

# 5-Day Devotional: When Plans Don't Go to Plan

## Day 1: God Directs Through Disruption

**Reading:** Acts 16:6-10

**Devotional:** Paul's missionary journey was repeatedly blocked—forbidden to speak in Asia, prevented from entering Bithynia. What appeared as frustrating disruptions were actually divine redirections. The closed doors weren't God's absence but His guidance. When our carefully laid plans fall apart, we often interpret this as abandonment rather than direction. Yet God was leading Paul to Macedonia, to people whose hearts He was already preparing. Today, consider: What if your current disruption is actually God's protection or preparation? Instead of resenting the closed door, ask God what He might be directing you toward. His "no" in one direction often means "yes" to something better you cannot yet see.

## Day 2: Wrestling, Not Drifting

**Reading:** Psalm 73:1-28

**Devotional:** The psalmist doesn't hide his struggle—he openly admits that the wicked seem to prosper while the faithful suffer. This raw honesty before God is sacred, not sinful. When life disrupts our plans, we're tempted to drift into apathy or pretend everything is fine. But God invites us to wrestle, not drift. Jesus Himself sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, honestly expressing His anguish while surrendering to the Father's will. Bring your real questions, your protests, your pain to God. He can handle your honesty. Wrestling with God in prayer keeps you engaged with Him rather than drifting away. Your lament can coexist with your trust. Don't waste your suffering by facing it alone.

## Day 3: Discerning the Spirit's Direction

**Reading:** Proverbs 3:5-8, 16:1-9

**Devotional:** Discernment isn't passive waiting; it's active wisdom-seeking. Paul didn't stop moving when doors closed—he strategically positioned himself in Troas, a major trade hub with multiple options. We discern God's direction through wanting Him above all outcomes, aligning decisions with Scripture, and listening to Spirit-filled community. God's will isn't mysterious—He desires your sanctification, your growth in Christlikeness, whatever your circumstances. When disrupted, don't freeze. Do the next right thing. Make wise choices with the information you have. Seek counsel from those who know you and Scripture. Trust that as you move forward in wisdom and obedience, God will guide your steps even when you cannot see the full path ahead.

## Day 4: Looking for People, Not Just Outcomes

**Reading:** Acts 16:11-15

**Devotional:** Paul's disrupted plans led him to Lydia, whose heart God had prepared, and to Luke, who would write 27% of the New Testament. God's direction is always about people, not just places or outcomes. When we're fixated on our disrupted plans, we often miss the divine appointments right in front of us. Withdrawal seems safer than engagement when we're hurting, but isolation sabotages God's provision. He places people in our path—some to help us, others for us to help. The church isn't optional; it's essential for discerning God's will and experiencing His comfort. Who has God placed in your life during this disruption? Stay open to unexpected relationships that may be part of His greater plan.

## Day 5: The God Who Suffers With Us

**Reading:** Isaiah 53:1-12, Hebrews 4:14-16

**Devotional:** Christianity's unique claim is not that suffering isn't real or that it's deserved, but that God entered into it. Jesus didn't observe human pain from a distance—He experienced betrayal, physical agony, mockery, and abandonment. Your suffering is so real that God suffered too. This changes everything. You don't bring your pain to a distant deity who cannot relate, but to a Savior who sweat blood in His own anguish, who forgave His murderers from the cross. Because Jesus shared in your suffering, you can trust God is directing you through it, bringing good effects from what is genuinely evil. You don't walk this path alone. Approach His throne of grace with confidence, knowing He understands completely and offers mercy in your time of need.

How do you typically respond when your plans are disrupted, and what does that response reveal about where you place your trust?

The sermon mentions that we often mistake God's direction for disruption. Can you identify a time in your life when what seemed like a disruption was actually God directing you toward something better?

Why do you think our culture struggles to provide a framework for suffering, and how does the Christian understanding of suffering differ from secular approaches?

What does it mean practically to discern the Spirit's direction in your daily life, and which of the three methods mentioned (wanting God, Spirit-inspired Scripture, Spirit-filled community) do you find most challenging?

The sermon states that it is both holy and sacred to praise God in your pain and protest it at the same time. How does this change your understanding of honest prayer and relationship with God?

## Discussion Questions

In what ways might you be trying to use God for your plans rather than discerning His plans for you, and how can you shift that perspective?

How does the example of Paul's closed doors leading to strategic positioning in Troas challenge the idea that we should passively wait when facing obstacles?

What does it mean that you can waste your suffering by not bringing it to God, and how might you be currently wasting a disruption in your life?

The sermon emphasizes looking for people God is preparing rather than withdrawing when plans fall apart. Who might God be placing in your path right now that you are overlooking due to focusing on your disrupted plans?

How does understanding that Jesus wrestled in the Garden of Gethsemane and experienced real suffering change your view of bringing your honest emotions and protests to God?