

UPSIDE DOWN WORLD



I was standing at our kitchen sink washing dishes in Uruguay when the phone rang. It was our Vonage phone, which meant it was someone from the States. I immediately knew something was wrong. It was too early; we were three hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. I heard my sister's voice and my fears were confirmed. I dropped to my knees as I heard the news that my grandmother had passed away suddenly. Three days prior to that phone call, we had gone in for an ultrasound (I was six months pregnant) and received the news that something was wrong with our baby's kidneys.



A few months later, we welcomed our little one; then 12 hours later, she stopped breathing. Over the next few months we slept little, as she needed constant monitoring. Then there were kidney tests. She eventually developed RSV which meant breathing treatments and respiratory therapy every two hours around the clock.

A review of our finances forced an early return to the States. Another phone call saying, my mom had a bad mammogram. She had surgery followed by treatment. In the meantime, our little one was losing weight causing us concern. To add to everything else, I had a spot on my foot that needed an immediate biopsy.

I found myself constantly holding my breath, waiting for the next phone call, the next bad report, questioning, "what next?" I felt like my world was upside down.

The truth is most of us will eventually face times where we feel our world is upside down. It doesn't have to be from major events. Often this feeling comes from unexpected challenges—the rare big ones or a culmination of many small ones.

For example, you wake up late because your alarm didn't go off; you are out of milk so your coffee isn't good; your gas tank shows 'empty' so you have to stop for gas; but you are already behind schedule. Traffic is backed up. You arrive late to work and

find a last-minute meeting scheduled in an hour and you must give a presentation. Walking to the meeting, you spill your now cold, mediocre coffee on your new pants suit and all this before 10 A.M. Your day is flipped upside down before it even begins.

How do you respond?

How do you handle these interruptions? Irritably, impatiently, angrily? Or gracefully?

Another important question when you find yourself having one of these days or (months) is why do you feel like your world is upside down? Do times like these frustrate you because you aren't in control? Or because it is a change in your normal or a change in your plans?



God Is In Control

We should remain faithful because the Bible teaches us "...that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). We should find comfort knowing God has a plan. As believers, we can trust that things are working together. We don't always understand all that is happening and why, but we can find comfort. We can know He has a plan. We can trust in His sovereignty. But if you are like me, you want to understand the plan; you want to know what God is doing. We should be faithful because our difficulties may be His mercies, His protection, or His provision in disguise.

Let's look at a few possible scenarios:

1. Think about Esther. Esther, a young Jewish girl, was forced to enter a beauty contest and ultimately marry the king. Then, her

husband signed an edict that would have annihilated all Jewish men, women, and children. She found herself in an overwhelming predicament. Ultimately, God used this situation to place Esther in a position to save the Jewish people.

2. Consider Joseph. Joseph was betrayed and sold by his brothers, falsely accused by his master's wife, thrown into prison by his master, and forgotten by the cupbearer. His life was flipped upside down for years. Read Genesis 45:5-8. Why was Joseph's life turned upside down?

Can you think of a time in your life when a tough situation or a major change was actually God's provision or protection for you?

*What we perceive
as chaos may be
for our protection
or provision.*



God Draws Us Closer

Read Matthew 16:21-23. Before this Peter had declared that Jesus was the Son of the Living God; He was Messiah. He had placed his hopes and dreams in Jesus. He also likely still believed the present-day teachings that the Messiah would come more as a conqueror to overthrow the government. Now, Jesus was saying that He was going to die. His friend, his master, and the one he had given up everything to follow was going to die. Peter didn't like it. He rebuked Jesus. However, Jesus sharply rebuts Peter. He says his mind is not on the concerns of God but on the concerns of man. In the middle of hearing the bad news, Jesus wanted Peter to see the bigger picture, not focus on the earthly.

Or you may remember that Paul had a thorn in the flesh. But notice what he says about it in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. This difficulty taught Paul to rest in God's grace, to glory in God's strength. In the middle of life's chaos, we need to rest in God's grace, His glory, and His strength like Paul.

