

A CHANGE OF PLANS

The proverbial advice to "plan your work and work your plan" is significant and a responsible course of action. But what happens if all of our goals and aspirations are abruptly altered? What do we do when events that are beyond our control affect what we had planned? What if those changes are made by God himself?

This is what happened to a young girl in the Bible who was getting ready to marry a young man who was honorable and preparing everything to receive her as his bride.

What we know as the Christmas story starts with this biblical narrative.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" ²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." ³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail." ³⁸ Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her. - **Luke 1:26-38 (NLT)**

God's plans are always better than ours

Although things did not go as planned, Mary realized that the important thing is that God's plans are far better in the end, even if they don't seem to make sense at the time.

"Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand." - **Proverbs 19:21 (ESV)**

You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail.
- **Proverbs 19:21 (NLT)**

God is in control of our destiny

For Mary things may not have gone as she initially planned but one thing stands out in this passage and throughout her life story, she trusted God with her destiny and submitted to His plan and word even when things got difficult and she didn't understand the whys.

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. - Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)

*Through our union with Christ we too have been claimed by God as his own inheritance. Before we were even born, he gave us our destiny; that we would fulfill the plan of God who always accomplishes every purpose and plan in his heart.
- Ephesians 1:11 (PASSION)*

*We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!
- Ephesians 2:10 (PASSION)*

Being in charge of my own destiny and letting God be in charge are two different things. One causes stress, while the other promotes rest. But whether I live or die is not important, for I don't esteem my life as indispensable. It's more important for me to fulfill my destiny and to finish the ministry my Lord Jesus has assigned to me, which is to faithfully preach the wonderful news of God's grace. - Acts 20:24 (PASSION)

God gives us courage when things don't make sense

God gave Mary a clear message, and with that message came the bravery she would need to confront the rumors and chitchat of people who would learn of her pregnancy.

Having a word from God gives us the strength and fortitude to deal with what could seem to be life's challenging circumstances that go against our plans.

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? - Psalm 56:3-4 (ESV)

*Everything written long ago was written to teach us so that we would have confidence through the endurance and encouragement which the Scriptures give us.
- Romans 15:4 (GW)*

"I have commanded you, 'Be strong and courageous! Don't tremble or be terrified, because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'" - Joshua 1:9 (GW)

Even though I walk through the dark valley of death, because you are with me, I fear no harm. Your rod and your staff give me courage. - Psalm 23:4 (GW)

God's word infuses us with faith

The word Mary received infused her with faith.

What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail." Faith believes the impossible is possible when God gives you His word. - Luke 1:36-37 (NLT)

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."

Mary had an open heart, she was a servant of the Lord and a worshipper.

Listen to this part of her song of praise that she sang when she visited Elizabeth:

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. - Luke 1:46-49 (ESV)

Remember that God's plans are always better than ours, that He is in control of our destiny, that He gives us courage when things don't make sense, and that His word fills us with faith to see the impossible become possible.

When things don't turn out the way you planned simply say with Mary... "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."