



What did you accomplish at the "Eat, Pray and Brainstorm" session?

On June 16, sixteen people came together to share ideas about our current building and financial situation. (Like nearly every other organization that relies on donations, the economic downturn has adversely affected our bank account). After prayer for God's guidance we did the first thing we should always do: Check God's Word. It is in His Word that God has already given us guiding principles. Here's a sampling of passages we looked at - all of which we'd had in recent Bible studies - and how we summarized God's message in that passage. Please take a couple minutes to read through them and their summaries

Zechariah 4:6

So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.

(Spoken to Zerubbabel when he and the Israelites were feeling they were powerless to complete rebuilding the temple.)

Summary: Don't judge the project by human standards. God can bring about anything He wills

Haggai 1:2-14

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.'"

[3] Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: [4] "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

[5] Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. [6] You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." (i.e. "Figure out why things aren't going like they should for you." And, in case they couldn't figure it out, God gives them the answer:)

[7] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. [8] Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. [9] "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. [10] Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. [11] I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

[12] Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord.

[13] Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: "I am with you," declares the Lord. [14] So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God,

Summary: Things weren't going as well as expected, because the people were focused on their homes, not God's. Their fortunes turned when they obeyed the Lord and began building the temple.

Luke 14:28-33

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if

he has enough money to complete it? [29] For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, [30] saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

[31] "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? [32] If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. [33] In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Summary: Count the cost before making a commitment - particularly as it relates to following Jesus' lead.?

Proverbs 16:3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Summary: For plans to succeed they need to be God's plans - His will

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

[6] in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Summary: Listen to God and follow His plan - not what makes sense to you

Matthew 6:30-34

O you of little faith? [31] So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [34] Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Summary: God knows what we need, seek Him first and everything falls into place

Jeremiah 29:11-13

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. [12] Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. [13] You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Summary: God has a good plan for His people. That plan always should result in us seeking Him

Malachi 3:9-12

You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. [11] I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. [12] "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.

Summary: tithing brings boatloads of blessings - the chief blessing being other people are attracted to the God who gives the blessings.

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After reading those passages, one common thread was evident:

When it comes to plans, the only opinion that matters is God's. We need to discern *what He wants* in the situation. (And if something *is* God's plan, accomplishing it won't always be a piece of cake, but He will always be with us and help us overcome whatever obstacles Satan puts in the way.)

Given that foundation, we set out to answer these questions about what God wants:

1. Has *God* called us to be a Bible-based Lutheran church in this area?

(We unanimously felt the answer was an obvious "Yes." There is an ever-growing need for Bible-based teaching among Lutherans and Living Word wouldn't be here right now if the answer was "No.")

2. Has God called us to put a building on the land He's given us?

(Again a unanimous and obvious "Yes." God wouldn't have given us the land if He didn't intend it for us as our home base for ministry.)

3. Has God called us to erect the building in summer/fall 2009?

(This was not such an easy answer. There were a lot of "signs" on the "Yes" side. Like the fact that the bids for the building came in at \$66/sq. ft - when the average new building costs \$115-120/sq ft. There is also one big "sign" on the "No" side of the question: In order to attain the down-payment goal we set at the start of our building project, we need at least 3x the amount we currently have in our building fund. So, this would seem to be one of those "Yes, but first I want you to..." answers from God. So our challenge as Building Committee, Mission and Ministry Team and congregation is to get creative in coming up with the rest of the down-payment. We ask your prayers and sharing of insights in this regard. We will keep you informed as we move forward.)

4. What should we do about our current shortfall in General Fund giving?

(Many ideas were shared, but one came through loud and clear straight from God: As a congregation we need to make tithing a reality, not just a stated priority - check again the passage above from Malachi chapter 3. The Mission and Ministry Team voted unanimously to follow God's directive and "test Him in this." We directed our treasurer to pay our tithe (ten percent of the offering) to our district's mission fund with the first check written each week. As God said so plainly in the Proverb 3:5-6 passage above, we need to trust Him in this area and lean not on our own (faulty) understanding. Again, we ask your prayers and for you to "test God in this" on your own.)

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net