WISE HER STILL

A Life's Sentence: Your Plans for You Versus God's Plans for You

Tiffany Buckner • May 12, 2015

Anytime we hear that someone has been given a life's sentence in prison, we know that their lives are pretty much over. For the rest of their lives or the duration of their sentences (25 years or more), they will be monitored, controlled, and limited in their doings. All the same, they will be restricted to a small cell that they'll likely share with another inmate or several inmates. They'll be subjected to tormenting words, lewd behaviors, and a lifetime of regrets. It goes without saying that there aren't many *sane* people (if any) who want to go to prison, and that's why most of us stay on our p's and q's and ensure that we follow every letter of the law. But what about your life's sentence? What have you limited yourself to? Who have you limited yourself to? Believe it or not, we have all given ourselves life sentences, and that's why God continues to extend new mercies to us everyday, all the while, renewing our minds whenever they need a refreshing.

Think about a written sentence. Each sentence we write is a statement we're making, and when we complete that statement, we follow it up with a (.) period. That period indicates to the reader that we have completed a thought, and of course, if we're not finished with whatever it is we are saying, we will continue on writing and finishing up each sentence or thought with a period until we've concluded our statement. In verbal communications, we don't use periods; we use pauses. These pauses tell the listener that we've just finished a

thought, and listeners will usually give us a few seconds to either continue speaking or they will respond to whatever it was that we were saying. When the listener offers us feedback followed by their opinions, we call this a conversation, but sometimes, the listener will go off topic and start a new conversation. This can be frustrating to us if we liked the initial conversation and wanted to continue in it. Anytime someone changes the subject and we don't like what they're talking about, we'll either respond to what they've said and return to the previous conversation or we'll excuse ourselves from their presence altogether. That's because, as human beings, we like to complete our sentences. Let's apply this concept to life in general.

Our lives right now are nothing more than the manifestation of the choices we've made, the mindsets we've submitted to, and the people we can relate to the most, and of course, our choices are the reflections of our mindsets. The people around us are also reflections of our ways of thinking. Human beings don't necessarily hang out with people they cannot relate to. "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). That's why anytime you come across a person who is constantly talking about someone they consider to be their friend, we call them a backbiter, gossip, slanderer and a coward. They absolutely have something in common with the person they are hanging around, but there's some area of their lives that they don't agree in and it is this disagreement that is putting their friendship at risk. The backbiter knows that the sentence she's shared with her friend is about to be interrupted or ended by a period, meaning, the period of time they were called to walk together is coming to an end. Anytime we begin to see differences between ourselves and our friends, we somehow know that the friendships are coming to an end, and sometimes, we respond negatively because we thought those friendships would last a lifetime. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that God had other plans and His plans always supersede, override, and cancel out our own plans.

Most of us have these long, thought out plans for our lives, and we've seen these plans interrupted time after time by unforeseen circumstances, interferences from loved ones, and life, in general. Some of us were married and we thought our marriages would last a lifetime. Some of us had friends and we thought our friendships would last a lifetime. Some of us had jobs that we thought we'd retire from. Many of us had family members we thought would be in our lives for the rest of our lives. But life happened, and one by one, we saw the fall of our plans. We fought hard to keep every plan of ours alive because our plans are valuable to us. After all, we've invested one of the most valuable assets we have in this earth realm thinking up and meditating on those plans, and that asset is our time. Our thoughts are nothing more than stories we plan to tell with our lives, and oftentimes, these thoughts go against God's plans for us. But it's easy for human beings to think that because their plans for themselves are good plans that involve God that God will cosign with those plans and revise His plans for them to match their own. "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand" (Proverbs 19:21 ESV). A great example of God changing man's plans is outlined in the book of Genesis, chapter 11. The people of the earth were unified, and all had one language, so they conspired to build a city that reached into the heavens because they did not want to be scattered across the earth. The bible tells us that God came down, saw the city they were building, and said that because the people are one (unified), nothing they imagine can be withheld (held back) from them, so He confused their languages. As a result, they ended being scattered across the earth, which, of course, was the very thing they were striving not to do. What does this mean for us? Sometimes, God will interrupt our plans with His own plans so that we can carry out His will for us and not our wills for ourselves.

God does not change His plans for us to accommodate our own. Instead, He said He would give us the desires of our hearts. But wait a minute? Doesn't this statement contradict the former statement? What if God's plans does not

match our plans? How is it then that His purpose or plans for us will stand, but at the same time, He'd give us the desires of our hearts? It's simple. When our plans for ourselves does not match God's plans for us, it is oftentimes because we've gone off course somewhere with the Lord. For example, let's create a character named Brenda. Brenda has been in a relationship with Vincent for four and a half years now. Before Vincent came into her life, Brenda married a man named Jacob, but their marriage ended in divorce after Brenda discovered Jacob's many betrayals. A few months after divorcing Jacob, Brenda met Vincent, and he appeared to be the perfect man. He has been great with Brenda's children, plus, he seems to be a pretty settled man. He goes to church often, has a stable job, and Vincent desires to get married someday, so Vincent appears to be the ideal husband to Brenda.

