

Book of Experience

#0593

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 30, 1963

“The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
My ransomed soul he leadeth;
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me;
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death’s dark vale I fear no ill,
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And oh, what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days,
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within Thy house forever.”

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is” by H.W. Baker.

Our text this evening is Isaiah 55 verses 8–9:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” Isaiah 55:8–9.

If that is so (and of course we all believe it, for it’s the Word of God), one would think that everybody would be glad to exchange his thoughts for God’s

thoughts, wouldn't you? And to put aside one's own way and have God's way instead.

Yet, do you know that's the hardest problem God has had with His people for 6,000 years, to get us to think His thoughts instead of our own and to accept His way instead of our own way?

I want to study with you a little about it tonight. And before I do and as a prelude, I would like to read you a statement from the book *Christ Object Lessons*, 125:

"The great storehouse of truth is the Word of God—the written Word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 125.

Now, let's look at those three books for a moment. What's the first one?

"...The written Word..." *Ibid.*

Second is:

"...The book of nature..." *Ibid.*

And the third is:

"...The book of experience in God's dealing with human life. Here are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw" *Ibid.*

We draw from the Bible, we draw from nature, and we draw from this third great volume. And you notice it's included in what is called the Word of God. God is speaking to us through the Bible, He's speaking to us through nature, but He's speaking to us through the experiences of life. Happy is the people that know the joyful sound, my friends.

And you know, the longer I study life, the more convinced I am that the great purpose God has in speaking to us through the Bible and through nature is to help us to recognize His voice as He speaks through this book of experience. That's the great purpose of it.

When Jesus was here on earth, we're told that He gained knowledge as we may gain it. In the book *Education*, page 77, we are told:

"His education was gained directly from the heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life—God's lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart" *Education*, page 77.

Let's bring those tonight. What do you say, friends? And let us look into the book of experience or the book of providence as it's also called. And see if we can discern some of God's thoughts which are higher than our thoughts, and some of His ways which are better than our ways.

In the little book *Steps to Christ*, on page 70 is this paragraph, which many of us have heard over and over again. But somehow in recent days this has meant more to me than ever before, as God is helping me get it translated out of the book that's *written* into the book that's *lived*—from the written Word to the book of experience. Here is the statement:

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ” *Steps to Christ*, page 70.

The next paragraph says that's the way to be happy; that's the program.

Now, I'd like to study that with you a little, for it's been growing on my heart. It's become very simple as I've thought about it. Three uses of the word “lay” as relates to plans.

First, we're to lay plans. And unless you have some plans laid, you can't do what this says. We'll see presently and review what it is, but you remember it spoke of “plan.”

You know, sometimes somebody may ask us about a certain subject, and we may have to honestly answer, “Well really, I haven't made any plans yet about that.”

But to carry out what *this* says, we must reach the point where we have some plans laid. So I repeat, the first thing in what I want to study with you is to lay plans.

Now, some people think that living by the Spirit's leading is to make no plans at all. And there are some references which, if they're misread, might lead to that conclusion. But the Bible is very clear, friends, that we need to lay plans.

Turn to Luke 14:28 and notice how clearly Jesus puts it:

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it” Luke 14:28.

That's laying plans, isn't it? They ought to be good plans. They ought to be well-laid plans. Here's a man that's going to build something, build a tower Jesus speaks of here. He's to first do what? Lay some plans. He's to take long enough to do it that he needs to what? Sit down. That's right. That's what it says.

Some people are always on the move, but time is well spent that is used in careful planning, thinking through matters.

Somebody says, "Well, there's no use for me to lay plans because somebody always interferes with them anyway."

We'll come to that presently. But all the interference in the world, my friends, is no excuse for failure to lay plans. Lay some; ask God to help you. Think through your problems. Think of the work that God has called you to do. Lay plans.

Christ laid plans for His work. I know there's a statement that says that He laid no plans for Himself, but that is He didn't do it selfishly. We're told very definitely that He laid plans for His work. And ministers and evangelists are counseled to do that today.

Every teacher is told that when he stands before his class, he should have well in mind what he hopes to accomplish during that period. Is that right? That calls for laying plans, doesn't it? All right.

And every good cook has to lay plans, doesn't she? Yes. Did you ever eat where there weren't any plans? Well, you may have had a snack. You may have been able to browse a little. But good eating comes from what? Good planning, precisely.

