



Worst That Can Happen? The Secret to Wise Decision-Making

Throughout history, wise leaders, builders, and visionaries have understood the value of **pausing before action**—taking time to ask the critical question:

"If I do this, what is the worst that can happen?"

This simple but powerful exercise has been used by military strategists, architects, business leaders, and church builders alike. It is not about fear; it is about wisdom. Those who succeed are not the ones who avoid all risk but those who assess it wisely and prepare for the challenges ahead.

However, there is one essential truth to this approach:

If you cannot live with the worst that can happen, you should stop.

A Time-Tested Principle of Success

From ancient Rome to modern business, history has shown that **those who plan for the worst are the ones most likely to succeed**. Consider these examples:

- **Roman Generals** carefully studied the risks of battle, ensuring they could recover from setbacks before ever stepping onto the battlefield.
- **Cathedral Builders** in medieval Europe spent years preparing for the structural, financial, and logistical challenges before breaking ground.
- **The U.S. Founding Fathers** debated worst-case scenarios when drafting the Constitution, ensuring safeguards were in place to prevent governmental collapse.
- **NASA Engineers** meticulously calculate and test for failure before every space launch to ensure there is a plan for every possible malfunction.

None of these leaders avoided problems entirely. **Instead, they succeeded because they had already considered the worst and knew they could handle it.**

Individual vs. Group Perspective: Everyone Must Be On Board

One of the most overlooked aspects of this process is the fact that **each individual must assess their own worst-case scenarios, while the team or committee must also assess the worst collectively.**

- **For an individual**, the worst-case scenario might involve personal burnout, financial stress, or damage to their reputation.

- **For a team or organization**, the worst-case scenario could involve financial collapse, loss of credibility, or a church split.

Both perspectives must be considered, and both must be fully on board. If an individual cannot personally live with the worst that can happen, they should step back from the project. If the team as a whole cannot survive the worst-case scenario, the project must be adjusted or stopped.

Why Projects Succeed: The Masterful Secret

Success is not about avoiding all problems. **Problems will come.** Every project, whether a business, a church ministry, or a construction effort, will face obstacles. The difference between success and failure lies in how those obstacles are handled.

Those who have **considered the worst in advance** don't waste time panicking when trouble arises. Instead, they **immediately focus on solutions.**

A Prepared Team Doesn't Waste Time on Fear—They Focus on Solutions.

When challenges appear, an unprepared leader reacts with **shock, fear, or blame**—wasting time and energy. A prepared leader reacts with **a plan, action, and faith**, knowing they have already determined that failure is not an option.

Steps to Implement This in Any Project

1. **Make the “If I Do This…” List Individually and as a Team** – Each person should consider their own risks while the group should assess the risks to the organization as a whole.
2. **Ask, “Can We Live With the Worst?”** – If the worst-case scenario is unacceptable at either the individual or group level, rethink or stop.
3. **Develop Contingency Plans** – For every major risk, outline possible solutions and preventive measures.
4. **Unite the Team Around This Approach** – Ensure that every leader, committee member, or decision-maker understands this mindset.
5. **Move Forward in Confidence** – Knowing that problems will come but that you are prepared to handle them.

Application: Church Building Projects

For a church construction project, this principle is especially critical. Some common worst-case scenarios to consider:

- **Financial Collapse** – *What if we run out of funds mid-project?*

- **Church Split** – *What if strong disagreements arise?*
- **Legal or Zoning Issues** – *What if we can't secure necessary permits?*
- **Project Delays** – *What if construction takes years longer than expected?*

If the answers to these questions reveal **risks too great to recover from**, then the project should not proceed in its current form. Adjustments must be made to ensure that the worst-case scenario **can be survived and managed**.

Faith and Wisdom: Honoring God Through Preparation

Too often, people confuse faith with blind optimism. But **true faith is acting in wisdom** while trusting God for what is beyond our control. The Bible itself teaches the importance of **counting the cost** before beginning any endeavor:

"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?" — Luke 14:28

Faith and wisdom go hand in hand. **God is honored when His people prepare well** and make decisions that reflect both trust in Him and responsible stewardship.

Final Thought: Trusting God's Direction Above All Else

While planning, preparation, and wisdom are crucial, the most important factor in any project is **God's direction**. No amount of preparation can substitute for **seeking His will** and following His leading.

Yes, we must ask, *"What's the worst that can happen?"* and prepare accordingly. But we must also ask, **"Is this what God is calling us to do?"** Because if He is in it, He can **overcome any obstacle, provide any solution, and guide us through any challenge**.

Before starting your next big project, pause and ask:

"Can I live with the worst that can happen?"

- ✓ If the answer is YES, move forward with full confidence.
- ✗ If the answer is NO, stop and rethink before disaster strikes.

But above all, ask: "Is this God's will?" If He is leading the project, then even the worst-case scenario is not the end—it is simply part of His greater plan.

Success comes not because nothing goes wrong, but because when things go wrong, we are prepared—and we trust that God is in control.