After my husband, Neil's, sophomore year at Welch College, he spent two and a half months in India. He was with Carlisle Hanna for a few weeks, and then he and a friend went to South India for several weeks. After this he took a year off from college and taught at the Free Will Baptist school in the US Virgin Islands. His year was a rough one. He had never taught before, and he faced discipline issues, spiritual challenges, few resources, and long hours. Then his brother attempted suicide. Life was complicated. Neil was praying for the situation to improve, begging God to make a difference, when he realized that maybe God wanted to transform him through the situation. Neil's perspective and prayers changed and he began to grow spiritually.

Sometimes, God uses difficulties in our lives, even those where we feel our world is upside down, to bring us more in line with His plan and His will.

Can you think of a time in which God used a topsy-turvy situation to draw you closer to Him?

Are you presently in a situation in which you need to change the way you are praying? How should you pray about your situation?



God Gets Glory

3. Let's consider David. Dutifully, David left home to check on his brothers serving in the Israelite army, which was currently having a showdown with the Philistines. The Israelites were cowering in fear beneath the taunts of the Philistines and their giant, Goliath. With no military knowledge, David volunteered to be the champion of the nation. He was granted permission to take on the biggest

and best of the Philistine army, yet he was too little to even fit into the king's armor. So, he faced Goliath with no armor and five smooth stones. Notice what David says in 1 Samuel 17:46.

This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel (1 Samuel 17:46).

This situation occurred for deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines sure, but also so that ALL the earth would know there is a God in Israel. God wants His name to be exalted.

Due to field requirements, when we transferred to Spain, we had to study Spanish culture. Our lives were very busy: full-time university work in Spanish, three kids in school with homework and afterschool activities, work at the church, teaching English classes, and to top it off, Neil started having health problems. We were stressed.

Then, one of our classes announced a 15-minute presentation and research paper as our final exam. A Chinese girl from our class asked to work with us

on the project. Now, we had to find a time to meet with her.

Later that day, we received a phone call from a British guy in Madrid whom we had met several months earlier. He said an

American professor who taught at a Chinese university had contacted him about a student who was studying in Alcalá (where we lived) and was severely depressed and suicidal. The British guy asked us to find this girl and help her. Here we were, overwhelmed by a completely full schedule and were now expected to locate one student out of approximately 26,000. Then, he told us her name.

It was the same girl who asked to work with us on the project! We did everything we could to help her emotionally and spiritually. One day she was at our house and Neil felt compelled to pointedly ask her, "Do you believe there is a God?"

She answered, "I do believe

there is a God. I just don't know his name." We were able to share His name with her. The changes in our schedule, the placement of people around the world, and the project were all part of a plan to exalt the Name above all names.



God's Thoughts Are Higher Than Ours

When I think about the Bible and people in it whose lives were turned upside down, I immediately think of Job. In the beginning of chapter one, he had everything a person could want. By the end of chapter two, he had lost everything. In other words, he had lost status, family, riches, and health.


To our knowledge, he never finds out why. When God answers him, God asks him a series of questions, such as the one in Job 38:4, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." God is teaching Job there are things man simply can't understand. There are situations we can't understand as well.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states that His thoughts are not our thoughts. Neither are our ways His ways. His ways are higher/better than our ways and his thoughts are higher/better than our thoughts. So, when we don't understand, we choose to trust.

I'm reminded of the second and third verses of the hymn, "The Solid Rock."

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay

We serve a God who is in control. We serve a God who is working things together. We serve a God who has a plan. A plan that could be for our protection, to draw us closer to Him and align our will with His, or for His exaltation. We serve a God whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours. We serve a God who is faithful, so “when all around my soul gives way—He then is all my hope and stay.” 

About the Author: Mandi Morgan and her husband Neil live in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, where they assist pastor José Manuel in the Esperanza Church. They also teach English classes through the University of Alcalá and encourage and help the church with multiple outreach opportunities. They have three daughters, Emma, Aubrey, and Sofia.

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