And so, we might go on into all the different areas of life. Jesus summed it all up when He said, "If you're going to build a tower, sit down *first* and count the cost" [a paraphrase of Luke 14:28].

Well, how are you going to count the cost? You're going to have to know how many bricks it takes, how many two-by-fours it takes, and all the rest, aren't you? That calls for a plan.

You can't say, "Well, I don't know just how big that tower is going to be. It might be 20 feet in diameter; it might be 40 before we get through."

Lay plans; sit down *first* and lay the plans.

Now, the men of this world, they do that, friends, but they don't know anything about this second point, and that is, lay your plans at His feet, at Jesus' feet. That's step number two. Lay your plans; then number two is what? Lay your plans at His feet. Those plans that you've figured out have and have planned, and as far as you can see, everything is just the way it ought to be, now take those plans and lay them at Jesus' feet.

You remember in the 1st chapter of the book of Acts, the 24th verse, right after the ascension, the disciples were engaged in those days of prayer, preparing for Pentecost. Peter called their attention to some business that needed to be taken care of. There was a vacancy, and they made some plans. But the best light they could get, there were two men equally fitted to fill that one place. And so, having brought their plans to that point, they prayed together, and they said:

“Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship” Acts 1:24.

Weymouth translates that:

“...Show clearly which of these two Thou hast chosen”
Acts 1:24 (*Weymouth New Testament*).

Now, did they make some plans? Yes. What did they do with the plans? They laid them at the feet of the Lord.

They said, “Lord, now we’ve made some plans, but we need some help. Show clearly what *Your* thoughts are.”

And again and again in the history of the church, God has taken the plans of men when He’s been allowed to and made some changes in them. Sometimes He sets them aside altogether. Sometimes He uses them just as they’re presented. Sometimes modifications, corrections, improvements must be made.

And that leads us to the third point. Having laid our plans and then laid them at the Master’s feet, we’re to be ready to lay them aside or carry them out as His providence shall indicate [a paraphrase of *Steps to Christ*, page 70].

But right there comes the human problem. To take a plan that you’ve worked day and night on for weeks, and lay it down at Jesus’ feet, and then find it’s laid aside, that’s hard on human hearts. And we’re either liable to question God or question our experience.

And when God takes our well-meant plans and lays them aside, it doesn’t necessarily mean, friends, that there’s anything wrong with our experience. I mean it doesn’t mean that we have been wasting our time in laying plans.

You remember that wonderful experience of David.

David got to thinking one night or one day, “Here I am in a beautiful home, and the ark of God is just in a tent.”

And the more he thought about it, the more he began to do what? Lay some plans, lay some plans. What was his plan? Build a house for God. Well, anybody would know *that* was a good plan, wouldn’t they? Sure.

But David had learned, friends, to inquire of God. And so, as he thought of his plan, he thought, "I'm going to the prophet."

And that's a good place to go, friends. And he went to the prophet, and he said, "Nathan, I have a plan."

And he told the prophet all about it. And the prophet said:

"...Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee"
1 Chronicles 17:2.

Nathan thought it was a good plan, too. And I'm sure David went home very happy.

He said, "God is moving in this thing. There is the okay."

David had laid his plans. He'd laid them at Jesus' feet. Now watch. What's the next thing? Ah, in the night season, the prophet is instructed.

"...The Word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in" 1 Chronicles 17:3–4.

"What? Go tell David that he can't build a house?"

"That's right, yes. No, he mustn't build that house. But tell him I'll give him a son, and the son will build the house."

And so, Nathan did what God told him to do. And what did David do? Thank God, dear old David, with all his faults, he had this wonderful virtue. When God said that, he bowed his head.

He said, "All right Lord. If my plan must be set aside so that your plan is carried out, that's all right."

And then what did he do? He got busy helping to work out that new plan. He gathered material, and the Holy Spirit of inspiration came upon David as he worked out the blueprints for that wonderful temple. And before he died, he turned it all over to Solomon, and he gathered all the chief of Israel together, and they gave too. And they had a wonderful time.

Why, friend, what a shame it is to allow disappointment and discouragement and things of that kind to come into our experience because God sets aside some of our plans.

What was that opening text we read tonight?

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" Isaiah 55:8.

And I'm sure that the temple that was finally built was something more wonderful than David had any idea of when he first started in to think through the plan of building a house for God.