Brenda and Vincent have been sharing a house together for the last few years and Brenda's children love and respect Vincent. Because they've merged residences and Vincent has made it clear to Brenda that he intends to marry her one day, Brenda has merged her finances with Vincent's finances, they've gotten joint bank accounts, and they've merged their bills. Everything seems to be going well with them until God confuses their languages. What Brenda doesn't know is she has a call on her life. God has called her to evangelism and her season to walk in that call is near, so He begins to stir up her spirit, but this stirring is causing a whirlwind of trouble in Brenda's plans. Brenda doesn't understand why she can't seem to have a conversation with Vincent without the two of them arguing. She doesn't understand why she's been so hungry for the Word lately, but she's been appeasing her appetite by reading her bible and frequenting the sanctuary. Brenda has also been super prayerful lately, and one of her prayers is that God touches the heart of Vincent, and God does just that. He begins to have a conversation with Vincent's heart that his ears cannot hear, but his spirit man understands. God makes it clear to Vincent that Brenda is not for him and He extends an invitation to Vincent's heart to reconcile himself to Him, but Vincent does not want a relationship with the Lord. After all,

Vincent is an educated man with a good job, and since he believes his life is "good enough", he doesn't think he needs God, so God turns Vincent over to his own lusts, but He keeps on calling Brenda. As each day turns into night, the home that Brenda and Vincent shares together becomes colder and colder, and it's obvious their languages have been confused. Even though both adults speak impeccable English, they can't seem to understand one another and their hearts are going in separate directions. What they don't know is their home is a tower that they built in an attempt to get to their own versions of paradise. God confused their language so they could stop building together, and then, He scattered them from one another because their will was not His will. Brenda had thought up a story that she intended to write, but God's story for her didn't match her story for herself. Before long, Vincent has had enough of living with a woman he can't seem to understand, so he moves out not understanding that God simply took a sentence they'd both written in their minds and He placed a period at the end of that sentence. It was time for Brenda to stop living in her dreams and start facing the reality of who she was. Of course, Brenda goes through the stages of grief, but at the end of her grieving period, she is given a choice. She can stay in her pain and allow that pain to turn into bitterness or she can acknowledge her wrongs, repent of her sins, learn from her mistakes, and follow the will of God for her life. In other words, our hearts will be renewed when we seek the kingdom of God, and it is then that our plans for ourselves will match God's plans for us. It is then that the desires of our hearts will match God's will for us, and He will give us those desires.

In this day and age, there are many Brendas walking about the earth, and some of them chose to stay in unforgiveness, and because of this, they didn't place periods at the ends of their sentences, they confined themselves to those periods in their lives, thus, causing them to stunt their growth in the Lord. They lived in the confined restrictions of those periods, and because of their pain and mental imprisonment, they began to insert themselves in the lives of others in their attempts to end their sentences. They started successfully or

trying to end other people's relationships, friendships, and many of them began to bring strife within the church. Hurt people hurt people....we know this to be a fact. The Brendas who chose to repent and learn from those lessons went on to tell better stories than the ones they'd once dreamed of telling. They found the answers to many of life's mysteries and they discovered the freedom of who they really were as opposed to the limited plans they once had for themselves, plans that restricted them to lifestyles they weren't designed to lead and mindsets they weren't designed to stay in. They discovered the limitless power of their minds and they began to explore the Word of God so deeply that they discovered many of the hidden mysteries of God. They also discovered that they would have had to kill their futures to live in their own revised versions of the lives they attempted to live. Which Brenda are you? Did you know that your life is nothing more than a conversation you are having with God, and anytime you are making plans in your heart, God responds to those plans, but sometimes, His response appears to be off topic. Nevertheless, His responses are never off topic; after all, we tend to talk to God about our lives, but God's plans for our lives is different from our plans, so when it appears that God is changing the subject, He is simply telling the story that **will** be told, not the story we want to tell. We may get angry and try to return to our initial statements, but God will continue to respond to our hearts in a way that seems confusing at the time, and of course, so many people excuse themselves from His presence when He doesn't say what they want to hear.

Your life is a series of statements being made from a compromised heart, but a renewed mind and an active, intimate relationship with God will teach you to never limit yourself to even the greatest of your imaginations; after all, your greatest plans for you are God's least plans for you. "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). It's okay to have imaginations as long as those imaginations are Godly. It's

