

Pray and Plan



A historical, Bible-based, decision-making method

Association of Military Christian Fellowships (AMCF)
www.amcf-int.org

Purpose

This booklet has been produced and provided by the *Association of Military Christian Fellowships (AMCF)* and *Association for Christian Conferences, Teaching, and Service (ACCTS)*.

AMCF encourages a broad understanding and use of the uniquely effective Pray and Plan decision-making process, which has used by military Christian fellowships (MCFs) around the world since the early 1900s. This material has been condensed from the book, *Pray and Plan*, authored by Col. Tom Capps (USAF, Ret.).

AMCF encourages MCFs in all nations to train its members to use Pray and Plan as the decision-making method of choice in order to promote Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-led, and God-pleasing leadership of worldwide military Christian ministry. **Pray and Plan should be more than a process only used occasionally. It should become a way of life for all decisions.** To this end, AMCF leadership is praying that this booklet will transform the hearts and minds of military Christians and their families to the ends of the earth.



Prepared by
Colonel Tom Capps,
U. S. Air Force, Retired
Email: cappstom@gmail.com

History of Pray and Plan

In 1851, Captain Edward Trotter, an English Household Cavalry officer serving in Northwest India (modern Pakistan), was so concerned about the spiritual welfare of his men that he sent his friends in England an invitation to pray for God's blessing on the military in general, and on his men in particular. Within six months, 300 of his English Christian friends had signed up to receive his *Call to Prayer* letters. This led directly to the formation of what is today called *Armed Forces Christian Union* – a military Christian fellowship (MCF) in the U.K.

The first person to formalize the Pray and Plan teaching was Brigadier General David Forster. He was the son of a Christian general and his whole family strongly supported the MCF. Brigadier Forster was twice wounded in the First World War. His daughter, Joyce, married Major General Sir Robbie Ewbank, who became a convinced protagonist of Pray and Plan. He took every opportunity to explain Pray and Plan to others.

General and Lady Ewbank visited the United States in 1966, just after he retired from military service and while he was President of the British Officers' Christian Union (OCU). They shared two concepts with the U.S. MCF leadership which have been used ever since. The first was the organized undergirding of military ministry by prayer, particularly by civilians, and an adjunct they called Pray and Plan -- a planning exercise where you pray first, requesting and expecting the Lord's leading. Then, you plan as any good staff officer would, after God makes it clear the direction or decision to follow to make it happen. In other words, **the Pray and Plan procedure gets us out of the mode of making our plans and then asking God to bless them.** It gets us on His frequency, as opposed to asking Him to bless our agenda.

Scriptural Basis for Pray and Plan



Acts 13:1-3. This is the best example of Pray and Plan used by early Christians. This group of men was ministering to God through worship and by fasting. It is important to note that they were not making any requests to God. **However, the Holy Spirit showed up** to provide unique and creative guidance for the specific situation (the people involved, the time and the place). By worshipping God, **the men got their hearts and minds in tune with God's heart and mind so that they were able to hear**

God's guidance, understand it and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey without hesitation.

Samuel 15:22. God gave King Saul clear guidance about dealing with the Amalekites. However, the king chose another path that he thought was best and did nothing that God wanted him to do. Instead, he did only what he wanted to do. As a result, King Saul lost his kingdom and subsequently his life. This is a good example to encourage us to **always seek and obey God's guidance before making any decision and before taking any action.**

James 4:3. There are a number of reasons Christians do not realize answers to their prayers. This verse says one reason is asking with **wrong motives**. That means that the request was not in line with God's nature or desires. Our desires are often influenced by the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes or our boastful pride of life (Genesis 3:6, 1 John 2:16). The best way to eliminate these ungodly influences is through creative and intentional worship. Genuine worship takes our eyes off of our problems and circumstances by refocusing our full attention on our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Through such worship we get our hearts and minds in tune with God.

John 15:5. Jesus teaches us that He is the vine and we are the branches. It is crucial for the branches to be vitally connected to the Vine so that He can produce good fruit through us (the branches). Jesus reminds us in verse five that "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing.**"

It is imperative that we always allow Christ to work in and through us rather than attempting to do His work for Him.