Are *you* willing to lay plans carefully, thoughtfully, prayerfully and then lay those plans down at Jesus' feet?

And then be happy when the Lord says, "Sorry, those plans will have to be tailored quite a bit before we can use them."

He may even put them in the wastebasket. It has been done.

Turn over to Acts the 16th chapter verses 6–7. You know, Paul was a man that was led of the Spirit. But that didn't mean that he always knew a week ahead where he was going to be and what he was going to do. No.

Now, Paul was a great planner. And this particular trip, he had suggested to Barnabas a certain plan. Barnabas hadn't seen the light in it, so Barnabas went his way, and Paul took Silas and went ahead with the plan. But after they got over into Galacia, the sixth verse says:

"...They... were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia" Acts 16:6.

That must have seemed strange to go to a region and then have the door, what? Closed. Now, some people think that the thing to do is to beat the door down or kick it open. But Paul had learned to respect the providence of God.

So, he said, "All right. The Lord isn't opening the way here in this place, so we'll go on to Mysia and go over into Bithynia" [a paraphrase of Acts 16:7].

"After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not" Acts 16:7.

Twice in one trip, they laid plans and laid them at the Master's feet, and the Master said what? No.

Well, did Paul get discouraged and say, "Well, I might as well go home"?

No. He kept on laying plans and laying them at Jesus' feet, and finally at Troas, he had a vision.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" Acts 16:9.

And the 10th verse says:

"And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering

that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them” Acts 16:10.

But if Paul had been so bullheaded and stubborn that he’d insisted on carrying out his plans about Galacia and Bithynia, he never would have been down there to Troas to get that vision, would he?

You know, some people get humiliated to admit that they’ve been mistaken. Did you ever have that feeling? Well, you ought to get used to it and get over being humiliated about it.

The servant of the Lord often said:

“God and heaven alone are infallible” *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 30.

“God and heaven alone are infallible” *Ibid.*

And to admit that we’re mistaken sometimes about our plans is simply to admit that God knows more than we do. That shouldn’t be hard to admit. In fact, our opening text said that His thoughts are how much different from our thoughts?

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” Isaiah 55:9.

Oh friends, I thank God for the lessons He’s teaching in the school of experience, teaching us to lay plans, lay them at His feet for correction. And we mustn’t break out in tears when the paper comes back with red pencil marks all over it.

After all friends, if you’re in a class where every day the teacher says, “That’s excellent; a hundred,” you probably need a new teacher, or else a new textbook. Don’t you think so? Yes. That’s right. We need to be face to face with problems that challenge us to do our best *and* that reveal to us certain weaknesses that show them up so that our minds are put to the stretch in thinking through what to do next.

Ministry of Healing, 473:

“Our plans are not always God’s plans” *Ministry of Healing*, page 473.

That doesn’t mean we’re to quit making plans. We studied that already. David didn’t quit making plans because God turned down some of his. He kept on making them.

“Our plans are not always God’s plans. He may see that it is best for us and for His cause to refuse our very best intentions, as He did in the case of David. But of one thing we may be assured, He will bless and use in the

advancement of His cause those who sincerely devote themselves and all they have to His glory” *Ibid.*

Isn't that nice? So if we don't get it the first time, let's try again. What do you say? And if that doesn't get His endorsement, let's go at it a third time. That's the way Paul did in this verse we've just read, and he finally got the beckon, and he answered it.

“If He sees it best not to grant their desires, He will counterbalance the refusal by giving them tokens of His love, and entrusting to them another service” *Ibid.*

So, after you've laid a plan and gotten it all fixed up and bring it in to God, expecting that He'll write “Okay” on it and you'll run off to carry it out, maybe He will, but maybe He won't.

Maybe He'll say, “Well now, I'm sorry. That doesn't fit into My overall plan. But since you're here, while you're here, if you're willing to wait, I'll tell you here's a plan that I'd like to have you carry out.”

Well, it would be worth running in with the plan that we've laid to get close to Him so He can suggest that better plan. What do you say, friends?

“Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed” *Ministry of Healing*, page 473.

Will you repeat that with me?

“Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed” *Ibid.*

I fear there is too much influence in our lives of the worldly idea that the way to succeed is to make a plan and then carry it through no matter what. The success stories of the world are of that character. And it's a wonderful thing to have push. We need every bit of it. It's a wonderful thing to have perseverance. We'll need every ounce of it.

