

How to Connect Your Circumstances to God's Plan

Does God control my circumstances, or are the circumstances in my life just that—circumstances?

Well ... uh ... yes.

God often uses our circumstances to guide us and show us what to do, but sometimes the circumstances surrounding us have nothing to do with what God wants us to do. Let me give examples of both.

1. God is behind our circumstances.

- **Ruth** was not a Jew, but she came to Judah with her mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth went to find work gleaning in a field, and she "just happened" to end up working in the field of Boaz, a man related to Naomi. In their culture, Boaz could marry Ruth and be the "kinsman-redeemer" for two women in desperate straits. These "fortunate circumstances" brought the couple together who figure into the family tree of King David and Jesus of Nazareth. (It's worth reading the short Book of Ruth for the full story.)
- **Esther** was a Jewish woman in exile, yet she was forced into a beauty contest which led her to become queen of the entire Persian Empire. These circumstances happened around the time a law was created to exterminate all the Jews. Her cousin, Mordecai, challenged her to use her position as queen to save their people. "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this." (Esth. 4:14).

2. God is not behind our circumstances.

- **Samuel.** God sent Samuel to Jesse's family in Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. Everything pointed to Jesse's son, Eliab, as the obvious candidate. But God was not behind this.

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7).

- **David.** Saul was king of Israel, but everyone knew David would be king. Everybody. Even Saul, which is why he was set on destroying David. In spite of God's promise and



anointing to be king, David ran from Saul. On one occasion, David and his men were hiding from Saul in a cave, the very cave Saul ventured into to ... um, take care of business. All the circumstances came together for David to kill Saul and take the position God had ordained for him.

But David wouldn't do it. These circumstances were not directed by God. David said, "I swear before the Lord: I would never do such a thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the Lord's anointed." (1 Sam. 24:6).

So God is in our circumstances—and He isn't. So how do we know the difference? How do we know when God is using our circumstances to say, "Take action"?

God uses several things to communicate His will to us: the Bible, other believers, and yes, circumstances. But the counsel of other believers and the "nudging" of our circumstances must always be in line with God's Word.

Always.

Twelve Israelites ventured into the promised land to check out the land they would soon be moving into. But every piece of circumstantial evidence screamed this was a bad move. But God had already told them He had given them the land and He wanted them to move into what He had promised. They were not to worry about the circumstances because the circumstances did not line up with God's word.

Discerning the "message" of our circumstances is intricately tied to knowing God's Word. Obedience to His Word makes us sensitive to and in tune with the voice of the Holy Spirit.

"Teach me good judgment and discernment, for I rely on your commands." (Ps. 119:66).

"Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2).

We renew our minds with a diet of reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word. And when we follow this diet ...

"But solid food is for the mature — for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

Unwavering faith is not grounded in our circumstances, but in the trustworthy Word of God.