

When God Intervenes: From Ordinary to Extraordinary

BY Diana Bryant

I recently attended a retreat for ministers' wives, and our speaker introduced an interesting concept. She asked us to write out a timeline of our lives starting as early as we could remember. We were to write down any significant event, person, or situation we could recall. It turned out to be a fascinating exercise! As we traveled back in our minds, certain memories triggered others, and the relationship between specific events became evident. People who had influenced our lives stood out, events were recalled, and it didn't take long to recognize how incredible God's intervention in our lives had been. There were "aha!" moments as we realized that "if this hadn't happened, I never would have met this person, or ended up in this situation, or learned a particular lesson." What also became evident as we pondered the course of our life was how little of it had been up to us. God often intervened and directed our paths, but we didn't realize it. We thought we were going about our business, never realizing God had placed people in our path or orchestrated events with a purpose in mind for His plans and glory. Psalm 47:23 tells us that

the Lord orders the steps of a good man. Frequently, we think that God intervening in our lives is evidenced by amazing transformations, miraculous healings, or incredible instances of supplied needs at just the right moment. While that is sometimes true, as we reminisced and pondered, it became apparent that God's intervention in our lives had been quiet and occurred during everyday events. We hadn't always recognized His intervention.

Think of the women we know in Scripture who are shining examples of God intervening and changing their lives. Look how God intervened in Hannah's life and supplied the longing of her heart—a child. Ruth found herself in a less than desirable circumstance. But God orchestrated events such that people and situations resulted in a life change for her and all of us throughout eternity. Remember the woman with the issue of blood and how God changed her life? Mary Magdalene experienced God's miraculous work in her, and she was never the same again. Think of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Whatever plans Mary may have had for her life, we can be confident God's fulfilled plan for

her was nothing like she had ever imagined.

There are other women for whom the intervention of God is nothing short of miraculous, but perhaps not as dramatic as some of these. Those women are us. Me, and you! How do we recognize God's working in our everyday lives, and more importantly, how do we get on board and follow Him when He does?

Proverbs 3:5-6

We're told to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our understanding. Sometimes our circumstances are not what we would choose, or a desire of our heart is not being fulfilled. We must realize and live contentedly with the fact that God is aware of our circumstances and longings but He sees far past what we can see and has a plan for our life far beyond what we may realize at the time. Leaning not on our own understanding involves trusting God and His understanding of our situation. We must be willing to live obediently and believe He knows best.

Can you think of a time in your life when you didn't get what you wanted but later realized that had you gotten your way, it would not have turned out for the best?

Psalm 5:8

David asks God in this Psalm to lead him and help him to know the right path to travel. Discernment is necessary to recognize God's provision and leading when it is difficult to see and may not align with our thoughts and plans. How do we do that? By spending time in the Word! Not just reading to check something off a list but with a desire to learn and understand, to know the heart of God better, and to store the profound truths of God in our hearts. We develop discernment by asking the Holy Spirit to remind us of the principles we've found in God's Word at the appropriate time or in re-

sponse to a question of our heart. He cannot call to our remembrance things we have not planted in our hearts and minds. It has to be there to be recalled! If we do our part, we have the assurance that He will do His part. He is faithful!

When was the last time you made a specific effort to memorize a portion of Scripture?

Start small if you need to, but if you haven't done so recently, pick a passage and get started.

Job 42:2

What an encouraging and comforting truth. God can do anything. Anything! God can accomplish His plan even when we don't see a way. And when we understand that He loves us, we can assume His plan is for our best. This verse also states the eternal fact: No plan of His can be defeated, thwarted, or conquered. He will prevail! God will put us in places, place us in circumstances, and introduce us to people to accomplish His plan, whether we recognize it at the time or not. He is there working and leading in ways we may or may not understand. Think of the life of a child. His parents are arranging care, meeting needs, and organizing circumstances for them with no awareness on their part. Parents don't ask their children if they want to go to the doctor; they make the arrangements and take the required action. Does God do no less? We must realize that there are no accidents or coincidences in the believer's life. God is always in control, and He always knows best.

Try to remember a time when an unfortunate circumstance brought about a helpful lesson, introduced you to a person who

became an essential part of your life, or caused a completely different situation that turned out for your benefit.

Romans 8:28

What is your definition of all things? In many discussions of God working all things together for our good, we tend to think of bad things that turned out to have some unexpected benefit. But God says He works ALL things together for our good. That means bad things, good things, and even mundane, everyday things. To realize how God intervenes in our lives, we must recognize the things over which we have no control. You had no say in selecting your parents, but those two people shaped your life in many ways. God chose them for you. Think of the personality that is you. Consider the innate abilities you possess. Can you sing? Are you good at math? Do you have a creative niche for hospitality? Or can you sink a basketball almost every time? We may hone those abilities with practice and hard work, but those abilities were given to us by God; they are not of our own doing. He intervened in our lives, gave us the capabilities He wanted us to have, and gave us opportunities to use them for His glory. When we understand that He intervenes and gives us our opportunities, places us where He wants us, and gives us our circle of influence, it's very freeing. We are relieved of the temptation to manipulate people or circumstances to get what we think is best. Our work is trusting God, discerning His leading, and watching as He provides what we need in every area of our life. He provides places, people, circumstances, and opportunities "above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

Finally, consider the most extravagant intervention of God in our lives. In our sinful state, He interposed the precious blood of His Son to provide a way of salvation, changing the course of our lives forever and providing a sure eternity. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that it was nothing we did so we cannot boast. It's all by Him and about Him. Be thankful and mindful of His intervention in your life, recognize it, and give thanks. To God be the glory!

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About the Writer: Married to Randy Bryant, Diana has been a pastor's wife for 42 years. She has been active in WNAC at all levels, and currently chairs the Florida Women's Ministries Board. Diana has a heart for women's ministry, especially ministry wives and young moms.

