

Strategic Thinking:
Blueprints for Life, Work, and Ministry

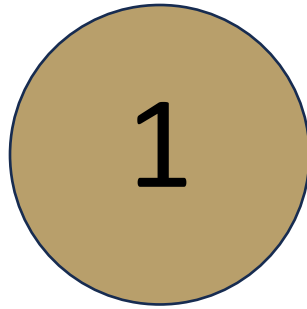


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God the Strategic Thinker

God lives and works strategically; the closer we are to Him and how He thinks, the more strategic and focused we become. God thinks from the end to the beginning and from the macro to the micro.

Genesis 1:26-28 explains that God designed us to reflect and emulate the way He thinks so we could rule over the earth. We were created to think the way our heavenly Father thinks, and our heavenly Father is a strategic thinker, par excellence. No one thinks as strategically as He does!

Someone once asked me, "If God loves me so much, why didn't He take me home to be with Him when I got saved?" Good question. Why doesn't God save us all a lot of trouble and take us directly to the sky when we accept salvation? The reason is simple: The earth is our training ground, not only to walk out the implications of the covenant but to grow in relationship and maturity as we learn to be good stewards and managers of His resources. He is after men and women who desire to think the way He thinks, act the way He acts, and are capable of stewarding His creation as co-rulers with Christ.

This concept is novel to many believers. They have always thought the purpose of their salvation was to become holy, go to heaven, and sing in the heavenly choir. All these things have a place, but that is not the reason He saved us. The reason is that Father is building a family business. He wants us to take our place as managers in the family business, fulfilling His plan of using believers to bring life on Earth under His order.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Romans 8:17:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Acts 2:23

This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Revelation 13:8

All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world

SUMMARY

- God thinks from the end to the beginning and from the macro to the micro.
- The earth is our training ground, not only to walk out the implications of the covenant but to grow in relationship and maturity as we learn to be good stewards and managers of His resources.
- He wants us to take our place as managers in the family business, fulfilling His plan of using believers to bring life on Earth under His order.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever thought of God as being strategic? Why or why not?
2. Why is it important for us to think strategically?

2

Ingredients for Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking requires both revelation and self-conscious awareness. The Holy Spirit must reveal to you why you need to think this way. Remember what Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you but your Father who is in heaven.” We need a revelation of strategic thinking!

Strategic thinking is the understanding and self-conscious awareness that gives power to what you do. It is one thing to do something by accident; it is another thing to be self-consciously aware of what you are doing. Self-consciousness adds power of infinite measure to what you do. You cannot reproduce an accident, but once you become self-conscious and understand the mechanisms and the principles behind it, you can intentionally recreate the same phenomenon. That is why we must become self-conscious in our thinking.

Strategic thinking is ultimately the understanding, desire, and ability to marshal and steward resources over time and effectively carry out a task.

Understanding: We must have a revelation of our need to think strategically.

Desire: We must have the willingness to learn and pay the price to live strategically.

Ability to marshal: We must have the ability to effectively steward our lives and focus on a preplanned direction that produces anticipated results.

Over time: Strategy requires time to work through and committed relationships which are built through trust earned over time.

Take the example of a prism. If you hold the prism up to the sun, you can focus its light and start a fire. You can take diffused heat and make it highly focused and multiply its power. God sees, plans, and applies all His resources into a specific focus, just as He did in Christ. That is what God wants for all our lives and ministries—the focusing of our life force so that we move a specific thing in a pre-planned direction, and it produces anticipated, purposeful results. That is effective life and ministry. Through this focus of energy and resources, we can accomplish the goals God has established by the Spirit.

In addition to revelation and awareness, we need the ingredients of time and key relationships. Strategy requires time, and time requires committed relationships that operate with longevity. It takes covenanted people working together over time to produce anything that lasts, be it family, church, ministry, or a business. Strategic thinking is beginning with the end in mind.

Key Scriptures

Matthew 16:17:

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven

Ephesians 1:18-23

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

SUMMARY

- Strategic thinking is ultimately the understanding, desire, and ability to marshal and steward resources over time and effectively carry out a task.
- God wants all our lives and ministries to be focusing our life force so that we can move a specific thing in a pre-planned direction, and produce anticipated, purposeful results.
- Strategy requires time, and time requires committed relationships that operate with longevity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is time so important relative to strategy?
2. What are some of the sacrifices involved in living strategically?