But when we've laid our plans, we're to lay them at His feet and then be prepared to lay them aside or carry them out “as His providence shall indicate” [a paraphrase of *Steps to Christ*, page 70].

“Ah,” somebody says, “but Brother Frazee, what is that providence? How do you know whether to go ahead with the plan or whether not to?”

Well, that my dear friends, is the great lesson of life—learning to read the signals of God's providence, learning when the great Red Sea in front of you means stop, and when it means just stop long enough to have prayer and then go ahead; learning when it's foolish to go out into a desert without bread or water, and learning when it's following the cloud in which is hidden the Son of God.

And nobody in this world can tell you in advance just how you're to know from moment to moment and hour to hour, day to day and week to week, just what the providence of God is leading. That's for you to work out in the laboratory of your life. That's for you to study this Bible.

That is for you to spend time in prayer on your knees saying, "Oh, Lord, help me. Which is the open door, and which is the closed door? Where is the pillar of cloud leading?"

But I can tell you this, my friends, as dear old Elder Luther Warren used to say, "If you play fair with God, God will teach you how to do it."

If you'll tell the Lord there's just one thing you want, and that's to do His will, and keep seeking to lay plans, and lay them at His feet, and watch the signals of His providence, may I say it reverently, it is up to God who is keeping this school to get you through and graduate you by commencement day. That's right. It's up to Him.

And oh, I'm so glad He's going to do it, friends. Not one student in His school is going to fail if they'll listen to the teacher.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ" Philippians 1:6 (marginal reading).

But let me tell you, friends, that to learn that lesson means that we must come to the place where we're willing to have our plans dashed to atoms; that we're willing to wait in uncertainty at times.

You remember that wonderful statement in *Great Controversy* in the chapter on "The Time of Trouble":

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure..." *Great Controversy*, page 621.

What?

"...weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried" *Ibid.*

Ah, to wait and to wait in uncertainty. That is the lesson of faith. That develops patience. And we know that the remnant will be a patient people.

There are those who would make good soldiers if they could just be going all the time. But John the Baptist had to learn to wait and to wait where? In prison. Will any of us have to learn that? Oh, yes.

There are those who can be very happy in a program like this, provided—watch the point—that they have the opportunity for *full* use of their planning abilities. We have some very fertile minds among us, full of plans. And if they can only plan

and get a chance to carry out those plans, then they're happy. But if the hand of God or their brethren is laid upon them in a negative manner, that's hard to take.

But John the Baptist had to learn that lesson, didn't he? And Paul had to learn it over there at Mysia and Bithynia. And we'll all have to learn it before we get through.

As I was meditating on these thoughts, some little verses that I had heard some time ago, something like this came back to my mind. See if you catch the thought:

"I am not eager, anxious, bold,
All that is past;
I am ready *not* to go,
At last, at last."

Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to go somewhere on God's errands, friends. But oh, sometimes the supreme test of faith and trust and surrender is when God apparently has nothing for us to do at the moment, and we're just waiting like a bellboy on the bench, not knowing what the next assignment is.

But in one way or another God keeps working with us and bringing us around, until like the clay we're soft and pliable and ready to be molded.

"Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.
Mold me and make me, After Thy will,
While I am waiting, Yielded and still."

Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnal, #567, first stanza.

So, we're going to lay plans. We're going to lay those plans at His feet, and we're going to understand that that means that we're all prepared to lay them aside or carry them out as His providence shall indicate. And we're going to be sweet about it.

And friends, let's get past the place thinking we're martyrs when we do something like that. Why we're the richest people in the world when God takes our poor little plans and permits us to trade them for His infinite, wonderful plans, aren't we? We're the richest people in the world. A sacrifice? Something we ought to get the Medal of Honor for? Not a bit of it, friends.

We're rich that God thinks enough of us to substitute His wonderful ways for our poor little puny ways.

And do you know something? The thought is growing in my soul tonight as I think about it. If you and I will learn this lesson, friends, God is going to do some things with a rapidity that will surprise us. We'll lay plans and lay them at His feet, and many of them will be set aside. But we'll try again and think through things, and we'll go quickly from one step to another, and God will get His work done.

“There will be a series of events revealing that God is master of the situation” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 9, page 96.

But remember this, the God who could have led His people through from Egypt to Canaan in two years and still have plenty of time to teach them at Sinai, He took 40 years to do it. Why? Because:

“...They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” Psalm 78:41.

