

IN THE MARGINS: Well, THAT didn't work – when God redirects our steps

By Tony Martin

Editor

We've all been there. You put your heart into something – a job, a relationship, a big decision – convinced it was the right path, only to watch it crash and burn. You stand in the wreckage, hands on your hips, shaking your head, thinking, *Well, THAT didn't work.*

It's frustrating, isn't it? Especially when you thought you were following God's plan. You prayed, you sought wisdom, and yet, here you are, staring at a closed door, a dead end, or a mess you never saw coming.

But here's the thing: just because something didn't work out the way *you* planned doesn't mean God's plan isn't still in motion.

God's Plans Are Bigger Than Our Missteps

Jeremiah 29:11-13 is one of those passages that gets quoted a lot, and for good reason. It reminds us that God isn't up in heaven throwing His hands in the air when our plans fall apart. He's not scrambling to figure out Plan B because we messed up Plan A. No, His plans are steady, good, and purposeful – even when our own plans fall flat.

“For I know the plans I have for you” – this is the Lord's declaration – “plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11, CSB)

Notice God says *I know the plans I have for you*. He doesn't say, *I'm figuring things out as we go*. He's not making it up

on the fly. Your missteps, wrong turns, and even outright failures aren't outside of His ability to redeem.

When We Hit a Wall, God Offers a Pivot

God's plans often involve pivots – moments when we realize the path we're on isn't working, and He nudges us in a new direction. Think about some biblical examples:

- **Moses** thought he'd deliver Israel *his* way by killing an Egyptian. That didn't work. God pivoted him to the wilderness for 40 years before bringing him back to lead with wisdom and humility.
- **Jonah** ran in the opposite direction of God's call. That didn't work. God pivoted him through the belly of a fish, sending him right back to Nineveh.
- **Peter** swore he'd never deny Jesus. That didn't work. Yet, after his failure, Jesus restored him and used him mightily in building the early church.

See the pattern? Failure isn't final. When we hit a dead end, God is already preparing a new road.

The Key to Moving Forward: Seeking Him Fully

The rest of Jeremiah 29 is just as powerful as verse 11:

"You will call to me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:12-13, CSB)

When our plans fall apart, God invites us to seek Him – not half-heartedly, not just when it's convenient, but with *all* our heart. He listens. He leads. He redirects.

So if you're standing in the middle of a situation thinking, *Well, that didn't work*, take a breath. This is not the end. It's a pivot point. Instead of wallowing in frustration, ask

God, *What now? Where do You want me to go from here?*

Trust the Process

Here's what I've learned about God's pivots:

1. **They usually feel uncomfortable.** Change is hard. Being redirected can feel frustrating or even like failure – but it's often a setup for something better.
2. **They require trust.** When God shifts your direction, He doesn't always lay out the full map. He asks you to take the next step in faith.
3. **They lead to growth.** Every closed door, every failure, every dead end teaches us something if we're willing to learn.

So if you're facing a situation where your plans aren't working, take heart. God is not done. He is always working for your good, even in the redirections. Seek Him, trust Him, and know that His plan – though sometimes unexpected – is always for your well-being, your future, and your hope.

And next time you find yourself shaking your head, muttering, *Well, THAT didn't work*, smile a little. You just might be standing at the doorway of something even better.