3

THE CARNAL MIND VERSUS THE STRATEGIC MIND

God's mind and thinking are divine and eternal. The focal point of the Father's resources is His Son, Jesus Christ. What is the focal point of your mind and resources, and how do you know?

While God's mind is divine and strategic, our carnal minds often think short-term. We tend to think in terms of the immediate: "If it feels good, I will do it." I will take the path of least resistance based on what feels good. Most Christians live on this level. However, feelings produce short-run goals and short-run living.

To the other extreme, we have fatalism which says, "The world is too big. I am powerless to change it, so why attempt to make long-range plans?" The carnal mind operates at these two extremes: We either live by our feelings and take the path of least resistance, or we live by fatalism and avoid long-term planning because we believe failure is inevitable.

However, because we have (or should have) the mind of Christ, we are called to think strategically. We are to manage His cosmos, i.e., the world order. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." World or cosmos comes from the root word, komeo, which means "to tend for in an orderly arrangement." God so loved the orderly arrangement that He did what? He gave us His only Son so we could have eternal life. When we read that, we might think God is just talking about the saving of souls. But He is talking about

the entirety of His creation. Paul shows us that in Romans 8 when he talks about the whole creation groaning in travail. Sin marred all creation, including both man and nature. Because God loves to tend and bring order to His creation, He sent His Son to die for us and to recapture the ability for us to manage all that He created.

Key Scriptures

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 8:5-8

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Proverbs 21:5

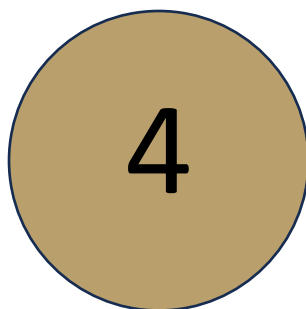
The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty.

SUMMARY

- God's mind is divine and strategic, our carnal minds often think short-term.
- Because God loves to tend and bring order to His creation, He sent His Son to die for us and to recapture the ability for us to manage all that He created.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the pitfalls of the carnal mind?
2. Discuss the command to steward the cosmos and what that implies for us as believers.



ATTRIBUTES OF STRATEGIC THINKING

There are four key attributes of strategic thinking.

Key 1: Strategic thinking produces design in all it touches. God is a designer. He created everything according to its kind. In other words, if your ministry is raising cattle, don't go into the chicken business! Many people struggle to identify their ministry, so they try everything, hoping they will accidentally find their anointing. When an organization starts, there may be numerous projects, needs, or opportunities screaming for attention. This snare can divert us from our primary calling and purpose. Studies on the most effective long-term companies show a common characteristic of sticking to their niche. A successful company knows its primary purpose and does not get involved in producing products or services that could divert it from its main call.

Where are you called to influence and where are you called to directly steward? You can influence far more than you can control. In your life and ministry you must decide what you are going to influence and what you are going to control. If you try to control what you are only supposed to influence, you will fail. Control requires full administrative energy- that which you steward God requires you to administrate. Influence requires little to no control since it deals with impact through the force of ideas and perceived power.

Key 2: A strategic thinker thinks from the whole to the part and from the end, backward. This type of thinking ensures the overall goal is in sight. Ask yourself, "What will this ministry or project look like in its fruition?" Of course, it rarely ends up looking exactly like that. But if you don't start with a big-picture

vision to work backward from, I guarantee you will never get there. You don't think forward first; you must think backward.

Isaiah 55:8 reminds us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." God thinks from the end to the beginning. That is why He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. He didn't just think about the Garden of Eden in Genesis; He thought about the full consequences beyond the Book of Revelation. If you have the mind of Christ, you can begin to think from the end to the beginning and from the whole to the part—because that is the way God thinks.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:21

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Revelation 13:8

All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Key 3: Strategic thinking builds a platform and focal point from which to work. If you plan to build something, you must have both a platform and the tools. What is it that Father has given me as the platform of my operation? What preceding words, key relationships, mission, church, business focus, or other resources has He provided as my base? Another way to discern God's plan for you is to realistically assess the resources he has committed to you.

Four primary questions to ask:

1. What is in your hand?

Exodus 4.2

Then the Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied.

