

# WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN FRUSTRATED OVER PLANS THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT?

When Doing God's Work Is Interrupted

The  
**POINT** >

God may interrupt us to move our ministry in a new direction.

## › ACTS 16:4-15

<sup>4</sup>As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. <sup>6</sup>And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup>And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. <sup>8</sup>So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup>So, setting

sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. <sup>13</sup>And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. <sup>14</sup>One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.



# THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

## FACT:

If you take a road trip through Seattle, there's a chance you'll cross the only floating bridge in the United States, the Lacey V. Murrow Memorial Bridge.<sup>1</sup>



## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

God is omnipresent (all places at all times), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all-powerful), and exercises sovereignty over all creation.

Recently, I took some time off, attached a camper to my truck, and headed out for a month of adventure with the family. We left Maryland and drove west, up to Minnesota, through North and South Dakota to Washington, down to Southern California, and back home. When we got home, the trip meter read "8812," or about an average 367 miles a day. This was certainly an epic, long trip. And my family did it in a fairly new truck, which has a great sound system and was stocked full of snacks.

Still, Paul and his companions had us beat. As pioneer missionaries, Paul traveled over ten thousand miles with none of the conveniences and comforts we had. Plus, he faced many life-threatening hazards, attacks from people who opposed him, and prison time, all because of his commitment to spreading the gospel.

In all the experiences Paul and his companions had, something unusual happened during the second missionary journey: God halted their plans, not allowing Paul to go where he wanted to take the gospel. We've all had plans that just didn't work out, no matter how hard we tried. It's time for a road trip with Paul and lessons in listening to God.

## ACTS 16:4-5

**1** What value is found in mentoring relationships like Paul had with Timothy?

**2** How are you involving yourself in God's work to share the gospel and make disciples?

*We can know that God's plans are always best, and the best place we can be is in the center of His will. #BSFLInterruptions*

## ACTS 16:11-15

### ACTS 16:6-10

**3** Why did God forbid Paul from carrying the gospel to Asia?

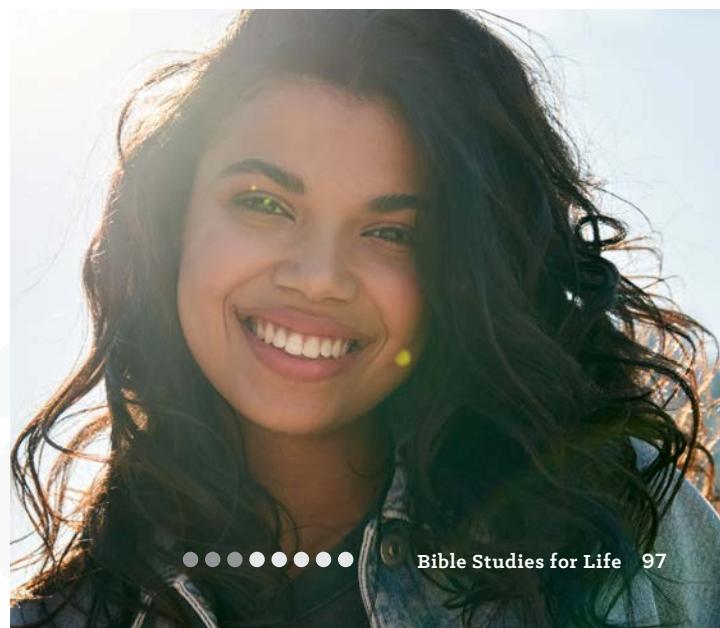
**4** When have you wanted to pursue something, but you felt like you just couldn't make it happen?

**5** Why is it best to be at the center of God's will?

**6** What can we learn from Paul going to the place of prayer when there was no synagogue?

**7** Why was Lydia such an important piece of God's plan to spread the gospel?

**8** When have you struggled to understand the ways God was working in your life, but over time, it became clear?





# LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY  
& WORLD

## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // GOD

*God is omnipresent (all places at all times), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all-powerful), and exercises sovereignty over all creation.*

At times, God's plans don't always line up with our own plans. When we face challenges we don't understand, it's important that we trust God and seek to obey Him, no matter the situation. God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and we can trust that God is in control and He is good no matter what we face in life.

## >CHRIST

Take time this week to honestly evaluate your faith. Ask yourself if the pattern of your life is to truly live by faith in obedience to God.

**9** Ask God to reveal His will for your life day by day.

**10** Pray about ways you can serve in your church. If you're not already, get involved in a big way.

## >COMMUNITY

Paul told people about Jesus wherever he went. Maybe you feel compelled to share about Jesus more than you do, but you might not feel confident about how to share effectively. One way to think of the gospel is in four parts: creation, rebellion, redemption, and restoration.

**11** Make time this week to get together with Christian friends. Talk about the gospel and practice sharing it with others.



## >CULTURE

Paul had a plan and a pattern for doing ministry in new places. However, God interrupted Paul's plans. Still, Paul was ready to take advantage of any opportunity God put before him, and we are called to operate with this same mindset.

