



God has His ways of changing our plans. The Bible is replete with examples from Noah to Abraham, Moses, and Samuel. Are we willing to let God change our plans to His plans? This lesson encourages us to step out of comfort, where change is tough but God is always sufficient.

# embrace THE DETOUR

BY EDDIE MOODY



You've heard the question, "Where do you plan to be in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years?" It is often followed with, "And *how* do you plan to get there?" I've heard many career counselors ask those questions. I've asked them to others and to myself as well. The idea is to help people think about their future and make wise plans to prepare. A young person might rattle off, "Well, I'm going to complete my undergraduate degree in biology, and then head to medical school. After I finish my residency, I'll start my family and I plan to live in . . ." You might hear an older person say, "I'm going to work ten more years at \_\_\_\_\_, then I'm going to retire, spend time with my grandkids, and travel the countryside." We all have our plans. As one reads Scripture, it appears we are to plan and to seek wise counsel to help us with our plans (Proverbs 15:22). Indeed, Jesus instructed us of the importance of planning and counting the cost of our plans (Luke 14:28). But, what do we do when plans change?

If you are a reader of the Bible, you've probably noticed that God seems to have a knack for changing people's plans. Noah probably did not set out to build an ark, but God changed whatever plans he had for his life when He informed him of the coming flood and Noah's role in preparing for it (Genesis 6). Abraham certainly did not have on his "to do" list to head off to Mount Moriah to offer Isaac as a sacrifice until God called him and instructed him to do so (Genesis 22). It looks like Moses planned to deliver his people from Egypt (Exodus 2), only to see those plans dashed,

until God called him to deliver Israel decades later (Exodus 3). Samuel did not go to Jesse's to anoint David as king, he planned to anoint one of his older brothers, but God changed his plans (1 Samuel 16).



### God Is Probably Going to Change Your Plans.

It looks like we all will have some point in our lives where God will change our plans. Perhaps this is why Jesus instructed us to pray “thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10), which sounds a bit like “Thy plan be done” to remind us of the importance of seeking God’s plan rather than our own. Notice Jesus used the same phrasing in Luke 22:42 as He prayed to the Father about the difficult plan before Him and concluded with “Thy will be done.”

When God changes your plans, it will probably not be easy. When God changed Esther’s plans, it put her very life at great risk (Esther 5). When God changed Nehemiah’s plans, he was required to leave a job with some prestige and work with some difficult people (Nehemiah 1). When God changes your plans, you will often have to step out of your comfort zone.

You may also experience great pain. Jacob’s plans for a future with Rebekah changed when she died in childbirth

(Genesis 35:18). He turned to Joseph and likely planned to spend his life mentoring him in the land of Canaan. Instead, he thought he had lost his son for many years. He lived differently than he had planned. Pain and regret filled his years (Genesis 37:34-35)—at least initially.



### God's Plan Is Best.

Joseph did not plan to be a slave or a prisoner, or even to live out his life in Egypt but that is the plan God had for him (Genesis 39). Yet, God’s plan was best. Because of the hardship Joseph experienced he eventually became the prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 41:46) saving many people, as part of a bigger plan for God’s people (Genesis 50:20).

God’s plan was best for Jacob, too. The older we are, the more we dislike change so it is interesting to see Jacob uproot his family and head to Egypt (Genesis 46). It is unlikely he would have willingly changed his plans without the opportunity to see his son Joseph again. Certainly, Jacob and Joseph saw that God’s plan was best.

God's plan is also good. Often, when a person does not achieve his plan, people look upon him or her as a failure or a loser. Consider Abel. Certainly, he did not plan for his brother Cain to murder him (Genesis 4). Whatever plans he had did not come to fruition. Still, Abel is cited as a hero of the faith in Hebrews (Hebrews 11:4) even though his plans were cut short.



### **What Happens When We Resist God's Plan?**

It doesn't go well when we try to stick with our plans rather than embrace God's. Consider the turmoil that resulted in Isaac's family after he insisted upon his plans for Esau rather than deferring to God's plan for the birthright to go to Jacob (Genesis 25). Imagine how difficult it must have been for the prophet Jonah as he resisted God's plan (Jonah 1). Jonah likely had big plans as a prophet for Israel, and these plans did not involve Nineveh, the enemy of Israel. Jonah learned the hard way it doesn't go well when one resists God's plan.

On the other hand, Peter embraced God's plan after some initial resistance (Acts 10:13-14). Though his plans focused largely upon ministering to the Gentiles, after the vision he

received from God, he took the gospel to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Raised to see Gentiles as the enemy, Peter helped them find the good news of Jesus Christ. Rather than resist, he embraced Cornelius, a man from a different culture and fulfilled God's plan.



