolls and reading them, are we? Things have changed, have they not? Things are going to continue to change. **Styles are going to change, culture is going to change, language is going to change, and God wants us to think generationally.** That is true of what we are doing corporately. But individually, listen: **Whatever it is you have been called to do, God expects you to imprint that on the next generation.** You have to pass the baton. If you have something from God in your life, and you are doing something that should lend itself to the overall plan of God, God expects you to download that to somebody else who is going to carry it on so that it does not die with you. **If what we have and what we have done dies with us, we failed.** If our kids and our grandkids have to recapture all of the ground that we captured, we have done something wrong. **Our ceiling ought to be the floor they start from.** They are going to have their own battles to fight; they are going to have their own issues. But, hopefully, they don't have to fight all the battles that we won for them again.

WHATEVER PART WE PLAY MUST FIT INTO GOD'S GREAT PLAN OF SALVATION

It brings us to the final point. Whatever part we individually play, it all needs to fit into God's great plan of salvation. Whether our part lends to the proclamation of His plan, to the packaging of His plan, to the praying out of His plan, or the paying for His plan, whatever we do should not be just for ourselves. **Our gifts and our talents, the ideas, the resources, the strength, the things that are at our disposal are meant to have an eternal impact; and God's plan for you needs to be connected to His great overall plan of salvation.** Somehow it needs to funnel into that. It needs to be connected to that. It needs to be connected eternally. Now I am doing my best to use the gifts God has given me for the sake of His kingdom. How about you?

Somebody says, "Yeah, but you are called to be a preacher. You are going to have to give an account." No less than any person in the house for whatever your gift is. Are you using it just for yourself? Or are you using it for the kingdom? We have not been given these things just for us, but they are to be a part of something grand and marvelous. In fact, let me read to you about it. Listen. It's the New Living Translation. Ephesians 3:11-12,

"This was His plan from all eternity. And it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of His glad welcome."

That was God's plan that through Christ and what He accomplished and through faith in Christ, we are now not alienated from God, but we can come into His presence fearlessly and expect a glad welcome from Him. Friend, that is what redemption does.

In fact, if I can take it full circle. We started in Ephesians 2:10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." That is Ephesians 2:10. Do you know what Ephesians 2:8 and 2:9 say? **"For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not of works lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship in Christ Jesus."** It begins with salvation, friend; it ends with salvation.

I said a lot of different things today. I want you to take just a moment, and I want you to consider: Has God been speaking anything to you through this message? Maybe it was, why labor for what does not satisfy? Maybe it was moving the plan from heart to hand. Maybe it is being willing to act on the glimpse in order to get the guidance. Maybe it had to do with generational thinking.

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that those things that You have for us, You would do that amazing work by Your Holy Spirit. I don't know how You do it, but You speak to so many individual hearts all at once. Lord, though You are directing us together as a body to accomplish things for Your glory, You are interested in the smallest details of our personal lives. Bring strength, God. Bring wisdom. Bring guidance by Your Holy Spirit to each and every person who is here.

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