

September 4, 2022

Set Free: (Week 3) Free From “Plan B”

The top 10 reasons you are too busy to pray today:

1. You wake up feeling rested, then realize your alarm should've gone off an hour ago.
2. Your spouse is away on a two-day business trip that's lasted all week.
3. None of the clean clothes you were able to find match.
4. Your teenager shaved...the left half of his head.
5. Your bills are due, and your toddler hid the checkbook.
6. A strange fluid is dripping from your car.
7. You accidentally delete your quarterly report ten minutes before a meeting with your boss.
8. You're in charge of games for the church youth night tonight.
9. Your dog is throwing up.
10. Your toilet's overflowing, . . . but at least you found the checkbook.

Ten reasons you really should pray today: (See the previous 10 reasons.)

- When I think I'm too busy to pray... I'm too busy NOT to pray!!!
- When I think I'm too busy to pray...I've slipped into “Plan B” thinking.
- “What is “Plan B thinking”? I'm glad you asked.

I. “Plan A” is living God’s WILL God’s WAY

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV) 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.

Plan A is to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart” .

I. “Plan A” is living God’s WILL God’s WAY

II. “Plan B” is living my WILL my WAY

Let’s read the same verses again.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV) 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.

“Plan B” thinking is a mindset. It is “leaning on your own understanding” instead of trusting God’s “Plan A”.

When God said, “lean not on your own understanding”...

- **God was NOT saying that the way of faith is mindless.**
- No. You have to use your mind to have the right mindset.
- Actively use your mind to remind yourself:
 1. He is smarter than you. Of course he is. He’s smarter than all human intelligence combined!
 2. And He knows you and your best interest better than you do.
 3. Then keep directing your mind to His Truths. His Plan A thinking.

Simple right? Not as simple as you would think. I know this!! **So Why do I still TRUST my reasoning more than God's reasoning sometimes?** WHAT'S MY PROBLEM? My problem is that I STILL frequently want what I want more than what God wants.

Do you ever have that problem? Scripture is like a mirror that doesn't lie. Here's one that is confronting me now...

Philippians 2:3–5 (NIV) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

I still have many steps to take from where I am to where God wants me to be.

I. "Plan A" is living God's WILL God's WAY

II. "Plan B" is living my WILL my WAY

III. **"Plan B" brings big PROBLEMS**

See if you can see the "Plan B" thinking in this narrative from Genesis.

Genesis 16:1–2 (NIV) Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said....

Please remember, that although the Bible in places describes Abraham's faith as exemplary, this is not always the case. The Bible does not sugarcoat the flaws even of its heroes. **All these human flaws on the pages of the Bible help point us toward our flawless savior Jesus Christ.**

What human flaws do we see in Genesis 16?

1. **For one, Sarai's** thoughts sound like she is blaming God, or mad at God. It doesn't sound to me like she is trusting God.
2. **Secondly, SARAH's strange plan.** Her **"plan B thinking"** is shaped by the norms of the pagan practices of her day for a woman of wealth who could not produce an heir. This was a pagan practice and a legal loophole. She could claim the child of her slave as her own heir.

LET REMINDER TO US: Just because something is legal does not mean it is right. That was true then. That is still true now.

3. **The third big flaw I see is Abraham's.** He acted just like Adam did in the first disastrous sin. Instead of actively investigating the dangers of this new plan, or praying for wisdom regarding it, his approach was altogether too passive, and he agreed to it. Let's compare **their "Plan B" thinking** with **Jesus' "Plan A" thinking** on marriage. Here's Jesus:

Mark 10:6–9 (NIV) "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the

two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ° Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Sarai introduced a third party that was tearing apart what God joined together. **Sarai regretted her Plan B almost immediately.**

Genesis 16:5–6 (NIV) ° Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.” ° “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

What a mess! And it gets messier. **At first glance it appears that her Plan B worked: A son was born, and by the end of this chapter we are asking ourselves, is this the heir of promise? BUT...**

“Plan B” negative consequences always go far beyond what we ever imagined they would.

