

Why Christ Followers Sometimes Struggle to Believe the Bible's Promises

Why is it so hard for us to believe that God has a plan for our individual lives? I can think of several reasons. Allow me to expand on the top three:

1. Sometimes we feel forgotten. You may ask, "If God loves me, then why did He allow me to go through this terrible circumstance?" Or, "If God loves me, why did He cause this to happen to me?"

As a result of the things that we experience, we become distrustful and our faith falters. Also, although we may not realize it, we hold God accountable for something we don't think He should have allowed to happen to us. In effect, we start carrying a grudge against God.

There have been many times in my own life when I haven't understood what God was doing. It was only later on, when I looked back on the situation, that I saw His purposes clearly. I was looking at things from my limited human perspective. God was looking at everything from an eternal perspective. As human beings, we are limited by space and time, and we must live our lives in one direction, from start to finish.

But God is above space and time, and sees everything from every conceivable angle at once. You might think of it like shooting a movie. As you probably know, when a director films a movie, he does not shoot it in chronological order. Instead, all or most of the scenes that take place in a certain location are filmed first. In some cases, the ending may be filmed first and the beginning last. Then the whole thing is edited together so it makes perfect sense.

Similarly, when God sees your life—or mine—it's like He's picking up a length of film, holding it up to the light, and seeing the whole thing at once.

He knows where some improvements are needed—where you have to be a little stronger, bolder, or more courageous. He sees the places where you're in danger of falling. I'm not saying your life is like a movie or a game. It is much more serious than that, and the consequences are eternal. But it will help us have a proper understanding if we pray for God to give us His perspective on things.

As I said, there are so many times I look back on my life and think, "Oh, I get it now!" There may be times when we feel God is giving us more than we can bear, but His Word says He will never do that. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us, "No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." It may feel like more than you can bear, but only God knows how much you truly can handle, and He will never take you beyond that point.

Maybe you feel forgotten today. If so, I want to remind you that God *does* see you. He *does* have a plan for you. He loves you and He *does* care intimately for you. He is always faithful and has not forgotten you, no matter how forgotten you may feel!

2. Sometimes we feel insignificant. You may ask, "Who am I? What do I have to offer?" You may think, "I can't sing and I can't preach. I can't play an instrument. What do I have to offer?" Jeremiah felt the same way. The prophet responded to God's call by saying:

"Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am a youth.' For you shall go everywhere that I send you, and whatever I

command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces. For I am with you to deliver you,' says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, 'Now, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.'" (Jer. 1:6–10).

God had to remind him, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). When God called him, Jeremiah downplayed his abilities. God told him, "Don't say you're a child or that you're insignificant. I have called you to go to the nations. I have anointed you. I have a destiny for your life."

On the authority of God's Word, I tell you that He has a destiny, a plan, and a purpose for *your* life. He has deposited gifts and talents within you that you may not even be aware of. He has ordained a destiny for your life that is different from that of anyone else in the entire world. It's a trap to say things like, "I'm insignificant," or, "I have nothing to offer." Remember the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30). The first two who used their talents and abilities for the master were rewarded. But the one who buried his talent because of fear and did nothing was punished. Do not bury your God-given gifts and talents in the sand. Use them for His glory. You have significance in God. You have a purpose!

3. Sometimes we feel condemned. "How could God forgive me for that terrible thing I did? After all, I should be a mature believer. I know better. I let my family down. I let God down, and He won't forgive me." Thoughts like these cause us to walk in guilt and condemnation. On the outside, we may still smile and raise our hands and do all the things we know to do. But inside, we're weighed down with condemnation and guilt.

One of the many things I appreciate about the Bible is that it tells it like it is. There's no whitewashing; there are no perfect individuals. We get to see everybody, warts and all.

Take Peter, for instance. How do you think he felt after denying three times that he knew Jesus? What must have made it even worse for Peter was that he turned away from Jesus at the exact moment when his Master needed him the most.

And remember, when Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him, the apostle declared, "Master, I am ready to go with You even to prison and to death!" (Luke 22:33). No wonder he went out and "wept bitterly" (v. 62) after the rooster crowed and he realized that he had behaved just as Jesus said he would.

But despite Peter's "crime," God used him as one of the most influential leaders of the New Testament. It was Peter's powerful sermon on the Day of Shavuot (Pentecost) that led to the outpouring of the Spirit in the temple and the salvation of over 3,000 people in one day.

Obviously, God's great mercy knows no bounds! Do you ever feel condemned? I don't have to be a prophet to know that many people experience these feelings every day of their lives. We're all part of the human race, after all. But remember, God has a plan for every member of the human race, and that includes you.

Part of that plan is that if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you. He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness and wipe the slate clean (1 John 1:9).

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