Philippians 4:13. We are taught that we can do all things in Christ who strengthens us. It is important to remember that this promise is conditional. Unless we fulfill the conditions, we cannot effectively claim the promise. The required conditions in verses 11-12 teach us the need to **be content in whatever circumstance we encounter.** We must never be complacent in our circumstances. Instead, we are to be fully content with all that God supplies (what, when, how and why).

Proverbs 3:5-8. Our trust in God must come from our heart. What we believe in our heart determines what we think with our mind. We should never put thinking ahead of believing. Abraham believed with his heart, and it was counted as righteousness to him (Galatians 3:5-7). Our belief in God is determined by our faith in Him. Since God is a faithful God, we only have to have faith the size of a mustard seed (Matthew 17:19--21) in order to have confidence in God's ability to provide our every need and to protect us from all evil. **We need to acknowledge all the power and authority of God instead of depending on our own understanding** so that God can give us heavenly wisdom and make our paths straight. When man is able to totally trust God for all things (Matthew 6:33) and choose to allow God to accomplish all of His work without human interference, then we benefit from God's blessings which bring healing to our bones (Proverbs 3:8).

Isaiah 57:14. The power of leadership often corrupts the heart and mind of the leader. The result is that servant leadership is transformed into selfishness and greed. This is what happened to the leaders of Israel as described in the first thirteen verses of Isaiah 57. God instructed the prophet to tell the leaders about their responsibility to the people. This responsibility involves building up, preparing the way and removing obstacles instead of creating obstacles. **Leaders must never create obstacles for others.**

John 5:19. The best way to know God's will is to follow Jesus' example by doing only what our Heavenly Father does. But it is impossible for us to imitate Jesus' behavior in our own strength. We can only accomplish this by **allowing His life to be lived in and through us.** Jesus always prayed to His Father to discover God's will so that He would know exactly what to do. If Jesus is God and did this while on earth, we have no excuse for not doing the same.

Matthew 6:7-9. If we believe that our Heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask Him, why do we ask Him? There is nothing wrong with asking God for things, provided we ask in the right way and with the right motive. The best way to achieve a God-pleasing condition of heart and mind is to **worship God in every facet of life so that we will always want to know and obey His will instead of our own.** Once our hearts and minds are properly conditioned by worship, we will have put on the mind of Christ and will be equipped to ask for things that please and honor the Father.



Obstacles to Understanding God's Guidance

- There are **many obstacles that prevent us from appropriating, understanding and obeying God's guidance.** Many of these obstacles are associated with ungodly attitudes and feelings. They originate from Satan's deceptions which manifest primarily in human pride and fear from which all other attitudinal obstacles to God's guidance flow. These obstacles might include a spirit of independence, reliance on human intellect, anger, bitterness, resentment, an unforgiving spirit, lack of faith, etc. It is important to eliminate these obstacles through creative, intentional and continuous worship.



- **So often Christians are caught up with doing things instead of *being* the person that God has created them to be.** An attitude of busy-ness detracts from an authentic and intimate relationship with God as Christ had with His Father. To avoid the trap of excess activity or having life filled with activities not directed by God, it is important to understand the division of labor that God has established -- God's part and our part.

God's Part

- Creates everything
- Owns everything
- Controls everything
- Supplies everything
- Directs everything
- Protects everything

Our Part

- Being good receivers of God's blessings (requires these attitudes:)
- Grateful for all of God's supply
- Content with all of God's ways
- Abandoned to God for all our supply
- Being faithful stewards of all things provided by God

- **Often Christian busy-ness involves attempts to do God's work for Him.** For example, thinking we own anything, wanting to control life's outcomes, attempting to supply our own needs or depending on ourselves for protection from evil are ways we deny God's control of our lives. When we try to do God's part, we do not have time to do our part. As a result, we hinder God's desire and ability to work.

- Many Christians have been taught not to rely on feelings and emotions when making decisions. This counsel is usually based on not allowing unhealthy feelings and emotions (unrighteous anger, bitterness, resentment, etc.) to adversely impact our choices. Although it is true that we should never incorporate such feelings in our decisions, there are many God-honoring feelings and emotions which can enhance decision making. **All the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control [Galatians 5:22]) will positively influence wise decisions.** Likewise, other godly emotions or character traits (generosity, grace, forgiveness, mercy, long-suffering, etc.) will improve our decisions.
- It is important to understand how our hearts and minds interact with God and His guidance. If we appropriate and use God’s guidance wrongly, we will suffer harm unnecessarily. The chart below describes how God desires His guidance to be manifest in us.

