

191. God's Game Plan

By Arland Steen

Opening

Football isn't played at all like I thought as a kid. I assumed both teams showed up at game time and just played. Every play that didn't result in a touchdown was a failed play to me. I thought that way because that's how we played it on the schoolyard. Many times, a single play resulted in a touchdown. I knew nothing about playing for field position, time of possession or controlling the line of scrimmage. I just thought you should try to score on every play. But that's not how it's done in the NFL. Each coach approaches the game with a specific plan: this is how we'll shut down their running game; this is how we'll exploit weaknesses in their secondary; this is how we'll position ourselves for the big play. And since about 90% of the players play the game at the same level – there are only a few true superstars – it is the team with the best game plan that usually wins. Some people approach life like we played schoolyard football. Every play is a whole new game – just one desperate attempt after another to find something that works. But it doesn't have to be that way. You can follow a game plan that will turn your life into one long championship season. That's because God has a game plan for your life. We'll look at how you can implement God's game plan into your daily life.

Strategic game-plan principles

Game Plan Principle: God calls the plays; your job is to run them

Jeremiah 1:5 (NKJ): *⁵ Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.*

The word "sanctification" scares a lot of people because it is connected with the length of a girl's dress, whether she was wearing make-up or not, whether you went to movies or not and other things that don't really matter. But "sanctified" means you are or something is *set apart*.

As a baseball guy, you may have a bag of baseballs that you play ball with your friends with. But you also have a baseball that you caught at an MLB game and something historic occurred when that ball was in play, such as a historic home run by Barry Bonds or Hank Aaron. Are you going to take that ball and put it in the same bag as all the other baseballs and maybe play ball with it with your friends? No. That ball is different, not because the ball itself is different but because of how it was used in a game or it was the ball being used when Barry Bonds or Hank Aaron or Willie Mays or Mike Trout hit that ball and it was Number Five Hundred or Number One Hundred and it meant something special to them. The special attachment to the ball comes from the event but that ball then becomes (they don't use this term) but that ball becomes sanctified. It just happened with Austin Riley of Atlanta. He got his first hit and his first home run. The players make sure that ball gets carried to the dugout to give to him. That ball is not going to be used again. It's sanctified.

That is just what God said regarding your life. He said, "Before you were born, I sanctified you. I set you apart for Me and I set you apart for a purpose."

In Jeremiah's case, he was ordained to be a prophet to the nations. That was God's game-plan for him. All this happens before you have a say about it. Jeremiah's decision to become a prophet wasn't the result of weighing his options at Career Day. It was based upon God's plan for his life.

Going back to the game of football, our problem is we think we are Peyton Manning – one of the few quarterbacks of whom it was rumored was allowed to call plays. Aaron Rodgers, QB of the Green Bay Packers, debunked that in an article that appeared on Around the NFL which was published in June 2015. He reportedly said to ESPN.com's Rob Demovsky, "Well, Peyton doesn't do that. Nobody does that." And, he himself is regarded to be a QB with coach-like acumen.

Most quarterbacks get their plays from the sidelines – even superstars like John Elway, Joe Montana and Roger Staubach, for instance. Their job was to run the plays, not call them.

The key to success and ultimate satisfaction is discovering God's plan for your life and doing it.

That's the key distinction we need to pick up on.

God's game plan for you is **something you discover, not something you decide.**

The problem is we think we're the decision-makers. Billy Joel has a song out titled *My Life*. He claims in this song that he's going to do what he wants to do because it's his life. But God said here that I formed you before you were in the womb, I sanctified you before you were born and I ordained you to be a prophet. I use a

reference Bible and it says that the word “ordained” means *appointed*. Certain individuals get appointments to be ambassadors to countries. That means they will operate as the official representative of our government to that government. God appointed Jeremiah to be a prophet. What has God appointed you to be? Do we even think about life that way?

Other uses of **ordained** (Strong’s #5414):

Genesis 1:17: *God set them* (referring to the greater and lesser lights) Can you set the sun and moon?

Genesis 1:29: *I have given you every herb that yields seed...* Can you give herbs to yield seed?

Genesis 9:13: *I set My rainbow in the cloud...* Can you set a rainbow in the sky?

Yet we try to do this with our lives. We try to appoint ourselves this or that. I want to do this. This is my choice and this is my life. We make futile attempts at this just like would be if you tried to set a rainbow in the sky. No, those are things God does and your life is similar. GOD appoints these things and He’s appointed you and we need to see ourselves as players on the team and God is the One who calls the plays.

How do I discover the play He calls?

First, by listening to the words of scripture and second by listening to the voice of your spirit.

Do you ever just open your Bible and read it? If not, you’re not giving place to what God may be saying to you.

One thing I did right as a kid was read the Bible. I loved to read so I had some personal inclination but it was also fascinating because there are a lot of movies in there. The stories in the Old Testament can catch your imagination. These stories are like action movies. Like the story about the bad guy who was running away and tried to hide in a woman’s tent and she took a peg and nailed his skull to the ground. Yeah! And then David and Goliath. Yeah! Noah building an ark. All little boys like boats. It catches your attention, so just reading the Bible is one way. Another way is to listen when God speaks.

Another thing is that you’re going to know when you need to know about your life when you need to know it. Most children live in the future even when involved in a great time in the present.