And you and I have limited Him too many times, haven't we? Oh, let us tonight make up our minds that *often* our plans will fail so that His plans may succeed. Let's be willing. Let's tell Him that He won't have to give us an anesthetic when He does that surgery on us, that we *want* it and we want it *fast*, one after the other, one step after the other leading us from grace to grace, from glory to glory.

Shall we send Him that word, friends? How many would like to? All right.

Now, I want to open the meeting for a few brief testimonies right to the point. And may I ask that those who speak tonight be sure that God has something special He wants you to say right on this point. And two or three can be standing while one is speaking.

[Testimony meeting follows]

[Following are comments made by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

...Is it the thing for a pupil in a school when the teacher is forever correcting his papers to say, “Teacher, I've decided from now on you just write the papers in the first place, and then we won't have all this problem”?

...You thought you were a poor student, and He still has you enrolled? Isn't that encouraging? That ought to encourage everybody, shouldn't it, folks? Thank the Lord.

...Precious thought. If in our endeavor to carry out the will of God, we misread the signals, if we're honest or playing fair as we studied, God will not only rule, He'll overrule. Yes, He will.

...The question was raised tonight, “How are we going to know?” Well of course, that part of it isn't my subject tonight. I've talked on that at other times. But this matter of guidance is a balance between how God guides the individual and how He guides through the counsel of our fellow workers.

If we depend entirely on the counsel of others, that's the Jesuit principle. But if we depend entirely on our own personal impressions, that leads to the wildest fanaticism. We constantly need to cultivate a balanced thinking, a balanced view so that we expect God to use other human beings to help us see what's wrong with our plans or how to improve them.

And yet, at the same time, don't allow *that* to keep us from seeking in the audience chamber with God the personal evidence that the thing we're doing is approved of heaven. All of that calls for time with our brethren, and also time alone with the Lord; we need both. And nobody can get along with one to the exclusion of the other.

Well, we'll close our little testimony service now. But friends, as we come now to our benediction, I wonder if there's somebody here tonight that you're having a real battle with yourself or with sin, and you've got to have some help right tonight.

I'm sure we all want to do better. That isn't what I'm talking about. I trust every one of us is surrendering fully to Jesus tonight. But there may be somebody that's got to have some very special help right tonight, and you'd like to come up here and kneel down and have us pray for you.

If there is, right now without singing, would you just arise from your seat and come up here and kneel down, if you're needing some very special help and you want us to pray for and with you that God will give you the victory, the help that you must have in the struggle you're facing. And we'll just tarry a moment as God speaks to somebody that's needing that help.

I can assure you, friends, God has it for you; no question about it.

"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" Isaiah 55:6.

And I'm sure that God has at least one soul here tonight that He's talking to right now because the One Who has told us to give His messages, told us that in every congregation, there are souls that are hesitating, almost persuaded to be wholly for God.

And if there's some battle going on in your heart that you don't have the victory on, some struggle that you haven't made the full surrender on, and you need help right now, why not friends make the effort. Get up from your seat and come up here and seek God, and let us seek God for you. There's help for you. There's no question about it.

"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" Isaiah 55:6.

Oh, I long for everybody to be in the circle of light, to be walking in the smile of God, to know that you're accepted in the beloved, to know that your sins are under the blood and that you're walking in the light with Jesus as He is in the light.

Is there one tonight that lacks that full experience, and you want it, and you want to come and seek God? Ah, friend, you can have it, without money and without price. But you must reach out for it.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find...”
Matthew 7:7.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee
great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”
Jeremiah 33:3.

Have you been defeated? Come and get the victory again. Take it home
with you tonight.

“...Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 15:57.

If you don't know what it means to be led and guided of God day by day in full
surrender, I invite you, friends, to come and seek for it because it's yours. It's
bought and paid for with the precious blood of Jesus.

Oh, the power of a church that is made up of men and women that know that
they're led of God. Not in some bombastic, boastful way but in a quiet, humble way,
conscious of their own weakness, yet they know that God is leading.

Is there another that wants to come with these dear ones that are kneeling,
and say, “Yes, this call is for me; I need help, and I want it tonight”?

All right. Will the congregation kneel with us?

Brother Wilson, will you pray?

[Brother Wilson offers prayer.]

“Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er rain my being, Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit, Till all shall see,
Christ only, always, Living in me.”
Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnal, #567, fourth stanza.

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