Beliefs →	Thoughts →	Words/ Deeds →	Habits →	Character →	Destiny
Heart	Mind	Mind	Mind	Mind	Heart
Justification	Sanctification				Glorification

The top row indicates our progression in understanding God’s will.

- The foundation of understanding is what we believe. Romans 10:10 tells us that we believe with our heart resulting in righteousness. Believing with our heart is associated with justification, the first step of salvation.
- Our beliefs are the foundation of our thoughts, which originate in our mind. According to Romans 12:2, we are to have our minds renewed (by walking in the Spirit rather than by the flesh [Galatians 5:16]).
- Our thoughts determine what we say and do. These activities are also processed by our minds.
- When we say and do things on a recurring basis, they become habits, the fruit of how we think with our minds.
- Habits define our character, the ultimate fruit of our minds.
- Our thoughts, words, deeds, habits and character are part of sanctification which pertains to the renewal of our minds so that our behavior pleases God.

- Justification and sanctification lead to glorification that occurs when a believer is in the Lord's presence.
- If a person desires to make adjustments in their thought life, behavior, habits or character, they cannot focus their efforts in these specific areas. Instead, they must adjust their beliefs in order to affect the follow-on attributes.
- There remain two major obstacles to discovering and obeying God's guidance. **The first involves a person or group of people thinking it is their responsibility to fulfill any guidance or vision received from God. The second is impatience with God's timing and choosing to fulfill the guidance or vision according to human timetables.**
 - Many Christians believe that it is God's responsibility to provide guidance through visions, but that it is man's responsibility to fulfill the vision. Nothing could be further from the truth. This error results from man's inability to know and consider all the conditions associated with a vision and from man's inability to know how and why God performs His handiwork. Human effort only corrupts God's best or excellent way of performing a task. All such human effort results in sin because God's best is sacrificed for the sake of expediency.
 - The second obstacle, impatience, results from a lack of understanding of God's *kairos* timing. God's *kairos* timing deals more with completion of essential prerequisites prior to taking action as opposed to simply measuring time in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years, etc. Christians often think it is their responsibility to complete the vision in an expeditious manner without any consideration of the prerequisite conditions that God alone understands. By getting ahead of God's timing, the person or group of persons walks into a serious trap of sin which disrupts God's best solution. The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 illustrates how to appropriate God's *kairos* timing. There are three lessons to learn from this scripture: timely preparation, patient waiting, and moving with God (not before or after).

Preparation, Discovery and Execution

The three segments of Pray and Plan -- preparation, discovery and execution – form the method for discovering and obeying God’s guidance.

The most important segment of Pray and Plan is **preparation**, which consists of creative and intentional worship. This step reorients the heart and mind of each planner to coincide with God’s heart and mind. When that happens, then they will be able to hear, understand and obey God’s guidance. When this occurs, planners will be in consensus with God and one another. It is also important for properly prepared planners to accept guidance received from God without any doubt or hesitation. Very often God will provide His guidance during the period of worship and before anyone asks Him for anything. Acts 13:1-3 provides a great example of this phenomenal occurrence.

Once the heart and minds of planners have been prepared through worship, it is time to **discover God’s guidance**.

The founders of the Pray and Plan process discovered that God provides His guidance through the needs He creates in people, relationships and situations.

God led Adam by creating in him a need for a wife or helpmate. The first step in God’s guidance process is to create needs. God then reveals created needs to us if our hearts and minds are properly prepared. God revealed Adam’s need for a helpmate by having him name the animals that had male and female counterparts. The third step in God’s guidance process is His fulfillment of the created need. In Adam’s case, God provided the precise solution for Adam’s need. God will do the same for us if we give Him permission to do His work according to His way and timing.



The final phase of Pray and Plan involves **execution** of the plan, development of prayer support and celebration of fulfilled needs. Pray and Plan efforts will normally require more than one meeting to complete the process. Each meeting should be a minimum of three hours to give the planning team adequate time to get in tune with God’s heart and mind in order to discover His desires, purpose, and plan.

