

# Does God have a Plan?

Mark 9:30-37 & James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a

- INTRO:

**Does God have a plan?** Some people think he does. If so, **how does it work?** **Does God devise plans for each of us?** Think about it... The providence of God might just be much more graceful, free, and resourceful than many think. After all, God is love, there may be some sort of “**plan**” to love us now, so that God might love us for eternity.

- ME:

I remember back in 1984, after I was hit by that car in the mall parking lot, my mom said something to me more than once. I had survived a horrible accident so she said, “**God must have something special planned for you.**” I believed it. I still do.

- YOU:

**How about you? Do you think God has a plan? Do you have trouble with this idea?** If we are serious about it, we realize this is a lot more complicated than it might seem at first. When we have questions about God, it is best to turn to God or His answers. Let’s see how Jesus can help us with this today.

Let’s pray together first...

- GOD:

**Mark 9:30–37 (NRSV):** 30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

- WE:

Jesus promises his followers that he will suffer. *This is not what his disciples had planned! They planned to use Jesus as leverage to help them achieve great things!* **So what does Jesus do?** He calls a little child and blesses the child.

**A child?** Children do not usually make plans. Life is so bright and fresh and frightening to them, everyday is a new fresh page of the new and strange.

*Maybe that is just exactly what Jesus means when he says we must become like a little child! **Was that his plan?***

**Have you ever heard someone say they thought God had a plan for their life?** Suppose they had some difficult decision to make in their life. They would want to decide in accordance to the plan they think God has for them. **Does God have a plan?**

As our life gets more uncertain and chaotic and we lose confidence in our ability to predict the future, perhaps people of faith talk more about God having a plan. **Does God have a plan?** We usually can't see the plan and we can't tell if his plan is being worked out in the world we see going on around us. This does not matter, though.

*We believe in the plan, because we really need to believe that there is a plan!*

You may have heard it said that **if you want to make God laugh, just have a plan! This means that God is not so much the one who makes and follows plans, as he is the one who disrupts our plans! We see this in James where he says that we have our plans, we have our ways, we have our strategies for getting what we want in life. But those plans, ways and strategies are very different from God's. Does God have a plan?**

There are many reasons both biblically and theologically to doubt the popular idea that God has a plan for our lives, *even though I am sure my mom meant well!*

Maybe we should not call it a . . . **plan**. There is certainly a sense in Scripture that God's purposes are being worked out among us even now in our time and in our history. The Bible does show that we are helped or hindered by the unseen hand of God at work behind the scenes. We see this when Joseph told his brothers that their attempt to kill him was used by God to feed the nation in the time of famine.

It is good news that the things we do wrong, even though we have good intentions, everything we mess up . . . is not the last word. It is good news that God does have some kind of plan and that **"we know all things work together for good for the ones who love God"** (Romans 8:28)

*God keeps working God's good plan, despite our mistakes.*

There are times when it seems like God does it not just disrupt our plans, but that he disrupts even his own plans. Remember, God tells Jonah that he will destroy that wicked city Nineveh. *That is cool with Jonah!* **He hates Nineveh!** Then Jonah, after some time, *wink-wink*, preaches a one sentence, half-hearted sermon telling them what God plans to do, *and . . .*

**BOOM! The whole city repents!** So what did God do then? He changed his **plan** that he had announced to Jonah.

*So it seems if we are going to use the word “**plan**” with God, we have got to leave room . . . **for God to be God.***

So if we are going to say that God has a plan for our lives, or for anything, we have to realize that we have **freedom** and God has **sovereignty**. The people of Nineveh change. God shows that he is free to change. By the end of the book of Jonah, we see that Jonah changes, *though his change takes a little more work and time than the people of Nineveh took!*

- THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:  
***God’s plan is to love his creation, its our job to help creation know that is his plan.***

- CLOSE:

God has created a world not meant to just follow some rigid plan, but with great love he leaves room for us to grow and develop and change as we learn from our mistakes. We may even wind up doing better than we, or even God, thought we could do. They say that if God has a plan, that plan itself plans to give some level of freedom in responding to God in our own lives.

This is what worries me when some talk about God’s plan. Sometimes people seem to proclaim it as some **predetermined** (or maybe **predes-**

*tined!*) plan of what people will do. As though people are choice-less robots who are just puppets in God's puppet show.

**Does God have a plan?** If God has a plan, it will be wonderfully adaptable and flexible according to the wider reaching purposes of God.

I shared Romans 8:28 earlier and it really speak to this question about God an a plan. I also speaks to me and is my favorite verse. It says that . . . **ALL** things works together for good. **Did you catch that? How many things?** **ALL things!** My mom kept saying that “**God must have something special planned for you.**” I believed her, I believed it and I still do. After all he caught this mess of a 14 year old as he flew through the air wit a Dodge mini-van. God used this tragedy to reveal himself to me because . . . ALL . . . things work together for good.

God uses what we give him to use to accomplish his purposes. God's greatest desire is for God to simply be with us for eternity. That is God's plan. We probably shouldn't whittle that eternal plan down to the day to day, mundane, very earth-focused decisions we make in life. If you think about it, **doesn't that trivialize the idea of God having a plan? What would Jesus do? What aligns with God's purposes?** Depending on the **context** and the **circumstances, we can figure that out, can't we?** We can try. We can just live like God wants to love us and everyone around us forever.

Let's open our hearts to God's love as we pray . . .-