



"You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."  
—Abraham Lincoln

**05-Dec-14**

## *Planning and Preparation (Part One)*

A Yiddish proverb reads, "Man plans, [God](#) laughs." A variation on it advises, "If you want to hear God laugh, tell him you have a plan."

The following story appeared in a trade magazine that we subscribe to at the office. The magazine presented it in relation to an accident report for a workers' compensation claim. Variations of it have been around for decades, and it is not meant to be taken seriously. However, the anecdote does make a point.

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block 3 of the accident report form. I put "poor planning" as the cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I found that I had some bricks left over which, when weighed later, were found to be slightly in excess of 500 pounds. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley, which was attached to the side of the building on the sixth floor. Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I

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went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the bricks.

You will note in Block 11 of the accident report form that I weigh 135 pounds.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel, which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explains the fractured skull, minor abrasions, and the broken collarbone, as listed in Section 3 of the accident report form. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley.

Fortunately, by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of beginning to experience a great deal of pain.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground, and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now, devoid of the weight of the bricks, that barrel weighed approximately 50 pounds. I refer you again to my weight. As you can imagine, I began a rapid descent, down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken teeth, and lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks, and fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

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I am sorry to report, however, as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope. I lay there watching the empty barrel begin its journey back down onto me. This explains the two broken legs.

I [hope](#) this answers your inquiry.

While I at first found this tale quite humorous, it spurred me to think about planning and what part it plays in our lives. "Poor planning," the bricklayer said, was the cause of his accident. We speak a great deal about preparation in the church, and we often hear the two used as a phrase: planning and preparation.

*Prepare* means to "to make ready beforehand for some purpose," "to assemble, put together, train, perfect." We can easily see how this translates to our spiritual lives, especially the ideas of making ready, training, and perfecting. We must prepare, be ready, for the [return of Christ](#). To *plan* is "to have a blueprint, a design, an idea." Planning is deciding what we will do, a course of action we want to take, and preparing is making ready for what we might be called upon to do. The bricklayer in our story planned but was not prepared when the plan went awry.

The great American general and president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, once made a profound statement: "In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless but planning is indispensable." A much simpler version came from the boxer Mike Tyson: "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face." In the story, planning is our bricklayer figuring out a way to get those bricks off the roof. Preparation would be his knowing to let go of the rope at the first moment, when it became obvious that his plan was faulty. To plan is to prepare in advance.

[Proverbs 27:1](#) counsels, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." A related verse, [Proverbs 19:21](#), reads, "We may make a lot of plans, but the LORD will do what he has decided" (Contemporary English Version).

So should we even bother with plans? After all, God is in charge; He is sovereign. [Proverbs 16:9](#) answers in the affirmative with a qualifier, stating, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps."

In the [Parable of the Ten Virgins](#), all ten virgins went out to meet the Bridegroom ([Matthew 25:1](#)). All planned to meet Him, and since all of them carried lamps, all knew

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He was coming at night (verses 3-4). When He took longer to arrive than expected, all ten slept. They still *planned* to meet Him, but they did not know when. A cry goes out at midnight, "The Bridegroom is coming" (verse 6), and half the virgins had oil in their lamps, half did not (verses 3, 7-12).

Only the five wise virgins were prepared. They had planned. Recall the definitions: Planning is arranging beforehand for something, while preparation means "to be in readiness." In the parable, planning is illustrated in them taking their lamps and going to meet Christ. If the foolish virgins had had intentions to buy oil at some point, it would have been part of planning. Preparation, however, is shown in the wise virgins having the oil on hand when it was needed.

The two concepts go together. They are not at odds with one another. As [Proverbs 19:21](#) said, "We . . . make a lot of plans, but the LORD will do what He has decided." In Part Two, we will consider how to include God in our planning and preparations.

- Mike Ford

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Laodiceanism and Being There Next Year](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh maintains that the best matrix for salvation (or to come out of Babylon) is to diligently seek God, a connection lost in the Garden of Eden. Christians must rigorously practice their faith, having their senses trained, growing from immaturity to maturity. Sanctifying implies growing into perfection. We cannot seek God by standing still, but must continually pray, study, meditate, and fast, growing daily in grace and knowledge. Our biggest danger at this time is to be lured into spiritual drunkenness by the pagan Babylonian system. Our God is not what we say we worship but whom we serve. We dare not be at ease in Zion, settling on our lees- tolerant of sin and blind to our spiritual state- practical atheism or prudent agnosticism. God teaches us that the uncleanness from this world can be transferred from one person to another, but holiness cannot be transferred from one person to another.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [Parable of the Ten Virgins \(Part One\)](#)

by Martin G. Collins

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Jesus gave the Parable of the Ten Virgins to encourage His disciples to be watchful and to make preparations for His return. In Part One, Martin Collins compares the two groups of virgins, applying the lessons to our situation at the end of the age.

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