

## ADVENT AND SPONTANEITY

### I. [Proverbs 16:1-2 & 9](#) [Proverbs 19:21](#) [James 4:13-16](#)

A. During the four Sundays of Advent we're taking a look at Hospitality, Generosity, Spontaneity, and Charity. On Christmas Eve we'll look at Divine Humility. Today we're on to Spontaneity. Some people like that word but it scares others to death. Some find security in "*sticking with the plan.*" Others find adventure in "*veering off the beaten path.*" The plan was to go to Bethlehem and register for the census but did Joseph and Mary plan to have the Baby there? The plan was to get a room at the local inn. Having Baby Jesus in a barn wasn't in the script. Or was it? Is there room in your Christmas for spontaneity? Shepherds didn't plan on an angelic concert announcing that their Savior was born in their little hometown but what an awesome interruption!

B. Most dictionaries define Spontaneity as: "*The quality, state, or condition of being spontaneous.*" **Spontaneous** is then roughly defined as: "*Something happening in a natural way without being planned or thought about.*" "*Something done or said in a natural and often sudden way and without a lot of thought or planning.*" (Let's add supernatural to the mix.) Sometimes spontaneity for us means having great plans but then realizing God has other plans or intentions that cause us to shelve our's for His better ones. "*Leave your nets and follow Me!*" Or: "*Boys, leave the sheep and check out the stable in town and spread the word.*" Or: "*Don't stay here or go back to Nazareth, head down to Egypt.*" Or: "*Magi, head back east a different way than you came.*"

C. Jesus is on His way to heal Jairus' dying daughter. While pressing through the crowd, a woman who suffered a bleeding malady for twelve years, wrestled through the throng to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. She was instantly healed. Jesus stopped immediately knowing that healing power had gone out from Him. He asked who touched Him. The disciples say, *everybody!* He means specifically. Finally she shyly confesses. Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well. (Well = healed, whole, saved!) She's now clean and can worship at the temple! She's met the Messiah, God the Son! What caused her to make the lunge towards Jesus in that chaotic mess? What made Jesus stop right then and there? Was either response planned? And what happened to Jairus' daughter? She died. But don't worry--Jesus raised her from the dead!

D. The Priest and Levite would not stop to give aid to their bludgeoned brother. But what caused a despicable spiritual halfbreed to stop and tangibly love his enemy neighbor? What if he hadn't? Of course God's never surprised by the detours He sends our way. He calls more audibles than Peyton Manning and doesn't even use the word *Omaha*. How do we make plans, plot a course, prayerfully draft an itinerary and yet not be so rigid as to miss God when He changes everything? If you were marooned and snake bit on Malta, could you embrace the islanders, preach the Gospel, and minister to the sick? Were our knuckles made to bleed on the doors God doesn't want to open?

E. **Proverbs 16:1-2 & 9 (ESV) 1** The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. **2** All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit... **Verse 9** The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. **The Living Bible puts it this way: Proverbs 16:1-2 & 9: 1** We can make our plans, but the final outcome is in God's hands. **2** We can always "prove" that we are right, but is the Lord convinced? **Verse 9** We should make plans--counting on God to direct us. **Proverbs 19:21 (ESV) 21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. **Again the Living Bible: Proverbs 19:21 21** Man proposes, but God disposes. **James 4:13-16 (ESV) 13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— **14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

F. Should we quit planning? Quit setting goals? Become free-spirited Jesus freaks? Yiddish Proverb: "*If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.*" Sometimes we make intricate plans and then ask God to sign off on them. (Dear Santa God...) Wouldn't it be better to ask God to show us His plans for us and then walk in them? We say, "*Jesus is Lord.*" Is He Lord of our time, daily schedules, goals, long term plans, and aspirations? How can we make God the center of what we're doing instead of ourselves? Maybe we can start by making Him the center of His own Birthday activities and celebrations! "*We'll eventually make it to the Nativity but there's a big last minute sale at Walmart...*"

1) **Dr Richard Swenson**, writes in ***The Overload Syndrome***: "*As we have seen, Jesus never seemed in a hurry. Time urgency was not only absent from His life, it was conspicuously absent. Creating a margin--that space between our load and our limits--is perhaps one of the best ways to allow Christlike spontaneity and interruptibility back into our lives. Margin blunts hurry and allows us to focus on the divine appointments God sends our way.*"

2) **Interruptibility**. Such an awesome word! Jesus definitely had that. "*Don't keep those little children from Me--I welcome them!*" "*Don't rebuke that blind beggar--Bartimaeus, receive your sight!*" "*Don't keep that woman from pouring her expensive perfume on my feet--it's a beautiful things she does!*" "*Martha, Martha, you're so busy with urgent things, but your sister Mary has chosen what's most important.*" "*Sorry to interrupt Son, but they seem to have run out of wine...*"

3) **Tanner Green**, pastor of SouthPointe Christian Church in Warwick, RI writes: *"Interruptibility happens when someone or something interferes with a previous plan. This interference breaks the flow of one's day. It discontinues the diagram of how one thinks her/his day should unfold. Interruptibility is the willingness to be inconvenienced."*