2. Who is in your heart?

Ephesians 3.1-3

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

3. Who are you joined to?

Ephesians 4.16

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

4. What is your training?

I Samuel 17.34-37

But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

Key 4: Strategic thinking relativizes and prioritizes all activity. That is, strategic thinking puts everything into perspective. If you are in the cattle business and a chicken opportunity comes, you must ask, “How will this chicken deal fit into the cattle-raising business?” If it does not fit, do not do it. Whatever does not fit into your primary function is jettisoned. We prioritize by identifying our primary directive, ensuring all our activities are directly related to it. We ask: How will this lead to the furtherance of the master plan or assignment? Will it matter in five, ten, or twenty years that I am doing this?

I now measure my days by these long-term questions. I do not judge the success of my day by how much work I got done. I can grind out a lot of work, but this effort is moot if it has not moved the ball down the

field one inch; all it has done is maintain my current assignment. I must instead look at whether today's efforts will matter next year and many years from now. If I put time into something that matters in the big picture, I consider it a good day. If you do not invest a portion of your time into long-run projects, you will continually stay in the hamster wheel. You will answer all your emails and phone calls, shuffle papers, read some books, and at the end of the year, you will be satisfied until you realize you are in the same place you began. We must recognize that which is our long-term work and sow into it.

Key Scriptures

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Luke 14:28-35

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 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. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Ephesians 5:15-17

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is.

SUMMARY

- Strategic thinking produces design in all it touches.
- A strategic thinker thinks from the whole to the part and from the end, backward.
- Strategic thinking builds a platform and focal point from which to work.
- Strategic thinking relativizes and prioritizes all activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Under key 3 ask and discuss the four primary questions listed.
2. Are there any key areas in your life where your priorities might be out of line with your overall life objective?

5

STRATEGIC THINKING AS A LIFESTYLE

To live and think strategically, we must be committed to creating a regular habit of setting aside time simply to think and do nothing else. We need to think and freely process all aspects of our lives: family, business, spiritual, and service in general. Until we see the value of regular, reflective time, strategic living will be either a “plastic exercise” or a legalistic ritual. This time to think is committed reflection, with paper and pen at hand, to record what God will bring to mind.

Quietness before God regularly is the hardest thing for most leader/builder-type people. Quietness requires not only the absence of external activity but the quieting of the mind internally. To help achieve this, I write down the obvious “to do’s” that show up in the quietness of my mind in the first twenty minutes or so. Gradually, as I come to true quietness, insight often comes. The ideas and concepts discovered take us to a greater level of creative thinking and multiple-level problem-solving. True strategic thinking is multi-level, often buried behind to-do lists which cut short the reflective process before it begins. Undoubtedly, God gave us the gift of a day of Sabbath rest to promote the use of sufficient time to move from work and checklists the level of, “Lord, what do YOU want me to see?”

Strategic planning, while it does involve agendas, duties, scope-and-sequence concepts, and critical path exercises should ultimately serve us by clarifying what is truly important. Goals and personal achievement targets for our personal lives or ministries may be contrary to our growth in Christ. Our objectives must be birthed in God, aligned with our engifted destiny, and energized by faith rather than simple ego needs

or materialistic greed. This value clarification is not an exercise in psychological games; it is born through the practice of asking the right questions and regularly having reflective, quiet time before God.

Key Scriptures

Proverbs 16:3

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

Exodus 20:8-11

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Psalms 46:10

He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Luke 5:16

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

SUMMARY

- To live and think strategically, we must be committed to creating a regular habit of setting aside time simply to think and do nothing else.
- tba Strategic planning should ultimately serve us by clarifying what is truly important.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What practical changes do you need to make to your schedule in order to build in more regular time to just sit and think?
2. Who in your sphere of influence should you share some of these key truths with?



About GoStrategic

Founded in 1979 by Dennis Peacocke, GoStrategic is a prophetic ministry committed to training and equipping leaders of every cultural sphere in discipling nations and transforming the world. GoStrategic operates internationally, educating Christians through our online schools—the School of Business Leadership (GoBusiness), the School of Strategic Living (GoLife), and the School of Kingdom Citizenship (GoCitizen)—as well as events, networking, and educational products. Our ministry headquarters are based in Santa Rosa, California, with affiliate schools around the world. www.gostrategic.org

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Katherine Gallagher currently serves as the Executive Director of GoStrategic. She is a former small-business owner, author, and speaker who has made numerous media appearances. Katherine holds a bachelor's degree in communication from Azusa Pacific University and resides in Santa Rosa, California with her husband and two children. www.katherinegallagher.tv