Preparing Hearts and Minds

A Pray and Plan team consists of several players: a leader, members, prayer coordinator(s) and members who monitor



and report the status of God’s fulfillment of measurable objectives. The roles of these players will be described later.

Making adjustments to the hearts and minds of planners is a crucial facet of Pray and Plan because of inherent distortions of beliefs, thinking and acting that are a part of human nature. These distortions result from our sinful nature characterized by lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and a boastful pride of life. These views are further corrupted by environmental inputs such as marketing, ungodly philosophies and selfish behavior of others. If we attempt to make decisions based on distorted truth, we will always arrive at the wrong conclusion.

The best way to transform the heart and mind of planners is through creative and intentional worship of God, who controls and supplies everything that has been created. The normal tendency of humans is to focus on the circumstances, relationships or problems at hand. By worshipping God in spirit and truth (John 4:24), the worshipper’s eyes focus on God, the solution to all of life’s challenges, instead of the circumstances, relationships and problems. There is a fallacy in looking at circumstances, relationships and problems when attempting to make decisions. The error is that these points of view lead to temporal and distorted “fixes” that fail to provide long-term, eternal solutions.

The worship involved in Pray and Plan preparation includes three elements: praise or adoration, confession and thanksgiving. Each of these elements has a unique definition and purpose. The purpose of worship is to ascribe worth to the object of our worship.

Praise, or adoration, involves acknowledgement of God's character as revealed in the Bible. There are endless descriptions of God found in scripture: He is love, He is sovereign, He is all powerful, He is gracious, He is merciful, etc. So, worship is acknowledging the character God and simply telling Him what He has revealed about Himself in the Bible. Praise and adoration should be creative and pleasing to God. A good way to worship God is to read scripture describing His character to Him. Many of these scriptures are found in the Psalms.

Confession is simply agreeing with God about what is right or wrong in our lives. Jesus tells us that if we confess Him before men that he will confess us before His Father (Matthew 10:32). Confessing Jesus with our mouths leads to salvation (Romans 10:9-10). If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us (1 John 1:9). James 5:16 tells us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another in order that we might be healed. We should pray for the sins of our nation, our churches, our leaders and others whose are truly dishonoring God.

Thanksgiving is acknowledging God's goodness and His wonderful handiwork. Since God is responsible for creating, owning, controlling, supplying, directing and protecting everything, it is appropriate to thank Him for doing all of these things for us. Such thankfulness will create a spirit of gratitude and contentment with all that God does.

The Pray and Plan leader should structure worship to focus on one element at a time and should allow the Holy Spirit to determine the duration of each element. It is not important to always begin and end with the same elements, but it is important to include all elements in process. Worship might begin with confession, if appropriate, or with thanksgiving if that works best.

During the worship, the Holy Spirit might reveal some God-created needs associated with His guidance. If this happens, have the recorder make note of what is revealed.

At the end of worship, it is appropriate to ask God to have His Holy Spirit erase all ungodly human wisdom and opinions from the hearts and minds of each person on the planning team. By eliminating these obstacles, everyone will be better prepared to hear, understand and embrace God's guidance that will come in the next planning phase, called Discovery.

Discovering God's Guidance

In the Pray and Plan process, **God's guidance is revealed through the needs He creates in each person, relationship and circumstance.**

Since God creates each person uniquely, He also creates unique needs in each person in order to guide them to the unique purpose and plan He has for them. In the same way, God creates unique needs for each relationship and each circumstance. God is never a copy-cat God and does not repeat Himself by bestowing the same needs in different people, relationships or circumstances. There has only been one crossing of the Red Sea, one crossing of the Jordan River and one battle of Jericho.

This phase of Pray and Plan involves discovery of God's created needs through a type of brainstorming session that has been enhanced by worship for the preparation of hearts and minds. As God reveals the needs He wants to fulfill, the team recorder should make a record of each need in a manner that is visible to all the planners. Be careful not to evaluate or criticize any of the inputs if they seem foolish or illogical since God will often use foolish things to confuse those who think they are wise. Once all the needs are listed, attempt to group similar needs and write a concise statement of each group of needs. The final step in this part of the exercise is to ask God His priority for fulfilling the needs. The recorder should put the needs in priority order.

