

The Divine Plan B

Madi Simpson

“God has a plan for your life.” These words can be both reassuring and perplexing. Reassuring, because if God has a plan, then that’s good news. A good God must have a good plan. It means that my life and the events that occur in it aren’t completely meaningless or purposeless. A good God wants good things for me. He wants me to thrive. Perplexing, because no-one can see into the future and tell me precisely what’s coming or what I should do next, and when I look into the past, there are losses, deaths and disappointments, things that cause me a great deal of pain. Were all these things part of God’s plan? More precisely, did God plan these things?

Perhaps we should distinguish between the things that God plans, and the things that are part of God’s plan. Christians sometimes talk about wanting to live God’s perfect plan, the divine ‘Plan A’, but it can be very difficult to discern what that plan entails. How do we know if we’re living it? Is it even possible or attainable?

Curiously, much of Jesus’ own life was distinctly Plan B-ish. Plan A would have been a bed for Mary and a hearty meal to gear her up for labour. Instead, she is denied a bed and is forced to give birth in a urine-soaked outhouse (stench filled cow shed?). Plan A would have been acceptance of Jesus in his home town, but instead he is rejected there. Plan A would have seen all the people heeding his words, and enjoying renewed relationship with God, but all the people didn’t. Looking at the bigger picture, Plan A would have been trust in God from the start; God’s creatures enjoying relationship with their creator. There, in a nutshell, we have it: relationship is Plan A, redemption is Plan B. God’s Plan A has been thwarted by evil and rebellion; the cross is God’s divine Plan B.

At the point of his death, Jesus had few friends and fewer followers, no sign that Plan A had been pulled off. Christians follow a God who is no stranger to disappointment; they follow a God whose nature it is to redeem. It’s because of God’s redemptive nature that everything in our lives can be called ‘part of God’s plan,’ even if our lives follow a less than perfect trajectory. God uses everything for good, which means he can use anything for good, even if that thing wasn’t supposed to happen. Plan B can be just as divine as Plan A. So yes, God has a plan for your life. He has a Plan A, B, C and quite likely D, and he’s operative in all of them.