

22T20 Change of Plans

(written by Dr. Kip Wehrman 11/21/2022)

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table.

Change of Plans. I have learned that following Jesus often means I have to change my plans and align them with God's plan. God's plan is always bigger and better than mine. Judy and I are supposed to be getting on a plane for the Philippines on Tuesday evening. But Monday morning God gave us a change of plans.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father please guide our discussion today. Help me to share our story so people can better understand your plans. I trust your Lord with everything and everyone in my life. Bless our time together and I pray all these things in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

I want to begin by giving you a little background. It is November 2022 our last trip to the Philippines was in May of 2019. Because of COVID-19 our trips in 2020 and 2021 did not happen. Fast forward to July 2022. Travel to and from the Philippines was still very complicated and very expensive. As much as I wanted to see our friends, family and partners, I have to be honest I was very, very apprehensive about planning a trip. In fact, I was pretty confident we would not be going this year.

Then a change of plans. The urgings began. Subtle voice telling me and my wife Judy we needed to go. **Then I had a plan.** I thought, of course, Judy and Joy could go. It's their home and with all the travel complications, it makes no sense to take our three young kids. **Seemed like a good plan to me.** But how to know if God really wanted this plan and when? I can't explain it, but a number came to my mind \$954. It was so precise, \$954. For days I just knew this was the number. I took a quick look at flights and they were crazy expensive more than \$2000 per person crazy. I felt for a moment like this was a clear message, we weren't going this year. Then a date came to my mind, September 2. Again this was way too precise. **Now I had a good plan again.** I would search for flights on September 2, and if any were \$954 or less then Joy and Judy would go. **I thought it was a great plan.**

Then a change of plans. A few days later, Joy gets a new consulting job. It will require her to be full-time 40 hours a week starting in August. Now it was impossible for Joy to go to the Philippines with Judy. I thought, this must mean no trip this year. But no, the urgings persisted, the number and date even more clear. Now it was early August, I checked flights again, and they were more than \$1500 per person. Still crazy high. Not to mention political uncertainty in the US, a war in Europe and China threatening Taiwan. Surely God did not want us to be traveling in the middle of all of this. Oh and by the way my parents moved into our house in August as well. Our home was now a melting pot of families. My parents, Judy's mom, Judy's sister, our three young kids and a Chinese couple was also staying with us. Eleven very strong personalities all under one roof. I love it though.

But to say the very least we had a lot going on with our charity, businesses, and families. Then the moment of truth came on September 2. I resisted for nearly the entire day, until finally I started my travel searches late that evening. All the flights were expensive. I searched October and November, nothing even close. Then I did what I typically do. I entered flexible dates into my search. I pressed enter and almost fell out of my chair. One flight on one airline on one set of days came up exactly \$954. Houston to Taiwan, Taiwan to Manila. I did it again and again, with the same result. I quite stubbornly stopped and said to myself, it this is what God wants then it won't change overnight. Now it's the morning of September 3rd, I tried all morning to ignore it. But finally just before lunch, I searched again. And again \$954 but not only the amount but only for flights leaving Nov 8 and returning Nov 17th. This was far too precise to be a coincidence. And I don't even believe in coincidences, I knew it was God. But again, I was a little stubborn. If this is real it will be the same after super. Later I realized something. I still needed a local flight from Manila to Bicol. I had not included that in my travel costs. Saved again I thought. I went back to my office and searched again. This time the same flight was \$854 per person. That was a \$100 per person savings. Okay, okay Lord, I get it, I thought. So I searched to see what the best local flights would be. Any guess what I found. They were all very expensive except for one. One round trip flight was \$100 per person. And not only would this bring our total travel cost per person back to exactly \$954, the timing was the only flights with reasonable connections each way. Okay, God, I get it. A couple days later, I finally stopped resisting and bought the tickets. **Now we had a new good plan.** But I was still a little grumpy about the whole thing. I had been so sure, I was not going to travel, then God changed my plan. But I had two gripes. First, I knew my wife would make me bring back a bunch of things from the Philippines. I complained about carrying them and the hassle. Then, Joy who was now working fulltime as a consultant got news, she would be required to take a business trip to Philippines, at the same time we planned to go. This was complicated because we would be leaving our kids at home with my parents who have mobility issues and no Aunt Joy to help. **Big concern for my plan,** but obviously God had a better plan. Then God fixed it. Joy ended up going to the Philippines 3 weeks earlier than planned. She carried home all the stuff I did not want to carry. No more excuses, right?