The next step is to **ask God what He will do to fulfill each need.** Be careful not to ask God how He will fulfill a need or why since no one would be able to fully comprehend such answers. Once God reveals what He intends to do and when, the planning group should prepare a "measurable objective" defining what and when God says He will do into a concise and measurable objective statement. After this statement has been prepared, the planning team should select one person to monitor God's progress in fulfilling each need. An example of a measurable objective might be, "Establish an outreach to military widows in eighteen months. Monitor: Major Rodriguez."



Executing the Plan

In many ways, execution of the plan is the simplest and easiest part of the entire Pray and Plan process because it is God's responsibility to fulfill all the measurable objectives and to control the outcome of all efforts. The role of the planning team is to monitor God's progress in completing the plan and to do any preparation that is needed in order to facilitate God's handiwork.

One of the chief responsibilities of the planning team is to develop comprehensive prayer support for the

plan. The team leader should appoint one or more prayer coordinators who have the responsibility to collect prayer requests from team members and then distribute the requests to team members and prayer warriors. These prayer warriors should be mature Christians who have a proven track record as prayer intercessors. The prayer coordinators will periodically update the prayer requests when God has fulfilled some of the needs in order to keep everyone apprised of the status of plan fulfillment.

The planning team needs to meet periodically to evaluate God's progress in plan fulfillment and to make minor course corrections as needed and as guided by God. Be sure to record any miracles that occur during plan execution as a testimony of God's goodness.

It is important to celebrate God's handiwork in fulfilling parts or all of the plan. It would be good to include prayer warriors in the celebrations.

Closing Comments. If Pray and Plan is used as it was intended, the planning team will discover that **God's solution will always exceed the fondest imaginations of any team member.** God will always provide good reasons for worshipping Him. Please see the next page for some testimonies of God's miracles.

Testimonies of Pray and Plan Miracles

- As a very immature Christian in 1972, when I returned from the war in Vietnam, my flying squadron commander introduced me to Pray and Plan. He invited me to help him conduct a Pray and Plan to establish a Bible study for instructors and student pilots at our base. I had extremely limited knowledge of the Bible, had never been part of a Bible study and had never heard of Pray and Plan. In spite of these obstacles, God guided us and supplied a wonderful Bible study fellowship on Friday nights when most people might have been attracted to other activities.
- My first experience in leading a Pray and Plan occurred in 1980. I had been the president of a men's group that met monthly at the base chapel. After a year in this role, it was time to make a leadership transition. However, no one would step up to the responsibility. So, I gathered a few leaders and led them through a Pray and Plan. The first meeting consisted of nothing but worship for three hours. One member of the group commented that we needed to get on with making some decisions. I encouraged him by saying we had built the foundation. The next week the same group met, and within an hour God had supplied us with creative and unique solutions. God revealed three needs He wanted to fulfill: (1) leadership training, (2) creative programs and (3) appetizing meals. God then revealed His way of fulfilling these needs. Instead of having a small group of people to serve in these rolls, He guided us to a rotating leadership. The first month, a man would coordinate catering of the meal. The second month the same man would advertise the program that he would coordinate and emcee the third month. In this way, the men's group enjoyed creative meals and creative programming. When the concept was presented, everyone in the group volunteered to serve for three months without hesitation. God provided us a creative solution that none of us could have ever imagined in our own wisdom.

* In 1981, my family was transferred to a new base of assignment. Our two children were fourteen and twelve, and we had made no plans to pay for their college educations. After researching the total cost of tuition, fees, books, housing and meals at government supported universities, I discovered the cost would be more than we could possibly save from my salary. My wife and I entered into a Pray and Plan session to discover God's creative solution. After worshipping God, we asked Him what needs He had for our