okay to dream of the life you want to live, but the problem often comes in when you limit yourself to your imaginations because you then place limitations of God. God can do even greater than what you can ask or think. Plans are nothing more than imaginations that have graduated from the realm of thoughts into the realm of beliefs, meaning, you've accepted those thoughts as true and you've began to consciously or subconsciously work towards making "your" plans a reality. When we do this, we start attempting to override God's will with our plans, and this can cause us to enter the witchcraft of rebellion because, again, we often believe that if our plans are good and we've somehow factored God into those plans that He has no choice but to cosign, and this is not true. What we ought to do is use our imaginations to start sentences, and then, hand those plans over to God. When we do this, we won't place periods at the ends of those sentences, but instead, we'll start telling a story, only to let God finish that story. When we do this, we'll soon discover God's style of writing. For example, my plans were to be married to the men I'd chosen for myself, have three children, live in a large home, have my own business and live happily ever after. During the second marriage, I'd finally completely surrendered to God and handed my plans over to Him, meaning, I removed the period at the end of that sentence and asked God for His will to be done. My *initial* sentence read like: I am married to Roger; we will have three children, he will give himself to God (finally), we will buy a large home, and he will be a great husband to me someday. I handed my life's book to God and He edited it, and what He handed me back read: I ~~am~~ was married to Roger; we will not have ~~three~~ any children together, *I pray* he ~~will~~ gives himself to God (finally), we will never buy a ~~large~~ home together, and he will not be ~~a~~ my ~~great~~ husband ~~to me~~ someday. When God handed me back the mental manuscript, I thought there *had* to be some kind of mistake; after all, God made it **very** clear that Roger was not my God-appointed husband within the first year of us marrying. As a matter of fact, that truth came in within a few months of us being married and it was too confusing to read, so like any good author, I rejected the changes and sent them back to God. God

then sent me back another edit, and this time, the strikethroughs were worse than before. I had to come to grips with the fact that God had a different story to tell about my life and I had to make peace with that. When I made peace with God's plans, I wanted to end the marriage immediately, but like any good author, God didn't just stop a story mid-sentence to start a new one. The old one had to finish so that I could understand my mistakes and I could testify of those mistakes to other women who were trying to write the same story with a different pen. I kept trying to strike Roger out, but God kept rejecting my changes so that the story could end in a way that gave **Him** the glory. The point is...We have many plans for ourselves; we've written many sentences in our hearts, and we've even made arrangements for our plans to come to pass, but God will always interrupt our plans with His own. What I had to do was learn to stop making grand plans for myself because by doing so, I was storing treasures for myself in the realm of the earth, and then, I did like any ambitious treasure-hunter would do: I started looking for those treasures, meaning, I stopped seeking the kingdom of God (first) and all His righteousness! But when I stored treasures for myself in heavenly realms, I stopped seeking the things I could work for and the things I could earn, and I started seeking what I could never afford. I started seeking to please the Lord, and that's when my story changed and everything else began to be added to me. That's when I accepted the changes God had made in my life's story, and even though I don't know how the end of my story will read, I smile as I tell it because I know God will be glorified in it, plus, God doesn't write horror stories. He is love, so every story He tells is a love story, even the ones that don't read so well. I don't have to know how my story will end anymore; that's none of my business. I simply know now to take a sentence and hand it to God. This saves me time, energy, money, and precious peace because I'm no longer acting out sentences I've written in my heart, and then, reacting when God begins to edit out my plans while I'm in the midst of them. *Nope*. I now take my plans to God before I even touch them, and whatever He says goes for me. I'm okay with His plans for me now. I'm actually excited about what's in store for me because He said

that it hasn't even entered into my heart what He has planned for me. Let me tell you...I've had some *really* great plans for myself. **Seriously.** I'm not a person who lives within the constrictions or limitations of man's declarations of what's possible or impossible. Honestly, I can't even be around people who attempt to limit me because I hate to be confined. I won't even confine myself to my own thoughts, so it goes without saying that I refuse to allow someone in my life who wants to confine me to their thoughts. For me to never have imagined what God has in store for me is nothing short of amazing. I don't want the American dream. That's a nightmare for me. I don't want a piece of the American pie. I don't even like pie. I don't want a slice of heaven. Not after all the hell I've raised in my life. I need all the heaven I can get. The point is.....God really must have some supernatural, amazing, earth-shattering plans for me because my plans for myself were huge. The same goes for you.

Look at your life and review the story you've been telling. Your story is a sentence you're attempting to live in, and that sentence can serve as a prison cell for you. Stop making plans for yourself, and then, attempting to place periods at the ends of those sentences because it is by doing so that you set yourself up for a broken heart. When an imagination comes your way and that imagination looks good to you, don't start accepting that imagination as a point of destination for your life. Instead, take that thought to God and let Him edit it. If He says its not His plans for you, cast it down, or better yet, reject it because it goes against what He knows about you. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Anytime you make plans for yourself, you will surround yourself with people who support or compliment those plans, or people who you think can aid you in bringing those plans to pass, and when you do this, God will let you build for so long before He confuses your language. That's the church hurt so many people complain about. It's not the church that hurt them. It was the period God placed at the ends of their sentences that offended

them. It was likely not the church God wanted them to be a part of or they'd overstayed their welcomes in their attempts to rewrite their stories. God has plans for your life. You have plans for your life. To avoid delaying His plans for you, the best thing to do is submit to His will and stop trying to force your will upon Him. If there's a friend in your life who God wants you to separate yourself from, He will place a period at the end of that friendship. If there's a man in your life who God wants to separate you from, no amount of question marks and exclamation points will stop Him from ending that sentence. Just make life easier for yourself and submit to God's will for you. That's when you can serve a life sentence in the perfect will of God and still have heaven to look forward to.