Abraham and Sarah’s thinking was dangerously shaped by their culture. **The lesson is clear, even believers continue to have trouble “Trusting the Lord’s “Plan A” thinking with all their heart.** We too are dangerously shaped by what our culture believes is normal and right. But **God’s plan A morality is not out of date.**

Hebrews 13:4 (NIV) Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

- Most people get the concept of “the adulterer” and understand the pain and betrayal of unfaithfulness.
- Yet many of these same people completely misunderstand and redefine the second label, “the sexually imoral.” Please allow me to summarize the meaning of this label according to the Bible.

Although what the Bible teaches on marriage and human intimacy is quite controversial today, what the Bible teaches is not confusing or unclear.

The act of the two becoming one flesh in human intimacy is designed only for the marriage relationship between one woman and one man. This act is out of bounds outside of marriage and out of bounds before marriage, even if the acting man and woman marry later. It is called “sexual immorality”.

Now, I know this is very offensive to a lot of people and I do not want to offend anyone. It’s just that I want to be a faithful pastor and teacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What I want for you is to experience life to its fullest.

Our modern American culture does not trust God’s “Plan A” with its boundaries designed for our protection. Our modern American culture now prefers a “Plan B” that chooses to **test drive relationships** by sleeping together before getting married rather than building trust strong

enough to commit to one another in marriage first. The very idea of test driving comes with a conditional mindset that does not fit with the marriage covenant with its vows and commitments.

Test driving may work when you are comparing and shopping for cars. Test driving does not work with people. Cars don't care if you compare. Cars don't care if you are not committed to "buy before you try". Cars don't care if all you want is a joy ride. Cars don't care if they are being used. Cars don't care if you are unfaithful. But people care deeply about all of these matters because we are designed differently than cars. The moral boundaries God gave us fit our design because that is our reality.

Now even secular studies have discovered that our modern American "Plan B" test driving model of living together first before marriage does not produce more stable well adjusted people, or more stable well adjusted relationships, or more stable well adjusted children. Dare I say that our culture's "Plan B" thinking does not work as well as God's Plan A.

Secular studies seem to be at a loss as to why. Let me offer just one of many possible explanations to consider. People who want what they want now, and take shortcuts for quick and shallow intimacy, even if they commit to marriage later, have already set up a conditional mindset as a pattern of thinking and are far more likely to take shallow short cuts later when life becomes difficult.

Let's PAUSE, and take a deep breath. If you are feeling like you have already blown it, I bring you good news today. We can see good news right here Genesis 16!

*Genesis 16:6–13 (NIV) ...Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. ⁷ The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. ⁸ And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. ⁹ Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰ The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count." ¹¹ The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, **for the Lord has heard of your misery**. ¹² He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." ¹³ She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: **"You are the God who sees me,"** for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."*

When we are in the middle of big Plan B messes, please know this: **God sees. God knows. God cares. And God holds out his loving kindness and mercy in a promise for you too.** **Why not** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart **TODAY** and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"Talk It Over" study: MAKING PROGRESS: (5 application steps)

- Step 1:** When you recognize a tempting "Plan B" thought, look for the lie that promises happiness and write down the lie (on an index card, journal ledger, or note in your phone).
- Step 2:** Confess it and ask God for help.

- Step 3:** Search for God's truth ("Plan A") in the Bible regarding that lie and write it down.
- Step 4:** Commit this step 3 truth to memory. Why? *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (see Romans 12:1-2).
- Step 5:** Speak this truth out loud when you are tempted by the "Plan B" lie.

The truth will set you free from "Plan B".

Talk It Over

SET FREE
(Week 3)
Free From “Plan B”

SMALL TALK

1. How were decisions reached at your home while growing up? Who “wore the pants”? Mom? Dad? The kids?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Proverbs 3:5-6.** What is “Plan A”? Why do we often go for “Plan B”?
3. **READ Genesis 16 and 21:8-21** The Bible does not sugarcoat its heroes. What were some of the downfalls of Sarai, Abram, and Hagar?
4. What hope did God bring in the middle of the mess?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Can you think of a time when you had what you thought at the time were “good intentions” and you went for “Plan B” (“my will”) rather than “Plan A” (“God’s will”)? What happened?
6. What will you do to make sure “Plan A” grows strong in your life? What do you need to do to avoid letting “Plan B” thinking grow in your life?

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