

## Overthrowing Idol Expectations

Whether we're single in New York at twenty-eight or married in Nebraska at twenty-four, God uses all kinds of conditions and circumstances to mold us in His image, and He rarely restricts Himself to our expectations. Our plans tend to end up in the pile of dross.

"I never thought I would be single at thirty-seven. I thought I would be married and be done having children by now," said one woman, and a number of others echoed her in similar comments.

Fill in the blank: *I never thought I'd be...*

Jilted at twenty-seven?

Unemployed at thirty?

Our expectations seem to create serious blind spots to God's purposes in our lives, since His work often appears aimed at removing them so we can see Him. The crucible of sanctification melts away illusions of self-sufficiency and makes us know our need for God's goodness, not as mere truism, but as tangible, gut-checked certainty. It makes us realize God's work of redemption isn't a cold abstraction; it is a force that reshapes us through the friction of frustration, even despair, until a humble, reconciled peace can grow into joy.

"I was screaming at God the other day. It was a really violent prayer," said Jackie, twenty-eight, a graduate student in Chicago. She was speaking in the wake of a broken relationship that once looked like it would head toward marriage. "In the midst of that, all of a sudden, something in me actually thanked God that I didn't marry Paul, because I know I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be now.

“I do actually like my life right now, but it made me mad to admit it. I have this picture that I should be miserable since things aren’t the way they were supposed to be—they aren’t what I wanted them to be. I’m good at miserable, I do that *really* well...I’m less good at being peaceful where I am.

“Getting dumped completely threw off everything I thought my life would be like. It was one big shake that made me seek to figure out what I’m doing with my life. And now I feel like I’m finally making some directional progress toward becoming the woman that God has called me to be.”

A bitter breakup is one of those experiences that will make us think long and hard about what makes us get up in the morning. At times like that, getting lost in work or activities or some other distraction is a tempting short-term fix. Ultimately, however, there’s no substitute for finding the sense of purpose that outlasts boyfriends and keeps us on course through the tailspins of life. That’s what it means to have a call from now to not yet.