

SOUTH COAST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Ordinary people **“continually praising”** an extraordinary God

I am particularly enjoying reading the articles and Bible references on Crosswalk .com.

This week I was struggling to decide on a theme for today's newsletter when this article was posted on Crosswalk (God's providence) and I had my theme.

Many times during my life I have thought “this is not how I planned things to be”, and I'm sure each one of us have the same thoughts at times.



4 Beautiful Things That Can Happen When Life Doesn't Go How We Planned

Cortni Marrazzo Crosswalk.com Contributing Writer

“This is not how my life was supposed to go.” Every person has had this thought at least once in their life.

We have a plan of what we think our life will look like, but life throws us a curveball that changes everything--divorce, infidelity, loss of a job, struggles with your kids, serious health issues, infertility, bankruptcy, addiction, death of a loved one--the list goes on.

Circumstances like these leave us feeling like we've been punched in the gut and wondering how we go on from here.

How do you survive and pick up the pieces of your life when a dream or plan has died? It's a

to the unknown, which is why God is there to encourage and remind us that He is with us through all the pain, uncertainty, and struggle, and that He will lead us through to the other side.

You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Psalm 139:5 NLT¹ Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10 NLT And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

Here are few ways God can use times of unexpected changes in our lives for our good:

1. Alignment (or Realignment)

Unexpected life changes often cause you to rethink your priorities and your life, which can help you decide to stop running your life on autopilot and instead start being intentional about your life, your actions, and your priorities. Things like marital problems, struggles with your kids, health scares--they all stop you in your tracks and cause you to re-evaluate what is really important to you.

Relationship with God, marriage, family (and close relationships) and health are the most common to come to the forefront during these times. COVID-19 and the resulting mandatory quarantines caused many people to reassess their priorities in life and the speed at which they were living.

For instance, a long-time family-owned outdoor recreation store in my town decided to permanently close in the middle of the pandemic, but not because of financial strain. Rather, after having to close their doors for a while, they suddenly had the time to stop and

¹ New Living Translation

realize that they wanted to spend more time with their family and actually engage in the outdoor recreation that they spent so many years equipping other people to do. It enabled them to see that it was time to switch directions and focus more on what's most important to them.

An unexpected change in your life can be a great blessing to help you realign your life and priorities to what you truly value.

Take some special time to take stock of your life, and if what you are currently doing and surrounding yourself with matches your God-given dreams, values, and convictions. If not, what a wonderful opportunity you have to change your life's course.

2. Renewed Surrender

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. [Matthew 16:25](#)

The only way to truly move past the disappointment and heartbreak of your broken dreams and plans is to fully surrender those dreams to Jesus.

It's often easy to surrender your life to God when you first decide to follow Him, but further in your journey with God, it can be easy to start to pick up your own plans and ideas, and forget the importance of surrendering to God's plans for your life.

When I was in my 20s, I lived in a condo that was right on the beach of the Puget Sound near Seattle. One day when I went down to the beach to have some prayer and quiet time, I noticed a seagull repeatedly dropping a shell onto the rocks below it.

After watching it for some time, I noticed that inside the shell was a source of food, but since the shell was closed, the only way to get the food was to drop it in order that it would break open and expose what it really needed.

That seagull would have been pretty stupid to fly around with a shell it couldn't eat because it didn't want to risk losing it. That seagull taught me a lesson that day as I wondered how many times I've tried to hold onto things thinking that if I let them go, I would lose them, but in reality, that thing would only benefit me if I dropped it and let it break.

Only in the brokenness of that thing could I get what I really needed from it.

It's so tempting to try to hold on to something you treasure and value in your life when circumstances change, but sometimes it's only in the process of surrendering that thing or circumstance to God and accepting the resulting brokenness, that you will find the sustenance and blessing you really need.

3. Deeper Dependence on God

Unexpected events in our lives have a knack for helping us remember that God is (or at least should be) the driving force in our lives. This is such a beneficial reminder because it actually takes the pressure off ourselves to make things happen in our lives. Far too often we try to set goals for things we want to accomplish in our lives and end up stressing ourselves out and feeling like failures when we don't live up to those goals.

