

# HIS PLAN

12 - Nehemiah: A Time for Restoration  
A Word for 2021 & Beyond  
Church on the Park | New Year's Sunday, 3 JAN 2021

**Text:** “When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work” (Ne 4:15, NASB). “The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.” (Ps 33:10–11, NASB)

**Theme:** People plot many plans, but only God's plan will prevail.

**Intro:** In Nehemiah 4:15, we see that God foils the plans of his enemies. The enemies of the Jews people had planned to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. They plotted every type of scheme they could think up. However, God exposed these plots to his people, breaking up the enemy's work. Through Scripture—especially Ephesians 6:10-18, the passage on God's full armour—God exposes the enemy's plans. Only God's plan will prevail. As we enter 2021, know that no matter what comes our way, the Lord's plan will prevail. Since it's God's plan that always prevails, let's take care that we are in his plan. At the beginning of the year, it often concerns me that God's people often develop their own plans. There's a Yiddish proverb that says, “Man plans and God laughs” (*Der mentsh trakht un got lakht*; דער מענטש טראכט און גאָט לאַכט). This proverb developed into a saying often attributed to Woody Allen: “If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans.” So should we not plan? No, that's not the solution. Instead, we should ask: how can you plan God's way?

**His plan. His portion. His pace.**

## 1) P - Pray (Exodus 26:30).

- This may seem self-evident—even simplistic—yet it's simple things that we usually fail to do.
  - Pray—but not any kind of praying.
    - I'm talking about praying God's way.
      - Prayer is a call to intimacy with God.
- To follow God's plan, you can't be led by anything except God's Spirit and Word.
  - Watch out for following:
    - Signs
    - Feelings
    - Thoughts
    - Impressions
    - Fortune-Telling prophecies
  - We must test everything (1 Thes. 5:21-22).
    - Anything that takes the place of intimacy with God is an idol—it will lead you astray.
- The great example for us on how to pray and discover God's plan is found in Moses ascending God's holy mountain (Exo. 26:30).
  - Clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-6).
  - Remember, Jesus would often ascend a mountain to pray (Luke 6:12; Matt. 14:23; Luke 9:28).
    - Walking up the mountains means leaving our friends, family and the crowd behind so that we can enter into God's presence.
      - This involves a death to your flesh.
    - We enter into God's presence to spend time with him and learn his plan.
      - This doesn't happen instantaneous; it happens over time through friendship with God.
      - His plan always has to do with hosting his presence.
        - Remember the plan God gave to Moses had to do with the tabernacle, a place where God could rest.
          - God's plan revolves around him, not us. But he includes us.
  - Wait quietly before the Lord (Psalm 61:1-2).
    - Talk to God, but more importantly, let God talk to you.

## 2) L - Lay down your agenda for God's agenda (Psalm 1:1).

- Jesus wants to gift us the gift of the Father's will, but we have to lay down our own will to receive it.
- It's like the illustration I showed at our Christmas Service.
  - The boy had to exchange his empty box for the box with the money in it.
  - Let go of your plan to receive God's plan.
- One of the main Hebrew words for plan is **עֵצָה** ['etsah /ay·tsaw/].
- Etsah means plan, counsel, strategy, scheme, advice, direction or course of action.
- It's featured in Psalm 1:1:

אֲשֶׁר־יְהֵאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁרוֹ לֹא הֵלֵךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים

- “Abundantly happy is the man who does not walk in the plan of the wrong people...” (Psalm 1:1, my translation).
- During holiday time, people get around family and friends, and their family and friends often exert a certain pressure on you to fulfil their plans for your life.
  - Listen with respect, but only walk in God's plan.
  - His plan—your Shepherd's plan—is discovered by meditating on God's Word day and night (Psalm 1:2).
- The Hebrew word *etsah* is also found in Isaiah 11:2:
  - “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel [*etsah*, planning, direction, strategy, counsel] and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Is 11:2, NASB).
  - The Spirit of the Yahweh is the one who reveals God's plan to us.
    - Make your life a place where the Spirit can rest. When he rests upon you, he guides you.
    - The Spirit of God is like the pillar of fire and cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness.
    - Let the Spirit lead you rather than your desires, dreams, reasoning, emotions or feelings.
    - Imagine if the Israelites were led by their emotions. Well, they would have gone back to Egypt.
    - Exchange your Egypt for God's Promised Land.
- There's a great cost to letting the Spirit lead you.
  - Know that God's plans will always lead to restoration and unity—they will help the body of Christ rather than hurt it.
- Listen to Psalm 106:13 and 43, both feature *etsah*.
  - Now listen to Proverbs 8:10-14.
  - This year 2021 and beyond God wants his people to walk in his wisdom, rather than their own.

## 3) A - Acknowledge that your Father knows best (Proverbs 3:5-6).

- Proverbs 3:5-6
  - The Father knows the best spouse for you, the best job for you, the best church for you and the best ministry for you.
- Isaiah 28:29
- Listen to the Father's warnings in:
  - James 4:13-17
  - Isaiah 30:1
  - Isaiah 8:10
  - Psalm 33:10-11
    - We are in a season and time when God is frustrating (breaking up) man's plans.
    - This is why we need the Father's plan because “Yahweh's plan stands forever; the intents of his heart from generation to generation” (Ps. 33:11, my translation).
    - You want to be on the winning side.

## 4) N - Note what he says (Exodus 34:27).

- Like Moses wrote down the plans of the tabernacle, note what God is saying to you.

- This year, I want to encourage you like I did last year: journal, journal, journal.
- Compare your notes with others and always be open to adjusting what you believe God is saying by listening to wise counsel.
- Exodus 34:27

**Conclusion:** Plan God's way: 1) Pray, 2) Lay down your agenda for his agenda, 3) Acknowledge your Father knows best, 4) Note what he says.