

FOCUS ON FAITH

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

At this time of the year many of us begin to think about making plans for the following twelve months. With the holiday company brochures dropping on the doormats, even though it's six to seven months away, we'll be deciding on where we want to get away to for that summer break. Then there are all the jobs that need to be done around the house – the spare room that needs decorating or the bathroom that needs updating.

Or what about our working lives? There may be plans we need to formulate about our careers or possibly lack of them because you're facing uncertainty about the place where you're working. Some of us may be planning to move house or relocating to another part of the country or even another part of the world.

Many of us will turn our minds to making New Year's resolutions in the hope that our willpower will be strong enough to help us quit smoking or lose those extra pounds that we've put on over the Christmas period or some other area of character development that we want to improve on. But I wonder how long those great intentions will last?

Sometimes I think we're too hard on ourselves as well as on other people. On one hand many of us set ourselves unrealistic objectives and then feel guilty and disappointed when we don't live up to our expectations. On the other hand, some of us don't bother to plan at all and then also feel disappointed when life doesn't turn out the way we'd really like it to. And when other people don't live up to the expectations we arbitrarily place on them, relationships are often shattered.

Often we set ourselves unrealistic goals because we want to impress or be noticed

It's good to take stock from time to time where we're going and what we want to achieve and the start of a New Year is a great place to think about changes we may feel we need to make. But of course we can't always know what's around the corner and it's impossible to plan our lives to such a degree that we're in control of every event.

There are so many 'outside influences' impacting on our lives, that it's not always possible to predict with certainty how our lives will pan out.

But the Bible says that God is interested in what we're up to. Both the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah and the New Testament Apostle Paul wrote of God's intentions. Ponder on these couple of verses:

- Jeremiah 29: 11
"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."
- Romans 8: 28
"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."



Stephen G. Derges
Elder & Worship
Pastor,
Bridgnorth Baptist
Church

Yes we have a part to play in determining our future and setting ourselves plans and goals is no bad thing. As someone once said, "If you don't know where you're going, any old bus will do." But it's vital that we include God in our plans because thankfully He does know the future and He does hold the future in His hands.

Often we set ourselves unrealistic goals because we want to impress or be noticed and it has more to do with our pride and vanity than anything else. How about including God in our planning process this time round and asking Him what His purposes for us are?

Of course not everything will always be rosy in the garden – some of us will face difficult situations during the coming twelve months – none of us is exempt from pain and suffering, disappointment and unfulfilled dreams. But God declares He will be with us and when we trust Him with our futures I believe He will honour His promises.

A good friend of mine says, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." May I suggest that, if in the past we've had unfulfilled expectations, it's time to make our first New Year's resolution a decision to include God in our plans?

Information about Christian Churches in the Bridgnorth area can be found by logging onto www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk where you'll find links to websites and contact details.