I remember making the mistake one time of telling my oldest son when he was young that we were going to Disneyland that day. This was a Sunday morning and we were going to church first. Daddy would be preaching and he was going to Sunday school. Then, after church, we would be going. I told him that to give him something to look forward to but in his mind, he was going NOW. I had to backtrack and explain the timing of it. He couldn’t grasp that. All he heard was Disneyland.

That’s the way some people live their lives – they want to know everything right now. But that is not the way God leads. God will give you as much direction as you need to do His will.

The crucial difference about following God’s game plan is that we recognize that He is the one calling the plays; we’re the ones that run them.

Game Plan Principle: The best defense is a good offense

Here’s what that means. God gave Jeremiah an assignment and he immediately began making excuses.

Jeremiah 1:6 (NKJ): *6 Then said I, “Ah, Lord God! Behold! I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”*

Then God responded.

Jeremiah 1:7-8 (NKJ): *7 But the Lord said to me: Do not say, “I am a youth,” for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 “Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord.*

God is telling him to play offense not defense. He is telling him not to play defense by defending himself. The key thing here is obedience – doing what God tells you to do, saying what God tells you to say, going where God tells you to go. If he is committed to obedience, it doesn’t matter what other people say or do.

Maybe God’s call on your life is being obstructed by your objections and excuses. God is saying forget about your objections and don’t get sidetracked by what other people think. Just do what God has called you to do. You and God are a winning team.

The principle is that **obedience overcomes obstacles**.

God’s game plan is not a smooth ride; there will be obstacles; but obedience will get you through them.

The best defense against obstacles, critics and your own fears is a good offense. By “offense” I mean being focused on what God has called you to do.

The Scream

IT WAS MORE OF A rallying cry to buoy a roomful of disappointed supporters than the raving of an out-of-control zealot. But it quickly became known as The Scream, and it lives on as a case study of how a brief gaffe, given saturation coverage by the media, can cause deep damage to a politician's image.

The incident happened on the night of the Iowa presidential nominating caucuses, Jan. 19, 2004. Howard Dean, the former governor of Vermont, had been promoted in the media for weeks as the Democrat to beat, with what he described as an army of angry insurgents. But as the returns rolled in, it became clear that Dean and the media had badly overestimated his strength and that the air was leaking fast out of his balloon. In the end, Dean lost with only 18 percent of the vote, behind winner John Kerry and runner-up John Edwards. That evening, Dean appeared before a crowd of downcast supporters in West Des Moines. He took off his suit jacket, rolled up the sleeves of his blue shirt, and acknowledged, "I'm sure there are some disappointed people here." Then he tried to motivate them to continue the fight. Getting revved up by the crowd's cheers and chants, he promised to take his campaign on to New Hampshire, South Carolina, California, and a string of other states, the names of which he shouted out like a cheerleader at a high school pep rally. His face reddening and his right hand balled into a fist, Dean shouted: "And then we're going to Washington, D.C.—to take back the White House—YEEEEEEAARGH!"

The moment of exhortation was described in the media as the "primal scream" or the " 'I Have a Scream' speech." And it was replayed endlessly on national TV. It immediately became the target of ridicule on the late-night talk shows, adding to Dean's embarrassment.

- "Did you see Dean's speech last night?" asked Jay Leno. "Oh my God! Now I hear the cows in Iowa are afraid of getting mad Dean disease. It's always a bad sign when at the end of your speech, your aide is shooting you with a tranquilizer gun."
- Added David Letterman: "Here's what happened: The people of Iowa realized they didn't want a president with the personality of a hockey dad."

[Video clip of Howard Dean is played – about 1:17]

It all made Dean, normally a very disciplined and strait-laced New Englander, look more than a little bit kooky. And it was a signal that Howard Dean was playing defense and his political career went downhill from there.

Game Plan Principle: Every play is a crucial play

Have you ever noticed how sports announcers love to exaggerate the importance of a single play in a ballgame? They live and breathe on hyperbole; they love to over-emphasize the significance of a single play. And so do many fans when it comes to mistakes. But any coach will tell you that, except for last plays involving errors, games are not won or lost on a single play. Seasons don't ride on a single play. In the highlights, some plays are more spectacular than others but every play is a crucial play.

In our lives, **every day is a crucial day**. And the most crucial day is this day.

Jeremiah 1:9-10 (NKJ): ⁹ Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.

Notice TODAY I APPOINT YOU.

When you discover God's plan for your life, then this day is the day to start moving in that direction.

When Billy Graham accepted Christ as a teenager, God's plan for his life was activated. But it was decades before that plan fully unfolded. History shows us that Billy has lived every day like it was a crucial day. God has placed a call on your life. It may be decades before it fully unfolds but it can be activated today.

I accepted the call of God on my life when I was young and in my first year of college – pursuing business administration. Not being one to quit, I did complete that first year but immediately knew it was a dead end

and that I was going to Bible school. I enrolled a few months later and spent a total of four years at three different schools pursuing my studies about God.

Conclusion

There are three words that summarize going with God's plan in your life.

Consistency - because every day is a crucial day.

Surrender - through active obedience.

To His **Leadership** - because He calls the plays.

In a year or two we will be hard pressed to remember who won this year's Super Bowl because it is only a game. It has no eternal significance. Your life is different because it has eternal significance. If you try and call the plays you will lose; let God make the calls and turn your life into a championship season.