

Mark A McGee

On The Winning Side!

By

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Introduction

"The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations." Psalm 33:10-11

It is a thrilling thing to be on the Winning Side! I have no doubt that God will do everything He said He would do. That should give every Christian tremendous confidence in their service to God and to the world.

I'm fascinated by how Christians know what to do in serving God. Some become pastors. Others work with young people. Some work with children. Some Christians serve God in their own countries. Some go to countries thousands of miles away. Some speak. Some listen. Some write. Some sing. Some pray. Some pay. That is all part of God's marvelous PLAN for His Church, the Body of Christ.

Let's look at some of the basic principles of God's Plan for His people.

Principle #1

God Created the Plan and He Works the Plan

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11

God knows what needs to be done to meet the purposes and goals of His Plan and He does it through His people. Isn't that the greatest thing? God gives us spiritual gifts, callings and power to fulfill His Plan. Now that's something about which we can rejoice! When we participate with the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives we are serving the Almighty God in just the way He wants us to serve Him. That's exciting and rewarding.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer

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be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting ... " Ephesians 4:11-14

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Principle #2

God uses people to help people do His Work

Christ gave His Body "Equipping Leaders" for the purpose of preparing members of the Body for their service to Christ - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. As those Equipping Leaders prepare God's people for their service to Christ, the Body of Christ is built up. The Body of Christ becomes one in purpose and matures - "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

When we attain to the "fullness of Christ," we will no longer be children, tossed to and fro. What is it that can toss Christians around and keep them from fulfilling God's Plan for their lives? What is it that can keep Christians unbalanced and unfocused on what's right for them? "... every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

Just as God has a Plan for His Body Church, so does Satan. Satan's plan is to confuse Christians, push them off balance, keep them focused on what's unimportant, keep them upset about trivial things, keep them divided. Satan does that thinking God's Plan will fail. We know that Satan doesn't have the ability to thwart God's Ultimate Plan for His Church, but it is sad to see how successful Satan is with individual members of God's Church. It doesn't have to be that way. Each of us has a

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tremendous opportunity and responsibility.

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Principle #3

God's Plan is based on His Truth and His Love

" ... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." Ephesians 4:15

For too long I've heard arguments in the Church that Christians have to sacrifice Truth or Love in the way they serve Christ. Either we're tough on sinners and sin or we're soft on sinners and sin. Why is that? Why can't we tell the Truth in Love? Isn't that what Jesus did? What Paul did? Why can't we? As we speak the Truth in Love, we will "grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." We can Love sinners and tell them the Truth about their sin. We can Love fellow believers and tell them the Truth about their sin. God's Plan for the Church is based on His Truth and His Love. He has never sacrificed either for the other - and neither do we.

So, how does God's plan work on a daily basis? What is God doing in His Church today that can effectively accomplish His Goals tomorrow?

Principle #4

God's Plans work as each member of the Body does their work

"The fullness of Christ" is God's Goal for the Church. His Plan to get us there is through the process of every member of His Church doing what He planned for them to do, with the support of His "Equipping Leaders." Those are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Jesus gave them to the Church for the purpose of "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." When equippers equip, something very special happens in the Body of Christ - "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children ... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"

"... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:16

God used the analogy of the human body to help Christians understand what it means to be part of the Spiritual Body of Christ. Christ is our Head. We are His Body. Just as a human body is made up of various parts, the Body of Christ is made up

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of various parts. Just as the human body functions well as each part does its particular job, so the Body of Christ functions well as each part does its work.

Think for a moment about the working of a healthy body. The brain (head) communicates its desires through the nervous system to support systems (ligaments, tendons, etc.) to various parts of the body (hands, fingers, feet, toes, etc.). If the brain wants a finger to move, it sends its desire through a nerve to a ligament and tendon around a joint that directs the finger to move in the direction the brain wants it to go. The finger moves as the supporting ligament moves. The supporting ligament moves as the nerve directs it to move. The nerve directs the ligaments and parts as the brain desires. As each part does its job (brain --> nerves --> ligaments --> parts (organs, appendages, etc.)), the body is healthy and functions properly. If any part does not do its job, the body becomes unhealthy and functions improperly.

Here is a simple explanation of how that works spiritually.

- Christ is the Brain (the Head). He is Lord of the Body. He decides what the Body will be and what it will do.
- The Holy Spirit is the Nervous System. The Spirit connects us directly to Christ, the Head. Christ speaks and the Spirit does His Will.
- Equipping Leaders are the Supporting Ligaments. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers listen to the

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- Holy Spirit and do His Will, knowing it is the Will of Christ the Lord. Equipping Leaders prepare God's people for works of service and join and hold together the whole Body through their preaching, teaching, counsel, encouragement, prayers and love.
- Christians are the Parts of the Body of Christ - hands, feet, eyes, ears, mouths, etc. We participate in the building up of the Body of Christ as we work for Christ. We reach the goals of unity, knowledge, maturity and fullness as we obey Christ through the doctrines of the apostles and prophets, and the ministries of evangelists, pastors and teachers. We speak the Truth in Love and grow up into Christ, the Head of the Body. From Christ the whole Body, joined and held together by every Equipping Leader, grows and builds itself up in Love, "by which every part does its share."

