

THE BIG IDEA: Though the path may seem uncertain, God's plan is not.

The Take-Off

Questions people ask graduates:

- What college are you going to?
- What do you want to major in?
- What do you want to be?
- What are you doing after graduation?

These questions express an expectation. They expect you to have a plan, and frankly, not all of us are ready to answer those questions when they're asked!

These plan oriented questions continue through our lives, and many feel pressured to have an answer.

Some of these questions are:

- Are you seeing anyone? When are you getting married?
- When are you having kids (or more kids. I get that one a lot)?
- What are your career goals? (In my life: Do you want to continue being a stay at home mom?)
- When are you buying a house/car?

First, let me make this disclaimer: Don't buy into the lie that you have to have everything figured out. (Shout out to my 11th graders!) You're not a failure if you aren't sure of the answers to these questions. There are 50 year olds who may have thought they had the answers that are stuck in jobs they hate, who feel their job title defines them. What you do for the next 4 years, or the first job you're in after college is not the job that defines your life. And if you are that 50-year-old, you're not defined by that job or the choices you made in your life along the way to make ends meet.

When people ask these questions, the thing they neglect to tell you is that life rarely looks the way we plan. When you're 30, you look back at the plans you made when you were 18, and laugh! Life can look a lot different than you pictured. That's definitely the case in my life.

My story:

I unapologetically wanted to be a dentist from age 3. Every plan I made included graduating from NYU Dental school. In high school, I adjusted the plan to include the Air Force, as I was a JROTC cadet and decided military life was part of the plan.

I was accepted to Clemson U, planning to be a biology major to prep for dental school with an ROTC scholarship. I planned to sign a negotiate a contract that included dental school, and would allow me to be an Air Force dentist. Sounds pretty good, right?

It wasn't the plan God had for my life. After a series of events, I finally asked God if my plan was the right one, and God told me, 'Nope!' Does this sound familiar to anyone else in the room?

The summer I graduated high school, I worked as a substitute counselor at Mt Shepherd Retreat Center and realized God had a plan for my life. Once I figured this out, I went to Clemson's orientation and couldn't make

friends with anyone in my major. I felt so uncomfortable. I found out the extracurricular activities I wanted to participate in would be impossible with my major because of my class schedule and labs. I was also going to have to take out substantial loans to cover the cost of an out of state school, even with several scholarships, and at orientation the bursar's office wouldn't take my scholarship checks. I started to panic, but felt so at peace when I went back to camp the next week. The friends I made there were mostly Pfeiffer U Religion students, who encouraged me to pray to God asking about my calling. God answered with a call to youth ministry.

Long story short, God had been working in me about this calling for the last few years. I had gone to a JROTC camp at Pfeiffer U for two summers and fell in love with the campus, but was told it wouldn't be the best option to prep for dental school by family. I remembered this when I finally accepted my call to youth ministry, which happened to be two weeks before the freshman move in date at Clemson. Many colleges wouldn't even consider you for enrollment at that point, but I spoke with a friend at my church who said, 'if this really is your calling, God will clear the path.' I applied on a Monday, but would have to send a check via snail mail for the application fee because I didn't have a credit card. I called the school, worried they wouldn't process my application without the fee, and they said they would still process my application. I scheduled a visit for Wednesday of that week, was told I was accepted and was given a financial aid packet that said I would only have to pay \$375 for the first year, and they waived my application fee that I couldn't pay. I could double major in biology and youth ministry, which I did to appease my family at the time. 4 years later, I graduated with only a youth ministry degree and went on to be the DCE at a church, then an administrative assistant at a wellness company in Charlotte and was later promoted to a project coordinator position, and now am a stay at home mom, who will be part time teaching 7th, 8th, and 9th grade science (taking the time to try and double major ended up paying off, but that's God for you!).

NOTHING went the way I planned after high school, and even the vision I had post college when I began church work ended up looking vastly different from my plan. Through all the twists and turns, I've learned how important trust is. God has cleared the path for me on so many occasions. The life I picked for myself sounded appealing, but I wouldn't trade the life I have now for anything in the world.

How many of you have a similar story? Would you go back and do things differently? I wouldn't.

Graduates, if you only take one thing away from this message, know that you have a unique calling on your life. It may not be summarized in a question like, what are you doing after graduation? Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." You are not defined by a major, a job, or an occupation. You are defined by the Holy Spirit that lives within you.

While some might find this freeing, those Type A personalities of us (myself included) are probably feeling anxious because what you may have heard is, "Don't plan! You have no control over what happens to you!" Take a deep breath and allow me to explain. The Big Idea today is, 'Though the path may seem uncertain, God's plan is not!'

While God is in control, we don't sit down and do nothing. So what do we do?

1. Love God

- a. We're told in Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." You can't go wrong focusing on how to better love the Lord. God WILL work for the good in your life.

2. Hear God

- a. 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will he hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the

requests that we have asked of Him.” Listen for God in prayer, in scripture, and in the counsel of other godly people. When we do these things we can gain wisdom and know God’s plan for our lives. God will give you the next step when you seek to live your life according to His will.

3. Trust God

- a. Proverbs 3:5-7, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways follow Him and He will keep your path straight.” Sometimes it might seem like the path is hard or foggy, but the Lord will guide us along the path. Jeremiah 29:11 also tells us that God has good plans for us, so trust Him in those plans!

4. Follow God

- a. 1 John 2:17 “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” Once you’ve found the path, don’t hesitate to take it. Our accomplishments are fleeting, but God’s plans are eternal. Don’t worry so much about the title you achieve or the money you make, because you will only have that for the time you’re here. You don’t have to wait to start working for eternity.

The Landing

Graduates, we are so proud of you and all you’ve accomplished so far! God has a plan for your life, and my prayer for you is that in 20 years, you’ll look back and be able to see God’s hand guiding your steps. You’re already positively impacting the world, and we are excited to walk alongside you as you continue the journey.

For those of you sitting here and your life looks different than you planned, let me ask you a few questions. Did you choose God’s path? If you did, celebrate it! Use your story to reach people for Christ! If not, it’s not too late! You’re never too old, too far along in a career, or too far off the path to receive God’s perfect will for your life. He wants you to live your best life, and He knows what that is! Pray for guidance, seek biblical counsel, and spend time in scripture. God’s plans are so much better than our own, and it is never too late to serve the Living God.

Close with prayer:

Pray for graduates to seek, gain wisdom, and follow the path. Pray for God to reveal will and plan to those adults that ask. Pray thanksgiving for wisdom, God’s love, and grace we all receive daily.