

How Is This Going to Work Out?

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Artists often have to visualize the end product of a project before it is completed. An interior designer can see a swatch of fabric, a paint chip, and a magazine photo of a chair and convince a client that these will go perfectly together. A painter can see a clump of grass and mud on the side of the road and know just which brushstrokes and colors she will use to capture the feeling she has about this view. The painting is already in her head; she's got this.

When I'm working on a painting, it is sometimes impossible for me to explain to others, even artists, just what I have in mind for the piece. My husband is good at saying something like, "I'll take a look at it when you're finished. I trust you." When it comes to my life, though, I often can't visualize how all this is going to work out, or at least how it's going to be beautiful in the end. I can't get into God's head and see what He has in mind. But He does have it all in mind. There is not a single detail of my circumstances He hasn't planned.

Psalms 139:13-18 recounts the way God has planned out the total composition of our lives. I love that it uses the language of an artisan and an author.

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.

What strikes me about these verses is that He planned out each bit of me (my DNA, my talents, and my personality) at the same time that He planned each day of my existence. Why is this so profound? Because so many days it does not feel at all like they fit together. **"My personality and abilities are not a good fit for what is being asked of me today!"**

LIVE IN THE STORY

When my daughter, our firstborn, was born, it was a huge shock. I did not find that baby-care came naturally. I certainly didn't expect that every single waking moment of my life would be occupied with caring for another human being, as is often the case in those early days of a newborn. If someone had told me that I would some days have to choose between trimming my fingernails, showering, and eating, I would have suspected melodrama. But the biggest struggle for me? I wasn't making any art!

I remember telling my mom, "All I do all day is stuff I am not good at, and I'm not allowed to ever do anything I am good at." It feels much easier to me to pick up my brush and put paint to canvas. Being a mother is hard, and it doesn't always feel like a natural fit to me. (I have friends who are what I call "baby baby people" and parenting is still hard for them.) It's easy for me to be tempted to think, "This is not a very good fit for me. I mean, I have TWINS now, and I'm not even a baby baby person!" God knew that. He knew that I have an artist's drive inside me that is unquenchable, that burns my insides during the long months of newborn care when I cannot make art. He knows I would love to have time to develop my abilities as an artist, to travel to conferences on art, to write about art, to make more art, to have shows. To "gain the whole world," basically. (Don't we all want that?)

Stop. He planned each day. He planned the ones where I have a 30-minute block of time to go down to my studio and make stuff. He planned the days when the care of others takes every ounce of effort, every bit of energy, every single moment of the day. It doesn't make sense some days why God would give me abilities and desires in art, but not the means and time to use them, but His ways are higher than my ways; His thoughts are higher than my thoughts. Earlier, in verse 6 of the same psalm, this is stated:

**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.**

His plan is custom-built for me! He knows what I need. He's taught me so much through my kids. I have grown to really love being a mother. I have learned to chill out. I have learned to deny my own desires in new ways. I have learned what a blessing children are, and that I can find beauty and satisfaction in learning to do new, hard things, even things that aren't art. None of these things have been easy to learn, but they are what I need so badly! I do love being a mom, and I still love being an artist, even if I don't have as much discretionary time as I used to.

God has my best interest in mind. I can be sure of that. But **there's a bigger picture here.** He has a plan for how He is going to use my small story-- imperfect and insignificant--and blend it into The Story. In His Story, all the really mundane and "unimportant" bits of real life have real significance. In His Story, I don't have to become a big name in art or impress others. I don't have to manipulate my circumstances to paint my own perfect little story when I am part of the greatest Story that will ever be written.

He has the whole Story in His mind. I can't visualize the outcome, but He can! I can relax. He's got this.