In 1 Samuel, David, who had been anointed as the future king of Israel, spent almost 7 years wandering in the desert hiding from King Saul who was trying to kill him.

During that time, he strengthened his relationship with and dependence on God, which enabled him to become a successful king who was recorded to be a man after God's own heart. Based on the many Psalms that David wrote in his time in the desert, it seems as though this time really helped strengthen his heart for God. God didn't call you to sacrifice your peace in order to accomplish things and make things happen. In contrast, He calls you to step into what He is already doing in your life and to walk in what He has already prepared for you.

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. [Ephesians 2:10](#)
Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.” [Matthew 11:28-30](#) MSG*

4. A Reminder of God's Sovereignty and a Stronger Trust in God

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. [Psalm 139:13,16](#)

When circumstances hit our lives that feel like they came out of nowhere, it's helpful to remind ourselves that God knew every day we would ever live before we were even born. As humans, all we know is finite time--what has happened in the past and the here and now, but God sees all of time together at once.

As I was praying one day about a specific situation I was going through in my life and how God could use that for my good, I felt like God reminded me that not only did He know this was going to be part of my story, but He actually planned my calling based on all the things He knew I would walk through in my life, this situation included.

God saw all your disappointments, tragedies, mistakes, detours, and everything else before He even created you, and in His all-knowing wisdom, He created a plan for your life that weaves all of them in and uses them to make you strong, help others, and make you who He's called you to be.

Unexpected changes in our lives are hard because they are times of confusion and mystery to us and they leave us feeling like we are walking in darkness, but thankfully God always knows the way forward, even when we have no clue what that might be. I'll leave you with these 4 encouraging scriptures.

In their heart's humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. [Proverbs 16:9](#)

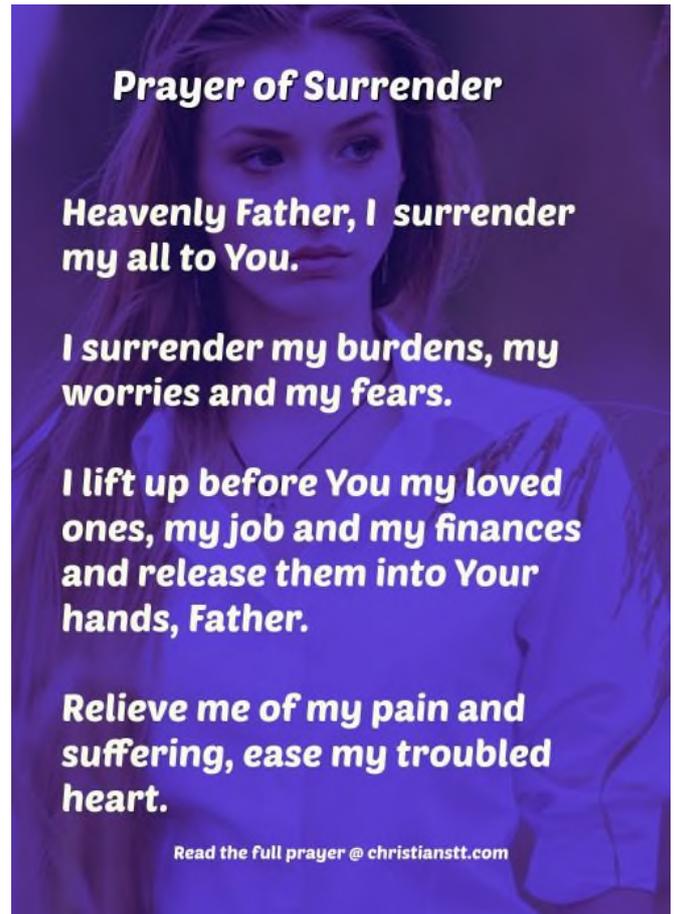
I know, Lord, that our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course. [Jeremiah 10:23](#) NLT

The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way? [Proverbs 20:24](#)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. [Proverbs 3:5-6](#)



Cortni Marrazzo Has a Degree in Biblical Discipleship and has a passion for encouraging and inspiring people toward God's Word through writing and speaking



Now for a little humour.

A friend in Sydney sent this to me. Both Tom and I found it very amusing.

