

God's Plans are not Ours

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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The apostle Paul was conveying to Timothy a very important point: The Scriptures are God-inspired, which literally means “God-breathed.” Amidst much false teaching cir-

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culating around Timothy, Paul was assuring him that God’s Word is truth. God does not breathe error.

Eighteen years ago, I was teaching inductive Bible study seminars in Russia after the Communist stronghold was broken. We had just finished our first seminar when we received word that the second seminar, in another town, had been canceled. Upon investigating, a local ministry partner discovered the problem: The seminar host’s superiors had accused Calvary Chapel of being a cult. He could not convince them otherwise; though nearly 200 pastors had signed up and we had paid a large, non-refundable sum to rent space for the sessions, the group refused to proceed.

I was extremely disappointed. The local ministry partner was as well, so he volunteered to go out and invite people to come. After scouring the neighborhood streets,

he returned with 12 people—four men and eight women—but not one pastor, to whom our inductive study courses are usually directed. I wanted to cancel, but he urged me to go ahead. Reluctantly, I agreed. I found myself discouraged as I dutifully, but without enthusiasm, taught the seminar to the dozen attendees.

Then on the second day, in the middle of a session, a woman burst into tears weeping loudly. I announced a break and walked over to talk with her. She was not a believer, and through hearing God’s Word she had become convicted of her sin. I shared the Gospel with her and asked if she would like to receive Christ as her Savior and Lord. She said she wanted to but could not because she was an awful sinner. I told her that’s why Jesus came. After insisting she could not be forgiven, she blurted through tears, “You don’t understand! I’m living with a man who is married to another woman.” Again I shared the Good News that Jesus came to forgive sinners exactly like her. She prayed the sinner’s prayer of repentance from sin and received Jesus in her heart. Her face reflected incredible peace that flooded into her life as she received Christ’s forgiveness and invited Him to rule and reign in her life.

That was a wonderful moment! However, I was still depressed because of the amount of money we had spent for so few participants. Then on the third day, another woman began crying during a session. I thought to myself, *All I can do in my seminars is make women cry!* I approached the lady and discovered that she was not a Christian either. I shared the Gospel and she immediately prayed with me. As I led her in the sinner’s prayer, I sensed God saying to me, *I am God, and I will do what I desire to do even if it is not cost-effective to you.* I had been frustrated because my plans to teach 200 pastors had not worked out. God had other plans in store for my time in Russia.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. Isaiah 55:8

One year later, I was back in Russia leading more seminars. During a break in the teaching, the second lady who had received Christ the previous year ran up and gave me a big hug. “I could hardly wait to tell you,” she joyfully exclaimed, “since you brought me to Christ, I have led my mother, brother, and ten of my best friends to Christ!” I could see, in her countenance, joy exuding from this woman—a dramatic change from the downtrodden person I remembered from my past visit. Christ had made a significant change in her life.

Later, I remembered how disappointed I had been when the seminar’s official cancellation had felt like disaster and the 200 pastors originally signed up had not come. I contrasted my dejection a year before with the joy I sensed that day as the woman told me how her life had been transformed by accepting Christ as her Lord and Savior. I reflected on how the Creator of the universe will go to any extreme to reach that one person who is ready to receive the Good News of eternal life. What an incredible God we serve—His Word breathes life into His people and then through them to others. All Scripture is indeed inspired by God, and we cannot always understand His plans. 🗨️

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

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