**G. Jesus has set His face like flint towards Jerusalem. He's passing through Jericho bound for the cross. His pace through the dense crowd is resolute. He has a destiny to fulfill that will affect you and me. But then as Jesus presses on, He sees a little man up in a tree. The people see a troll. Jesus sees a heart ready to become His. Jesus stops underneath the sycamore and looks up. (Was this in the itinerary?) He asks the man to come down then announces a home visit that leaves the little guy astonished. He had no clue this was coming. What prior notice did Jesus have of their meeting? Was it during His morning prayers? Was it just a hundred yards from the tree? Was it before the foundations of the world were laid? What Godly spontaneity! Repentance and Joy Unspeakable join hands. This is spiritual spontaneous combustion! Zacchaeus catches on fire! Oh how I pray that fire spreads to all of us! Let's pray it does! "But I didn't plan on this!" Just go with it!**

\* Jesus encountered ten thousand interruptions on the way to the cross to die for our sins. And it was like each one of them were planned. And so they were...

\* Close with Prayer...

### **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

#### **Proverbs 16:1-2 & 9 (ESV)**

**1** The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. **2** All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit... **9** The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

#### **Proverbs 16:1-2 & 9 (Living Bible)**

**1** We can make our plans, but the final outcome is in God's hands. **2** We can always "prove" that we are right, but is the Lord convinced? ...**9** We should make plans--counting on God to direct us.

#### **Proverbs 19:21 (ESV)**

**21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

#### **Proverbs 19:21 (The Living Bible)**

**21** Man proposes, but God disposes.

#### **James 4:13-16 (ESV)**

**13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— **14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

#### **Yiddish Proverb**

"If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans."

- From the Yiddish proverb, *Der mentsh trakht und Gott lakht* ("Man plans and God laughs").

#### **Quote by Richard A. Swenson**

"As we have seen, Jesus never seemed in a hurry. Time urgency was not only absent from His life, it was conspicuously absent. Creating a margin--that space between our load and our limits--is perhaps one of the best ways to allow Christlike spontaneity and interruptibility back into our lives. Margin blunts hurry and allows us to focus on the divine appointments God sends our way."

- Richard Swenson, MD, *The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live Within Your Limits*, NavPress, 1999.

#### **Quote by Tanner Green**

"Interruptibility happens when someone or something interferes with a previous plan. This interference breaks the flow of one's day. It discontinues the diagram of how one thinks her/his day should unfold. Interruptibility is the willingness to be inconvenienced."

- Tanner Green pastors SouthPointe Christian Church in Warwick, Rhode Island.

## Film Clips & Other Links

When You're Too Busy to Be Godly - Kevin DeYoung  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V0FIJfGriA>

"Hark The Herald Angels Sing" - Rend Collective  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT9Aouc\\_4M0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT9Aouc_4M0)

"Baby Boy" - For King and Country  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xl69i3jLdNE>

"Crowder" Christmas Special live from Mary Todd Hairdressing Co. Atlanta GA  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbmqORNPGck>

"The Coloring Song" - Petra  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6012RghSQ>

## Bonus Stuff

### Isaiah 14:24 (NIV)

**24** The Lord Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.

### James 4:13-16 (The Living Bible)

**13** Look here, you people who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to such and such a town, stay there a year, and open up a profitable business." **14** How do you know what is going to happen tomorrow? For the length of your lives is as uncertain as the morning fog—now you see it; soon it is gone. **15** What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we shall live and do this or that." **16** Otherwise you will be bragging about your own plans, and such self-confidence never pleases God.

### Mark 5:21-43 (ESV)

**21** And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about Him, and He was beside the sea. **22** Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing Him, he fell at His feet **23** and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." **24** And He went with him. And a great crowd followed Him and thronged about Him. **25** And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, **26** and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. **27** She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. **28** For she said, "If I touch even His garments, I will be made well." **29** And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. **30** And Jesus, perceiving in Himself that power had gone out from Him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" **31** And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing around You, and yet you say, 'Who touched Me?'" **32** And He looked around to see who had done it. **33** But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. **34** And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." **35** While He was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" **36** But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." **37** And He allowed no one to follow Him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. **38** They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. **39** And when He had entered, He said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." **40** And they laughed at Him. But He put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with Him and went in where the child was. **41** Taking her by the hand He said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." **42** And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. **43** And He strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

### Luke 19:1-10 (ESV)

**1** He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. **3** And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. **4** So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was about to pass that way. **5** And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." **6** So he hurried and came down and received Him joyfully. **7** And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." **8** And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of

anything, I restore it fourfold." **9** And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

#### **Quote by C.S. Lewis**

"The great thing, if one can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's "own" or "real" life. The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life – the life God is sending one day by day: what one calls one's 'real life' is a phantom of one's own imagination!"

- C.S. Lewis, *The Letters to Arthur Greeves*, (20 December 1943), paragraph 5, p. 499.

#### **Quote by Richard Beck**

"But interruptibility is not just a form of hospitality, it is also a form of humility. We tend to become uninterruptible when we think our agenda is the most important. Thus, when you allow someone to interrupt you you are implicitly setting their agenda ahead of your own. You are practicing what Paul taught: *"In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."* Paul isn't talking about self-esteem here. He's talking about priorities. Put other people's interests on your *To Do List*. Be interruptible."