children's education and what He wanted to do to meet the needs. He instructed us to get two blank pieces of paper and for each of us to write a dollar amount without seeing what the other wrote. This amount should be saved and invested for each child the day they entered university. We both wrote the same numbers on our papers. We were amazed at how God had guided us, but we could not see any way that this amount would be sufficient since it would not cover two years of schooling for each child. God encouraged us to trust His plan. Little did we know that He had already been working out His solution. When we relocated to our new duty station, we had wanted to buy a home but, interest rates were extremely high, and we could not find a home available for sale. As a result, we moved into Air Force housing that was very economical and included utilities. As a result, we were able to save a considerable sum each month. By the time our daughter entered university in 1985, we had saved the amount as God instructed us. A year later, she transferred to a school in Texas—an option we had never considered. She was able to attend as a resident of Texas because I had moved our permanent residence to that state fourteen years earlier when I returned from Vietnam in 1972. As a result of her residence status, her education costs were extremely reasonable. In 1987, our son entered university in Texas as a state resident and also had very reasonable costs. It took our daughter 5.5 years to complete her training, and our son took 4.5 years. So, instead of spending a very large amount for ten years of schooling, we only spent less than one-third of the amount most people spend. Our children received excellent educations at a cost much lower than we would have paid without seeking God's guidance.

- After retiring from the Air Force in 1992, my wife and I accepted responsibility for coordinating the 1994 AMCF World Conference. We worked for two years along with forty other planning team members. In June 1993 (sixteen months before the conference), the publicity committee asked for the all-inclusive price for conference attendance (excluding airfares), and they needed an answer by December so they could print and distribute 25,000 flyers worldwide. At that time, our team had no information on the cost of conference expenses, lodging, meals or local transportation to area hotels. However, our forty-member team prayed for four hours with intermittent discussion periods. At the end of our seeking God's solution, He told us to charge \$348 per delegate for a five-day conference. When I presented this answer to the leadership of the host

organization, I was told that the price would need to be at least \$500 to \$600 per delegate. Realizing that our host organization leaders had not benefitted from participating in the Pray and Plan, I could easily understand their different point of view. In December before our planning team met, I called the host organization to determine a price to charge for conference attendance. By that time, they had received budgets for all the working groups on our planning team. We reviewed the budgets to eliminate duplications of expenses. Then, we added the individual budget to get a total cost for the conference and divided the amount by 800 which was the break-even attendance God had provided us. The result of our calculation was \$350 per conference delegate. The host organization leader and I were amazed at the outcome. But, I appealed to him to take one more look at the budgets to see if another duplication of expenses existed. We found a \$1,600 duplication which when divided by 800 allowed us to adjust the price to \$348. This was the same price God gave our team sixteen months earlier when we had no information about conference

expenses. When the conference was over and all bills had been paid, we realized a surplus of \$65,000 which was enough to help members of the planning team to visit various nations around the world who attended the conference in order to promote military



ministry and chaplaincy to ministers of defense and commanding generals. We learned to trust God for His answer instead of trusting just facts that we could collect.

- My church used Pray and Plan to seek God's guidance for a new marriage ministry. The senior pastor, other pastors, elders and lay people and our wives met for nine three-hour sessions. At the end of the planning effort, the marriage class was started. It had an enrollment of more than 400 and had a waiting list for additional attenders. The success of this class came with almost no advertising. God moved in the hearts of His people to attend. This class was the largest ever the church had experienced.

- In 1994, I used Pray and Plan to establish a personal business for retirement. God led me to establish creative strategies for generating funding for God's kingdom. The blessing of this approach is that the business belongs to God, and I am only the manager. As a result, I am protected from selfish and greedy motives so that God is pleased with all the business activities.
- My wife and I have recently participated in a Pray and Plan effort to help another family deal with unemployment plus financial and relational needs in their family. The husband lost his job and then was involved in a serious accident that prevented him from working. The wife also lost her employment. As a result of lost income, the family has been on the verge of losing their home. Both parents are relatively new believers. They have three sons who do not actively walk with the Lord. The Pray and Plan team included another couple from our church and a gentleman who is involved in helping others re-establish their footing in life. The Pray and Plan effort has helped the couple see and understand God's goodness and His ability to guide them through the many obstacles they face. Execution of the plan will take an extended period as God orchestrates solutions to all the issues.
- **SUMMARY TESTIMONY.** The first few times one uses Pray and Plan, it tends to be viewed as a process. However, as one gains more experience with the decision method, it will become a way of life that impacts every life choice.

