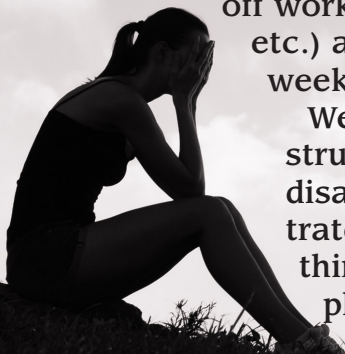


I DON'T LIKE CHANGE

Your husband promises you faithfully that he will arrange to get off early on Friday so you can get an early start on a fun weekend. It's been a while since you have taken a break and the excitement and anticipation mounts in the household as the weekend approaches. But ... the unexpected happens (he's unable to get off work, a family emergency, etc.) and all the plans for the weekend are put on hold.

We've all been there, struggling to deal with disappointment, and frustrated that once again things did not work out as planned.



How do you handle times like this? Do you take it in stride? Do you collapse in a fit of anger because you did not get your way? On the other hand, do you submit to life as it happens, realizing these things sometimes occur and you just have to go with the flow? I wish we could all say we always took the high road, but living in a corrupt world among people with a flawed nature, it is unlikely.



GOD'S PLANS

God had plans that did not turn out exactly as He wanted them to. When God created Adam and Eve, He desired to have an intimate relationship with them. God provided a place for Adam to live and enjoy an occupation, and even created a companion taken from the rib in Adam's side. This companion Adam named Eve. For a while, Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden and had sweet fellowship with the God of the universe, the Creator of all that exists. Then something sinister and evil entered the home of man and Eve was deceived, causing her to sin. She ate of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then gave some to her husband and he ate also. What had once been paradise on earth quickly lost its splendor and became the sin-infested home of a people who had broken fellowship with their Creator-God. God's plan did not

happen as He wanted. Was God caught off guard? No, He knew from before time began that man would sin. He knew if He were to have a relationship with His greatest creation, the one created in His image, He would have to supply a way for that to happen. So, an almighty, holy God poured His heart of eternal love into a way for man to be restored to fellowship with his Maker, if he wanted.

God's holiness and justice demanded payment for sin's penalty. God had told Adam and Eve if they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they would die. And from the day they sinned, they and all future descendants began to die, physically. But, more important, man died spiritually that day. Gone were the walks with God in the cool of the evening. Gone was the peace of mind that all was well. Gone were the intimacies shared with their friend, Almighty God. Man was alone.

Reflective Questions

Before you proceed further into the study, have you accepted Jesus' sacrifice for your sin? If not, ask the leader of the Bible study or the pastor to show you from the Bible what you must do to be saved.

Look openly and honestly at your life. What do you think you have missed by failing to make Jesus Christ Lord of your life?

Express how you think life was in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned. Compare it to what you think Heaven will be like.



GOD'S RESPONSE

God had created man, man had disobeyed Him, and God's holy justice demanded the penalty be paid. But, man could not pay that penalty. Nothing man could do or has ever done could satisfy the justice demanded by a holy God. However, there was an answer. God's Son could and would pay the penalty. First Peter 1:20 reads, "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Even before God created the world, He had already provided the sacrifice for man's sin. Even before man sinned God's Son,

Jesus, was destined to die for the sin of all men. Through Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the world, God chose to allow us to become holy and acceptable to Him. The apostle Paul proclaimed that "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). All we have and are is due to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with us.

Yes, God had plans, but those plans did not turn out, as He wanted. He knew they would not, but He had an answer for the seemingly

inevitable. Second Timothy 1:9 explains it completely: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Reflective Questions

How does it make you feel to know that even before you were born, God had provided a way for you to escape the penalty for sin? Write your thoughts below.



WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHEN YOUR PLANS CHANGE ...

We are not part of the Godhead. We do not have the ability to instantly provide solutions to disappointments, troubles, pain, etc., and we definitely do not have the ability to see beyond our plans and develop ahead of time a way to fix those broken plans. So, what can we do when our plans change, when we are disappointed?

RESPOND IN ANGER

I would dare say this is the most often response when plans change. Man seems to want to be able to fix whatever is broken, to make life happen just as he wants. We all know that does not happen and anger out of control never solves anything. The Bible teaches a man who has no control over his spirit is like a city that is broken into and without walls (Proverbs 25:28). Anger is not the answer; it only makes us vulnerable.

REFUSE TO FACE REALITY

Have you ever known anyone that simply would not face life as it really is? That person lives in a fantasy world. Things are never as bad as they appear, nor do they believe people really intend to harm others. It's all a big mistake. No harm intended. When we do not recognize sin in all of its ugliness and wretchedness, we

make a mockery of all God has done for us. Sinful man is unable to please God at all. If we could please God by our own efforts, then Christ's death on the cross was a pointless death. The reality is His death and resurrection were needed because we needed Him.

REALIZE THAT THIS WORLD SUFFERS UNDER THE CURSE OF SIN

Because of sin, our lives are subject to trials, troubles, disappointments, heartaches, and a myriad of other things resulting from our fall from God's grace. This is reality. We live under the curse of sin and only the blood of Jesus Christ can remove the guilt and shame that is ours because of that sin. No, God's plans did not work out the way He wanted them to, but before time ever ticked one second, God already had the answer in place. It's as if in the mind of God, Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world.

REMEMBER GOD IS WITH YOU

Our plans do change. Sometimes we are blindsided just by living life and it can be hard, so very hard to cope. God still has the answer just as He did all those many years ago. His name is Jesus. So, when plans change, when our day goes awry and disappointment, fear, sickness, or whatever stares us in the face, we have One we can go to, One who has the answer to all of life. We are His and He is ours, through faith in His death and resurrection. We have new life!

Reflective Questions

Do you have a problem with anger? Describe below what causes you to become angry and how you deal with it.

"LET'S LET GOD WRITE OUR STORY. AND IF HARD CHAPTERS COME, LET'S JUST TRUST THAT HE WILL WRITE IT INTO HIS EPIC STORY, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER."
—STEVE SAINT

Do you think anger is sin? Ask God to help you find a way to deal with the sin of anger.

Have you ever known anyone who refused to face reality? Do you think they live in a fantasy world? What do you think you could do to help them?

How do you face life when plans change? Give an example you've experienced and describe how you handled it. What were the results?

About the Writer: Dianne Sargent lives in Turbeville, South Carolina, near her son Brian and his family. She enjoys spending time with two of her grandsons. Dianne continues to do free-lance editing.