Well no. I had one more. We would be flying into Legazpi. I don't know the Legazpi area very well and neither does my wife. Where would we stay, how would we make the transportation work, etc. etc. I was just griping. A couple days later, a classmate of my wife from high school visited us. He is the captain of a super tanker ship, he got diverted to Houston unexpectedly and had a day of shore leave. Guess what, he owns a hotel near the airport in Legazpi and he will be back in Philippines in time to pick us up from the airport. Oh and one of Judy's brothers, volunteered to drive us around on the trip.

I was running out of excuses and gripes. It seemed so obvious God was orchestrating His plan. Judy and I were going to the Philippines. Over the next month as the trip neared, I settled in on the plan God had given us. Planned the trip with all our stops and visits.

I finally was ready to go. I surrendered the trip to God and relaxed. Then one week before our trip, my mom was diagnosed with COVID-19. I think to myself, at least it will be past by the time we need to leave. Slowly over the next week. My daughter Zoe gets sick, my daughter Mya gets sick, my father gets sick, our sister Joy gets sick, then my daughter Ala gets sick. Only Judy and I have not gotten sick. Now it's the Sunday before we leave on Tuesday, neither Judy nor I have symptoms. All seems good. Judy gets called into the Hospital Sunday afternoon and she works all day and feels fine.

Then a change of plans. Sunday night Judy begins to feel a little off. Monday morning she is sick. Yes, she is COVID positive. Judy is sick in bed and our trip is canceled. **Just like that, a change of plans.**

Next on, Tuesday morning, the very day we were supposed to be leaving, my mother falls. She is nonresponsive with low blood sugar. We call 911, an ambulance trip to the ER, and six and a half hours in the emergency room with my mom. She's fine by the way, but the time I was to be going to the airport had come and gone. Thank you, Lord, we had, changed plans the day before.

Next on, Friday, the day we should have arrived in Bicol on our mission trip, I started having an uncontrollable itchy feeling all over my body. My scalp, face, torso. Then I realized what's happening, I'm about to have a shingles outbreak. Sure enough by evening it's the right side of my face and scalp. Thank God, I'm not in the Philippines with this. Judy is sick, I'm sick, my whole family is sick. **A change of plans** was necessary but why?

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for making away for me, a broken, messed up sinner to be with you. Thank you for the sacrifice you made for me. I am in complete awe of your glory and power. I grieve at this story at the same time rejoicing for what it means for all of us. Lord help all of us to study your bible but keep our focus on you instead of all this contentious side topics. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

Let me leave you with this. Did I just miss it. Was I wrong with all the signs and indications. No, I don't think so. I think this was about obedience. We listened to God. We allowed God to lead our paths and change our plans. God gently guided me and helped me make choices for His purposes. So Why, is the obvious question. I'll be honest I don't know. I'm thankful Judy got sick Monday instead of at 30,000 feet in a plane on Tuesday. I'm glad she got sick at home instead of a mandatory very long quarantine in the Philippines or Taiwan. I'm just thankful. Yes, this series of events cost some money. But it's God's money. Yes, we spent time planning a trip that did not happen, but it's really God's time, not mine. Does it seem in vain? Not at all. My friends and family in the Philippines know we wanted to come and only several health emergencies including COVID-19 and shingles stopped us. Why? Well I still don't know but God does. I choose to trust God. I trust in God's plan even when that means a

change of plans for me. I trust God and eagerly wait for the next adventure God will put us on.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today. Having your plans change is rarely fun and my wife's health is of course a concern. But we trust God, period.

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Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.