

Rise Above Your Circumstances

By Paul Jetter, Pastor, Upper Valley Community Church, Piqua, Ohio
www.uvcc.info



Here is an interesting thought that you may have never considered this holiday season: Christmas was not God's original plan when he created Adam and Eve. God's plan was that Adam and Eve would never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, not God, brought evil and pain into the world. God's plan was that they would live forever in perfect harmony with him.

Of course, being God, he knew what they were going to do. But it wasn't his plan A for them. But once they disobeyed him, instead of throwing them on the trash heap and starting over, God created plan B, the coming of his Son to save his people from their sins.

Some people wonder why there is so much history in the Old Testament. The pages are full of stories of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel and many, many others. The writers record the journey of Israel into Egypt and out again in the Exodus. They tell the stories of kings and prophets. Why? Because the Old Testament writers did not see events as the result of fate or chance. They believed that God was at work in their lives to accomplish his plan for them.

When the Israelites sinned they often suffered, but God was quick to come up with a new plan to save his people. His greatest plan was the coming of the Messiah that first Christmas night. It was not an accident that Jesus was born when he was. God had planned world events in such a way that the story of the son of a humble carpenter in one of the least important countries of the world could spread throughout the known world. The Bible says, *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."*

God is still at work today. People may mess up his plan A for their lives, but God does not throw them on the trash heap of hopelessness. Instead he comes up with a plan B, or a plan C, or even plans D, E, F, G, and beyond. The Bible says, *"God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths."* The good news about these verses is that they do not have a qualifier saying God will direct our paths as long as we have never messed things up. The condition for finding God's plan for our lives is simply doing things his way now.

Recently I read a story of a sergeant who worked at an army motor pool. It was a dirty, smelly, curse-filled place of trucks and tanks. One day he decided to add some beauty by planting a few flowers. He ordered a private to dig out the polluted ground near his office door and replace it with dirt from down the road. Soon a colorful little flower garden lit up the otherwise dingy motor pool. Those who followed him kept the little garden blooming for at least eight years.

The sergeant noted that the flowers did not choose to grow in that dusty place of dirty machines of war, cursing soldiers, and oil-stained soil. They might have preferred a beautiful flower garden in a fancy park. But instead of complaining, they just went right on blooming. Instead of allowing the circumstances surrounding their garden to stunt their growth, they grew to their fullest and blessed many soldiers.

The moral of the story is this – we may not always choose our circumstances, but we can rise above our circumstances. Instead of giving up when plan A for our lives is destroyed, we should rejoice that God has a plan B that can bring us purpose, meaning, and happiness. God is the God that controlled history in Old Testament days, and he is still at work today. For some people, as they enter this New Year, it is a great opportunity to let God work in their lives in spite of what they or others have done. The year 2007 can be a great year; God is not finished with them yet.