Pay special attention to the wording and spelling. If you know your bible, even a little, you'll find this hilarious!

It comes from a Caithness (Scotland) school test.

Kids were asked questions about the old and new testaments. The following 25 statements about the bible were written by children. They have not been retouched or corrected; incorrect spelling has been left in.

1. In the first book of the bible, Guinness, god got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.

2. Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of Ark. Noah built the ark and the animals came on in pairs.
3. Lot's wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire at night.
4. The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic gentiles.
5. Samson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel-like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed Philistines with the axe of the apostles.
7. Moses led the Jews to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.
8. The Egyptians were all drowned in the desert. Afterwards, Moses went up to Mount Sinai to get the ten commandments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
11. Moses died before he ever reached Canada then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Jericho.
12. The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
13. David was a Hebrew king who was skilled at playing the lyre. He fought the Goliaths, a race of people who lived in biblical times.
14. Solomon, one of David's sons had 300 wives and 700 concubines.
15. When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.
16. When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manger.
17. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate conception.
18. St. John the Baptist dumped water on his head.
19. Jesus enunciated the golden rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.
20. It was a miracle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get out of the tombstone off the entrance.
21. The people who followed the Lord were called the 12 apostles.
22. The apostles were wives of the apostle.
23. One of the opposites was St. Matthew who was a tax collector.
24. St. Paul converted to Christianity, he preached holy matrimony, which is another name for marriage.
25. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monogamy.

BIBLE TRIVIA

1. How many days did it take God to create Heaven and earth?

Answer:

2. What did God use the rib of Adam to do?

Answer:

3. What did the serpent tempt Eve to do in the Garden of Eden?

Answer:

4. Who were Adam and Eve's first children?

Answer:

5. What did God divide when He created earth?

Answer:

{Answers Next Week}

WEEK THIRTEEN ANSWERS

1. How many people boarded Noah's Ark?

Answer: Eight

2. How many days and nights did Jesus fast for?

Answer: 40 days and 40 nights

3. Which prophet is known for turning his rod into a bronze snake?

Answer: Moses

4. What is the Holy Trinity?

Answer: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

5. What did Joshua command to stand still?

Answer: Moon and Sun

RECIPES

The inspiration for today's recipe comes from Alison Austin. She mentioned she had made a lovely cauliflower soup with ginger.



Ginger Lemon Cauliflower Soup

This 15-minute bowl of comfort puts a familiar vegetable in a new light thanks to the addition of citrus.

Prep Time 5 minutes

Cook Time 10 minutes

Total Time 15 minutes

Servings 5

Calories 45kcal

Ingredients

FOR THE SOUP

- Olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 heaping teaspoons freshly grated ginger, plus more to taste
- Approx. 500g cored cauliflower, cut into small florets
- 3½ cups vegetable broth, hot
- 1 bay leaf,
- 4 long strips fresh lemon peel,
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus more to taste
- Nutmeg, preferably freshly grated
- Fine sea salt and Ground pepper

FOR THE TOPPING

- Freshly grated lemon zest
- A few black peppercorns, crushed with a mortar and pestle
- Olive oil

Instructions

1. In a large pot, heat a splash of olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for a few minutes or until soft and golden but not brown.
2. Add the ginger and sauté, stirring constantly, for 1 minute or until fragrant.
3. Add the cauliflower, hot vegetable broth, bay leaf, lemon peel, and lemon juice and stir to combine. Season to taste with nutmeg, salt, and pepper.
4. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for about 10 minutes or until the cauliflower is al dente.
5. Remove the bay leaf and lemon peel and discard. Use a slotted ladle or spoon to remove about 7 ounces (200 g) of the cauliflower florets and set them aside.
6. Purée the remaining soup in a food processor, blender or with an immersion blender. If the soup is in a food processor or blender, return it to the pot.
7. Season to taste with additional ginger, lemon juice, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Break the reserved cauliflower into bite-size pieces, if necessary, and gently stir it into the soup, or use it as a topping.
8. Divide the soup among bowls, sprinkle with the grated lemon zest and crushed peppercorns, and drizzle with a little olive oil.

MUSIC

Matthew West - The God Who Stays

https://youtu.be/QPwd_TQpsHY