Just as in the human body, if any part of the Spiritual Body becomes "disconnected" from another part, great pain follows. We have different kinds of supporting joints in the body - hinge joints, ball and socket joints, gliding joints, condyloid joints. These joints provide flexible connections between your bones. The end of muscles turn to a tissue called tendons and it is the tendons that pull on the bone. The joints of the body work with the tendons from muscles and ligaments from bones to move the body in any direction the brain determines through

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the process of nerve communication. It is the same for the Body of Christ. Christ - the Brain of the Church - communicates His Will for the Body through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit delivers the Message of Christ to the muscles and tendons, ligaments and bone, and the supporting joints (Equipping Leaders) work to move the Body forward.

It is impossible for Christ to become disconnected from the Holy Spirit. That process will always work. However, it is possible for Equipping Leaders to become disconnected from the Plan of Christ because they no longer listen to or obey the Holy Spirit. It is possible for Christians (parts) to become disconnected from the Plan of Christ because they no longer listen to the Holy Spirit or submit to the equipping ministries of Equipping Leaders whose purpose it is to prepare the muscles and bones and tissue of the Body "for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

It's a simple, yet complicated process. God made it simple. We complicate it. God made us one Body with many parts. We succeed as each of us does our share.

So, which part are you? What is the work God has for you in the Body of Christ?

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Which Part Are You?

The Body of Christ is made up of many parts. Each Christian is an important part of God's Plan on earth.

That brings up another issue. Which part are we? Does it matter? Think about it. Does it really matter which part of the Body we are? Isn't it enough that God made us a part? Isn't it enough that we are safe and secure for all eternity and also get to participate in God's Eternal Plan by being a member of Christ's Body? Does it really matter which part we are?

It is important to understand the part we play in the Body of Christ, but we also need to understand that every part is just as important and as vital as any other part. Someone who preaches the Gospel is no more important than someone who supports the preacher through prayer and financial support. The evangelist is no more important than someone who helps sinners find a seat in the auditorium so they can hear the evangelist. What's the deal with us? Why are we so concerned about what someone else does? Why do Christians compare themselves with other Christians? Why do we think we're better or worse than some other Christian just because our gifts and ministries are different? What does it matter?

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"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." 1 Corinthians 12:11

Come on! Why are we divided? Why are we conceited? Why are we troubled? Why do we find pleasure in the problems of our brothers and sisters? Why do we gloat about the troubles of others? Why would we ever want any member of the Body of Christ to fail in their ministry? Don't we realize that we're members of the same Body? Our goals should always be the same as God's Goals. Let's grow up and move up to what God wants His Body to be!

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many

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members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

We understand that the body cannot function without the head. So it is with Jesus Christ - Head of His Body. We cannot function in the way God planned for the Church if we do not pay attention to God's Thoughts and Ideas. How does He communicate His Thoughts and Ideas? Through Jesus Christ - Head of the Body. So many Christians today are out of step with God's Plan for the Church because they are practically disconnected from the leadership of Christ. Everything begins there. We can do nothing without Christ.

Paul begins his explanation about the importance of every believer's function in the Body of Christ with the foot. "If the

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foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?" Think about your own body. How important are your feet to carrying out your plans each day? How do you get from one place to another? You walk. Even if you're walking to and from a car to get places, you are still using your feet. We stand on our feet as well. Our feet support us. So people who are "feet" in the Body of Christ help us to stand and walk. So, why would someone who is a foot in the Body think less of their importance because they are not the hands? It's mostly perception and pride. Feet are usually covered in public and not thought about much, even though they are extremely important. Hands, on the other hand, are seen prominently in public and thought about a great deal. Hands are thought of as being attractive, while feet are thought of as being less attractive. People who are feet in the Body are as important to God's Plans as people who are hands. The hands may get more attention and even be more attractive, but they are no more important than feet. How do hands get from one place to another? The feet transport them. The same is true with the Body of Christ.

Next, Paul uses the example of the ear. "And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?" We understand the importance of our eyes and ears. It is how we gain knowledge - how we

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experience pleasure and sense danger. If we have eyes, but no ears, our knowledge and senses are not complete. If we have ears, but no eyes, the same is true. God gave us eyes and ears so that our experiences in this life would be complete. The same is true with the Body of Christ. If you are an ear, you should not think of yourself as unimportant in the Body because you are not an eye. If you are an eye, you should not think of yourself as unimportant in the Body because you are not an ear. Christians spend too much time thinking about what they are not instead of what they are and appreciating God's Plan for their lives.

This plan is about what pleases God - "But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." Christians often look at their life solely from their perspective. If something comes into our life that doesn't please us, it upsets us and our attention goes to how everything affects us. It's not about us. It's about God and what pleases Him. Well, we just saw it - God has set the members in Christ's Body "just as He pleased." Do you see how important you are? God's pleasure is involved in your position in the Body of Christ!

God has a Plan and He has included us in His Plan. He has explained to us how His Plan works. Now it's up to us to live and serve by the Principles of His Plan. It works best that way.

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