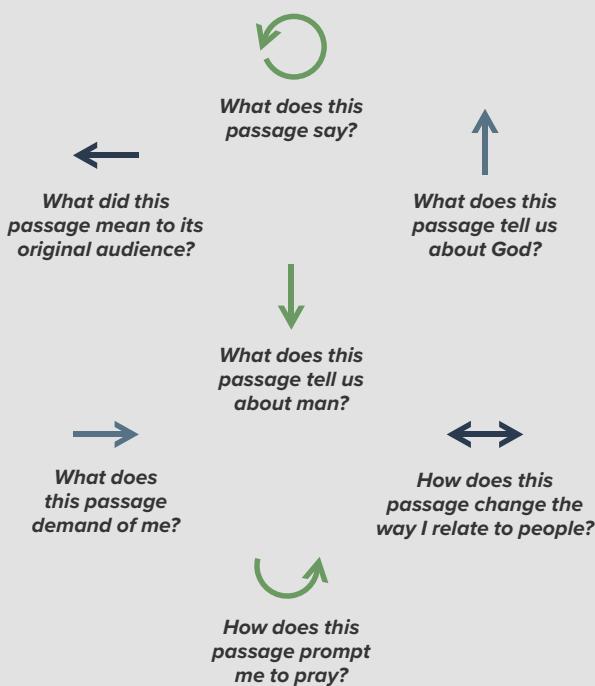
**12** This week, look for opportunities to point people to Jesus. When you slow down and pay attention, chances are you'll find opportunities to share the good news.

**13** Share the gospel with at least one person.

# DAILY DEVOTIONS



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



## Day One ISAIAH 55:6

Isaiah wrote to the kingdom of Judah, which had not remained faithful to God and had instead turned to idols. Isaiah warned that unless the people returned to God, they would experience terrible judgment. The people were living in sin, but it wasn't too late for them to be restored to God's blessing. They simply needed to seek God. There are a couple principles we can learn from this verse. First, God reveals Himself to those who earnestly seek after Him. This also means that God isn't obligated to receive anyone who doesn't pursue Him with his or her whole heart. A second principle we must understand is that God's promised blessings aren't unconditional, and there will come a time when it's too late to seek Him. When is that time? From an earthly perspective, as long as we're alive, we have the opportunity to turn from sin and to seek after God. And because we don't know how long we have, today is the day of salvation!

### ➤ To whom does God reveal Himself?

### ➤ When is it too late to seek after God?

## Day Two

# ISAIAH 55:7



Verse 6 is one of the clearest invitations to salvation in all of the Old Testament, and verse 7 teaches how to receive this gift. Sinners must change their ways, and all people have sinned and fallen desperately short of God's standards. Perhaps even more importantly, they must change the thoughts and desires that drive their behavior. When we return to the Lord in this way, He responds with compassion as a free gift. Some teachers have said that in the New Testament, we find the gospel revealed, but in the Old Testament, the gospel was concealed. Of course, Jesus is the clearest revelation of God's truth, but Isaiah 55:6-7 seems like a pretty clear picture of the gospel. How will you respond? Have you changed your ways and desires? Have you received God's free gift of forgiveness?

➤ **In your own words, what is the gospel?**

➤ **Why must we understand that God's forgiveness is a free gift?**

## Day Three

# ISAIAH 55:8-9

At times, God will ask us to do things that just don't make sense in our minds. Many (perhaps, most) devoted Christians understand that God is infinite in nature—He is all powerful, present everywhere, and all wise. However, it can be tough to understand how these ideas apply to our everyday lives. But as we read the Bible, it will inevitably call us to live in ways that don't seem to line up with how things normally work in the world. We're called to consider it joy when we experience suffering (James 1:2). If we want to live, we must choose to die (Matt. 16:25), and if we want to be first, we must be last (Matt. 19:30). These things just don't make sense. But this is where faith comes in, for God sees the big picture in ways we simply can't. His ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and when His calling on our lives doesn't make sense, we must trust that He is working out what is best in our lives.

➤ **When has God called you to do something that didn't make sense?**

➤ **Why is it important to trust God, even above our own thoughts and desires?**

## Day Four

# ISAIAH 55:10

We depend on rain in a big way, and when it doesn't fall, there are some pretty serious implications. For some of us, it means water levels might be too low to put boats on lakes or that grocery prices increase. However, there can be much worse effects, including crop failure or livestock death, which is disastrous for farmers and ranchers. For communities on wells, their water supply may dry up. Drought can lead to wildfires or devastating erosion. At times, we might not necessarily love the rain, but after a dry season, the first drops are cause for great celebration because those who have longed for the water know that there are good things to follow: drinking water, fruitful crops, healthy animals, and a happier life. Rain is a blessing that God causes to fall on the righteous and unrighteous alike (Matt. 5:45), and God is the One who is ultimately behind every blessing in our lives (James 1:17).

➤ **When have you felt spiritually dry?**

➤ **What are some blessings that God has poured out on your life?**

## Day Five

# ISAIAH 55:11



It's a reason to rejoice when rain falls on dry land, because we know that good things will follow. In the same way, when the Word of God is poured into our lives, we can know that God will use it to produce fruit, and this is cause for celebration. God is all-wise and all-powerful, and the way He chooses to accomplish His purposes is by the power of His Word. In the beginning, God spoke and creation came into being. The stars were hung in space, the world was formed and filled, and humanity, as God's image-bearers, was placed in a position of authority over creation. All this was accomplished by God's Word! Today, God speaks with this same power into our lives.

➤ **How would you describe the power in God's Word?**

➤ **What has God's Word accomplished in your life?**