

Pastor Josh Lance
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Purpose Over Plan

Finally doing Away with “God’s Plan for My Life”

Growing up in the church has afforded me a great deal of fond memories. I remember all the fun Youth Group games we use to play that would be a terrible idea to try nowadays... you know the ones. I remember the Music festivals and mission trips, the all-nighters and all day service projects. Good times!

But growing up in the late 90’s and early 2000’s had its own brand of Evangelicalism was not all cool t-shirts and W.W.J.D, bracelets, it also came with church baggage. Now some like to call this trauma or church hurt, and I’m not trying to make any judgments here one way or another, i guess its really more of a after of perspective.

Let me explain by continuing my metaphor...

One of the big pushes in the Evangelical church at the turn of the 21st century was knowing God’s plan for your life. This was huge! It was something that each person had to figure out for themselves by asking God to show them. As in most bad evangelical ideas it was very loosely based on a verse that was ripped out of its context kicking and screaming. Bad...you guessed it...HERMENEUTICS!

The whole idea was that God had some kind of blueprint for your life that He wanted to share with you, but you had to have enough faith, enough prayer, and enough seeking of the LORD's will for your life in order to be given a glimpse. In essence, you had to figure out God's plan for your life. Besides the fact that this notion really is not Biblical, it also gave many a great deal of anxiety (and probably ulcers) because then the questions came up, "but what if I choose wrong?", or "what if God wants me to go to this college A, and I misinterpret God's will for me and go to college B?"

For the very reasons above, at some point in my ministry career, study of God's Word, and life I came to the phrase and conclusion that it's best to think of God's purpose for me rather than God's plan for me; Purpose over plan! This way of thinking aligns with the Scriptures and Church traditions way more than this idea of a blue print I need to find and follow. Also, I think this simplifies our lives significantly. Let me give you some examples from both the Word and Church tradition....

Jesus, echoing Deuteronomy says the greatest commandment is to, "love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind, and with all of your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself," (Matthew 22:36-39 ESV). Paul writes to the Ephesian Church that God, "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will," (Ephesians 1:4-5 ESV). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells the church that, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." and later in the letter, "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," (1 Thessalonians 4:3

and 5:18 ESV). Finally, the Westminster Confession states in the very first question of the Catechism, “What is the chief end of man” in other words, what is man’s highest duty or ultimate purpose of mankind. The question is answered, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever,” (need a citation).

I hope you can see the pattern; Purpose over plan!

Over the next year I want to take the opportunity of these newsletter articles to do a series on “Purpose Over Plan”. I want to explore the above verses, focusing specifically on the ideas that if our ultimate purpose is to glorify God and Jesus said the greatest commandment is the love God with everything we are, how can we flesh that out in our lives. There also some fundamental truths at play here. For example, if you have children, than part of God’s purpose for you is to be a parent and that comes with Biblical expectations, things of that nature.

The purposes that God has for us are so much greater than we can possibly imagine. I believe that God works most within the everyday, what we would call mundane, areas of life to bring Himself glory. I look forward to bringing all that out i these articles.