### **What Happens When We Resent God's Plan?**

Perhaps Jonathan once planned to be king of Israel. At some point, he recognized God had His hand upon David and intended for him to become the next king. Jonathan accepted that plan (1 Samuel 20:31-32). His father, Saul, did not (1 Samuel 20:33). Saul resented God's plan. He grew bitter and angry, and this resentment led to his ultimate demise (1 Samuel 31).

Perhaps for a time John the Baptist resented God's plan for his life. The man who had referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) actually sent word to Christ asking whether He was the Messiah or should he be looking for another (Matthew 11:3). Plans had not gone as John expected. He was a man who loved the outdoors, and he found himself living in a prison while the wicked Herod continued with his evil ways.

Jesus' response to John the Baptist's question is helpful to anyone who finds themselves hurting because of unfulfilled plans. Jesus sent word to John, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me" (Matthew 11:6). You and I might say, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by God's plan."



### **Are You Willing to Let God Change Your Plans?**

Jesus told us to pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus used the same phrasing in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42) when faced with the Cross. We, too, must pray for and look for God's plan.

Often God changes the plans of those who follow Him, and Jesus truly knew the struggle of following a difficult plan (Hebrews 4:15). The writer of Hebrews prayed for God to "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight" (Hebrews 13:21). In other words, we are to be ready and equipped to do God's will or God's plan whatever that may be.



### **Has God Asked You to Change Your Plans?**

Sometimes, it is obvious God has changed our plans.

For example, a change in some family plans naturally occurs after a death. We had plans to do something with a child taken from us. At other times, our plans to engage in a particular activity are thwarted because of bad health or some other circumstance. In such situations, the challenge is to accept or execute a plan we never thought we'd have to follow. It is important to remember that God walks with us as we embrace this new plan.

Sometimes, God changes the plans of those of us in ministry. We'd planned to stay in a church only to find the congregation had a different set of plans. We find ourselves developing a different plan, but it is key to remember God's plan is good and better.

We may also find our plans changed in the way we do ministry. For example, some of us are finding it much harder to minister in a culture where fewer go to church, and the view of biblical Christianity is negative.

Recently, I saw a study that indicated if current trends continue the religiously unaffiliated will comprise as large a group in the United States as Protestants. Another study indicated that the majority of Americans no longer embrace a biblical view

of marriage. Perhaps one planned to minister in one environment, only to find himself facing something totally different.

In Scripture, we often see plans changed after a cultural shift in their environment. In the book of Daniel, we learn about four young Hebrew men who had probably planned to minister in the Kingdom of Judah. Their plans changed when Nebuchadnezzar de-

and homes. Imagine the challenges they experienced learning a new language (Daniel 1:4), meeting new people (Daniel 1:10, 3:4), and often being attacked for their faith (Daniel 3; 6).

What they experienced was so traumatic I hesitate to compare it to our own situation, but I believe we can learn much from their experience. As children, they'd probably planned to minister to the people of Judah

*You are where God wants you to be  
at this very moment.  
Every experience is part of His divine plan.  
~ Anonymous (Spiritual Quotes)*

stroyed their city, the Temple where they worshiped, as well as, the courts in which they had planned to serve.

Rather than pouting, quitting, withdrawing, or resisting God's plan, they prepared themselves to live, worship, and serve in a much different land with some very different people, just as Jeremiah had instructed them (Jeremiah 29:5-7).

Imagine the pain they experienced after losing their families

who looked and talked like them. Instead, they found themselves ministering to people from all different parts of the world with different languages and customs and from different religions (e.g., Arioch, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius).

Today, many of us feel as if our plans have changed. Our country nor our world look the way we expected it to look. Perhaps God is asking us to change of our plans.

A study from Robert P. Jones really bothered me. The study examined the social networks of people. Social networks were defined as up to seven people with whom one had discussed a serious matter in the last six months.

When looking at white Americans, 91% of their social network consisted of other whites and only one percent consisted of blacks. This is very telling. It exhibits why there is such a racial divide over many issues in the United States today. People continue to be segregated by race.

Another study recently described how different groups view marriage. It was actually Hispanic Protestants, and African American Protestants rather than mainline Protestants who were most closely aligned to evangelical Christians. Maybe God is telling some of us to make some plans to network together.

***I don't know what kind of plans you may have but I do know God is likely to change them. I encourage you to examine your life, our culture, and to pray to the Lord, "not my plans, but yours."***

***—Dr. Eddie Moody***

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