

## 16. My Father's Plans

Contributed by LG Parkhurst Jr  
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"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." -- Jeremiah 29:11-13.

Fran often said that we need to see things in the context of the Bible and the whole of Christian history, not just in the light of our own lives and personal experiences. L'Abri did not begin just in the context of the Schaeffers' own experiences, but with the additional confirmation of how God had worked in those they read about in the Bible and history. The prayer principles they used to start L'Abri were not new to them. They had been tried and tested by people like Hudson Taylor and George Müller, and the Schaeffers had proved their reliability over their years.

True faith must be based on evidence, evidence that God has given, evidence that can be passed on to others to lead them to faith or strengthen their beliefs. True faith involves understanding and accepting the Bible as the Word of God, and choosing to live one's life on the basis of God's Word. True faith includes bowing before Jesus Christ and accepting Him as Lord, the second Person in the Trinity, and our Savior from sin and hell. True faith consists of choosing to follow the day to day leading of the Holy Spirit and seeking to be filled with Him so we will follow the Spirit and not the flesh. True faith leads to purity of life and a concern for leading others to the Savior. When the Schaeffers began L'Abri, all of these elements of faith were involved in their decision. To have not begun L'Abri when they did would have meant disobeying God, for God had given them good and sufficient reasons that this was His will for their lives--plans for a hope and future, to prosper them so they could help others.

To pray with faith that we are praying according to the will of God demands evidence that what we are praying for is indeed according to His will. Praying with faith means that we have chosen to accept the good and sufficient evidence God has given that He wants us to pray for particular blessings, and then praying for the specific things God has shown us until we have received them. As Jeremiah wrote, once we understand that God has plans for us, we should pray for God to reveal His plans. And when we begin to understand His plans, we can come to Him in faith and pray on the basis of His promise to listen to our prayers. As we seek and find God, we can praise Him and thank Him for His leading and tender mercies, for His gift of life and hope, for His gift of service to others according to His power which works within us.

The Schaeffers began L'Abri and began praying for its success after God had given them evidence of His will using the four means He will use to give us faith in prayer--the faith that we are praying according to His will. Sometimes God will give us faith to pray for something specific by using only one of these means, but when He uses all four means we can pray with boldness and thanksgiving that God will achieve His purposes through our prayers. As we have seen, over the years, God taught the Schaeffers to recognize and follow His use of these means to reveal His will for how they should pray: the Holy Spirit, the general and specific promises in the Bible, predictions in the Bible, and providential events in their lives and world.

As we read the Bible through each day, not skipping from place to place thinking we will discover God's plan by opening the Bible at random places looking for His "magic" Word to us, we need to pray believing and asking for the Holy Spirit to show us any commands or promises God has for us that we need to follow. In Jeremiah, chapter 29, we find a general promise that any believer can use when he prays. In the verses above, God has given us the evidence we need to believe that if we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him and He will unfold for us His plan for our lives. He may not show us everything at once, but He will lead us daily to fulfill His plan if we will pray, seek His will, and choose to follow Him in the Holy Spirit's power.

As we read through the Bible, we also need to pray for the Holy Spirit to show us any predictions that we might apply to our lives. Usually, the Holy Spirit will not show these to us until we have first learned how to obey God and apply and obey the Bible's promises. Edith did not receive the Holy Spirit's inspiration and motivation to accept the prediction from Isaiah 2:2,3, for them until after she had learned a lot about God and prayer from His promises. If she had not spent much time in Bible study and prayer over the years, she would not have recognized these verses as God speaking directly to them. The Holy Spirit built upon all that God had taught her through a life of prayer, so she would accept this passage as evidence for the faith she needed to pray that God would build L'Abri through them in the mountains.

As we look around us, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us any special work that God is doing in our midst, that we are to recognize as a special work of providence for guidance in prayer--so we can pray in faith that God wants to give us the blessing. When Edith saw Chalet les Mèlèzes in Huemoz for the first time, the Holy Spirit showed her to pray for this

home through the providence of her finding it and its being perfect for a L'Abri in so many ways, and then the Holy Spirit prompted her to pray for a specific amount of money to confirm His leading.

As we pray, sometimes the Holy Spirit will speak to our spirits directly. As Edith prayed for God to make their living in Chalet les Mélézes possible, she first began to pray that the owner would change his mind and rent it instead of insisting that it be sold. However, the Holy Spirit stopped her and moved her to pray specifically for the money to buy it and set a deadline and amount for a confirmation of God's will. Because she knew the Spirit's voice, she prayed for \$1,000.00. And the Holy Spirit filled the family with joy when \$1,000.00 was sent with perfect timing. Through the gift's arrival in the next day's mail, God assured the Schaeffers that they were moving according to His plan.

Living by faith and prayer demands that we spend quality time with God by reading His Word and praying. Time spent in prayer will not substitute for time spent reading the Bible, and time spent reading the Bible will not take the place of getting to know God better through conversational prayer. As we demonstrate our dedication to God and open up our hearts to His leading, He will speak to us more and more through the Holy Spirit, the Bible's promises and predictions, and through providential events. Only by spending time with God, and by learning about His character and ways of working in the Bible, will God build our faith on solid evidence so we can avoid the pitfalls of following our feelings, impulses, or selfish desires, as though these were the Spirit's leading. To avoid following the wrong spirits and people, we need to know God and His Word so well that we will not be deceived. Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for the safeguards you have given, so we will not be misled or pray in the wrong spirit for the wrong things. Increase my faith so I can pray rightly. Amen.

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