

When [Christmas] Plans Go Awry

Matthew 2:13-23

Learning from Joseph (and Mary)

A. Operational Principle: The adversity we encounter from living in a fallen world can become a channel through which God accomplishes his good purposes *for us, in us, through us, and beyond us* (John 9:1-3; Genesis 50:20; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28-29; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; John 15:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Hebrews 12:1-13).

B. Positive Responses to Circumstantial Whiplash

1. Like Mary and Joseph, we should accept the unexpected as being *controlled by God* and trust that He is at work for good.
2. Our lack of control over the situation should prompt us to turn to God in humble dependence – not just to fix things, but to *reorder our lives* according to his purposes – and to rest in him.
3. When our plans are frustrated, we can regain our bearings by remembering that we are *supporting actors* in a cosmic drama written and directed by our Sovereign God.
4. We should remember that adversity is often better for our spiritual well-being than *prosperity* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
 - We need to be broken, repeatedly, of our *stubborn self-reliance*.
 - We need to experience the *sufficiency* of God's *grace* at the point of our weakness
5. As our circumstances drive us to greater dependency on God, we should watch for evidences of his *involvement* in our lives – the “fingerprints of God.”

(“Fingerprint” = a noteworthy event or provision or change of circumstance that draws my attention to God in a way that provokes a response of awe, thanksgiving, love, and/or trust, and encourages me to endure in faithfulness to Him.)
6. *Collect* fingerprints. As you deal with whiplash in the present, recall God's faithfulness to you (and others) in the past.