- Richard Beck is a professor at Abilene Christian University and author of *The Experimental Theology Blogspot*.

#### **Quote by Rebecca Barlow Jordan**

"How we spend our time determines what we enjoy the most."

- Rebecca Barlow Jordan, *40 Days in God's Presence: A Devotional Encounter*, Warner Books, 2006.

#### **Quote by Kosuke Koyama**

"God walks 'slowly' because He is love... Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is 'slow' yet it is lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love."

- Kosuke Koyama, as quoted by Philip D. Kenneson in: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, InterVarsity Press, 1999.

#### **Spontaneous Love**

By Oswald Chambers

"*Love suffers long and is kind...*" —[1 Corinthians 13:4](#)

Love is not premeditated— it is spontaneous; that is, it bursts forth in extraordinary ways. There is nothing of precise certainty in Paul's description of love. We cannot predetermine our thoughts and actions by saying, "Now I will never think any evil thoughts, and I will believe everything that Jesus would have me to believe." No, the characteristic of love is spontaneity. We don't deliberately set the statements of Jesus before us as our standard, but when His Spirit is having His way with us, we live according to His standard without even realizing it. And when we look back, we are amazed at how unconcerned we have been over our emotions, which is the very evidence that real spontaneous love was there. The nature of everything involved in the life of God in us is only discerned when we have been through it and it is in our past.

The fountains from which love flows are in God, not in us. It is absurd to think that the love of God is naturally in our hearts, as a result of our own nature. His love is there only because it "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit..." ([Romans 5:5](#)).

If we try to prove to God how much we love Him, it is a sure sign that we really don't love Him. The evidence of our love for Him is the absolute spontaneity of our love, which flows naturally from His nature within us. And when we look back, we will not be able to determine why we did certain things, but we can know that we did them according to the spontaneous nature of His love in us. The life of God exhibits itself in this spontaneous way because the fountains of His love are in the Holy Spirit.

- Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*. To read more, go to: <http://utmost.org/spontaneous-love/>

#### **Life's Interruptions Are Divine Opportunities**

Trevin Wax - The Gospel Coalition

<http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2013/01/07/lifes-interruptions-are-divine-opportunities/>

I confess. I'm a control freak.

To give my attitude the best spin, I could say it's because I'm "disciplined" and like to map out my time. But that's not the reality. Truth is, I like to be in control because it makes me feel powerful and secure. The heart issue is that I'm looking for security in something other than God. So, it's idolatry, not discipline.

If you like to be in control of your circumstances, then you know what interruptions are like. They're frustrating. They get in the way of your plan. They need to be avoided or discarded or dealt with as soon as possible so you can get back to being in control, right?

Wrong.

Those of us who follow Jesus shouldn't act this way when interrupted. We shouldn't see interruptions as obstacles to our plan but opportunities to embrace God's plan.

### **Jesus Interrupted**

I can't help but marvel at how Jesus handled interruptions. Take the story told in Matthew 14, when Jesus finds out about John the Baptist's beheading. Jesus is saddened by the news. He wants to be alone. So what does He do? He gets in the boat and starts on a journey to get some solace and relief.

But Jesus' solace is soon interrupted. A large crowd gets word of His plan, and the people make it to the other side in order to wait for Him.

Imagine Jesus as He nears the shore and catches a glimpse of thousands of people waiting to meet Him. Most of us would be frustrated at the sight. We'd probably decide it best to send away the crowds. Or maybe we'd stay in the boat and go somewhere else.

But that's not Jesus' response. He's not frustrated. Matthew says he felt compassion for the people.

Compassion?

Yep. While I'm busy figuring out a way I can keep control, Jesus is thinking of how He can show compassion. He doesn't throw a pity party for Himself. Instead, He puts others first. What would stir up frustration in us stirs up compassion in Him!

### **Interruptions and the Stuff of "Real Life"**

Many of us think interruptions get in the way of "real life." That's why we don't like them. They remind us we're not in control.

- \* Traffic is heavier than usual, and you miss an appointment.
- \* Unforeseen circumstances cause you to miss a deadline.
- \* Your kid comes down with the flu at the very time you're supposed to be going on vacation.

C.S. Lewis recommended that Christians stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's "own," or "real" life. He wrote: *"The truth is of course that what one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life – the life God is sending one day by day: what one calls one's 'real life' is a phantom of one's own imagination!"*

Interruptions are not obstacles to our plan; they are opportunities for us to embrace God's plan.

So, the next time real life comes crashing into your idea that you are "in control," look for the opportunity to show Christ's compassion. Instead of being frustrated at the presence of other people, look for the opportunity to reflect the compassion of the Savior.

- Trevin Wax is managing editor of *The Gospel Project* at LifeWay Christian Resources and author of several books. A former missionary to Romania, Trevin was recently named by *Christianity Today* as one of 33 millennials leading the next generation of evangelicalism. He earned his Ph.D in Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He lives in middle Tennessee with his wife, Corina, and their three children.