

WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS THE ITINERARY

A companion devotional to Episode 1: “the Stop That Began a Church”

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

This devotional accompanies Episode 1 of the *Kingdoms Collide Podcast* that explores 40 years of church in Ephesus. For the historical setting, narrative context, and complete story behind this devotional, listen to [Episode 1: “The Stop That Began a Church.”](#)

You can listen and find more free resources at www.KingdomsCollide.com

Read: Acts 18:18–28

We like to know where we are going.

We make plans. We build schedules. We imagine what the next season should look like. We decide which responsibilities matter, which opportunities are important, and which moments are merely things we need to get through on the way to something bigger.

Even though we make plans, God has a way of interrupting the itinerary.

That is how the story of the church in Ephesus begins.

When Paul first arrived in Ephesus, the city was not yet the center of his ministry. He had spent a year and a half in Corinth, and now he was traveling again with Priscilla and Aquila. Ephesus was a stop along the journey.

But it was quite a stop.

Ships crowded its harbor. Merchants filled its markets. Travelers passed through from cities scattered across the Roman province of Asia. Looming over the religious imagination of the city was the Temple of Artemis, while Roman authority shaped its politics, commerce, roads, laws, and public life.

Into that enormous machine walked a Jewish tentmaker preaching that Jesus was the Messiah.

Paul entered the synagogue and reasoned with the people there. Something about what they heard made them want more. They asked him to remain.

Paul declined.

He had somewhere else to go. Ephesus was only one stop within a much larger journey.

Paul gave them a remarkable answer:

He would return, if God willed.

Paul had an itinerary, but he knew that his itinerary was not Lord.

God was.

That distinction matters.

There is nothing wrong with planning. Scripture repeatedly commends wisdom, preparation, diligence, and responsibility. But Christian planning always carries an invisible sentence beneath it:

If God wills.

We can prepare the route without pretending we control the destination.

Paul spoke faithfully in Ephesus and then boarded a ship. He did not know everything that would happen after he left. He could not yet see the years of ministry ahead in that city. He could not see the gospel spreading throughout Asia from that city. He could not see elders weeping with him on a beach when he would finally leave that city. He could not see letters that he would end up writing to the church in that city.

He had one conversation in one synagogue during one brief stop.

Then he left the outcome with God.

We often decide which moments matter by how dramatic they feel.

A delayed meeting feels inconvenient.

An unexpected conversation feels distracting.

A change in schedule feels frustrating.

A person who needs our attention feels as though they have appeared between us and the important thing we were trying to accomplish.

But many of the most important moments in Scripture look like remarkably ordinary interruptions.

Jesus meets a woman while sitting beside a well.

A wounded man lies beside a road.

Children interrupt adults who believe Jesus surely has more important people to see.

A borrowed lunch becomes enough food for thousands.

And ultimately, the cross itself appears to the watching world like a catastrophic interruption of Jesus' mission.

Instead, it becomes the center of our salvation.

The interruption was not outside God's plan.

And neither was Paul's stop in Ephesus.

But there is another part of this story.

Paul left.

Priscilla and Aquila stayed.

Acts does not record some grand commissioning ceremony before Paul sailed away. We are simply told that Paul left them there.

Priscilla and Aquila already knew what disrupted plans felt like. They had once lived in Rome until Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from the city. Their familiar life had been broken apart. They eventually settled in Corinth, met Paul, worked beside him, traveled with him, and now found themselves beginning again in Ephesus alone.

They were not apostles.

They did not arrive with political influence, enormous financial resources, or a religious institution.

They had a trade making tents.

They had a home.

They had a table.

And they trusted Jesus.

So they stayed.

Sometimes obedience sounds like go.

Sometimes it sounds like remain.

We often assume the exciting calling is somewhere else. Another city. Another position. Another platform. Another opportunity.

But what if the assignment God is giving you is hidden inside the place you already are?

Stay.

Learn these names.

Love these people.

Keep opening the shop.

Keep raising those children.

Keep serving that church.

Keep showing up at that workplace.

Keep opening your home.

Staying is not necessarily inactivity.

Sometimes staying is readiness.

Most of the days Priscilla and Aquila spent in Ephesus were apparently not important enough for Luke to record. We do not know what happened on a normal Tuesday in their workshop. We are not told about every customer or conversation.

Perhaps that is appropriate because that sounds like most of our lives.

Most days that change history do not feel historic while we are living them.

Another morning.

Another day of work.

Another meal.

Another conversation.

Then tomorrow, do it again.

But somewhere in those ordinary days, Priscilla and Aquila were becoming ready for someone they did not know was coming.

His name was Apollos.

He arrived from Alexandria educated, eloquent, fervent, and competent in the Scriptures. He could speak boldly. He could hold a room. He taught accurately concerning Jesus.

And yet something was incomplete.

Priscilla and Aquila heard the gap.

And just like that, Priscilla and Aquila encountered a divine interruption in their normal schedule.

They had a decision to make:

They could have humiliated him publicly.

They could have used his incomplete understanding to demonstrate their own superiority.

They could have decided that correcting a gifted teacher was someone else's responsibility.

Likewise, Priscilla and Aquila's teaching was an interruption to Apollos' schedule.

He could have told the couple no.

Apollos could have become defensive.

He could have looked at the two tentmakers and decided that his education made their correction unnecessary.

Instead, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately.

The gifted teacher became a student.

The tentmakers became teachers.

And somewhere in a quiet conversation, God enlarged the reach of the gospel.

A God ordained moment that was good for the tentmakers, good for the preacher, and good for the Kingdom of God. This interaction was not a planned destination; it was an interruption in people's plans.

Scripture does not tell us that they actually sat around a dining table, so we should not pretend to know the setting. But the point remains: this was personal. Close enough to listen. Close enough to ask questions. Close enough to correct without humiliating.

Kingdom work was happening through relationship.

When Apollos left, he crossed into Achaia and became a great help to believers there. The truth invested in him traveled farther than Priscilla and Aquila did.

And suddenly these small interruptive moments surrounding the birth of the church in Ephesus don't look so random; they look divine.

Paul held his plans loosely enough to submit them to God's will.

Priscilla and Aquila made room for the interruption.

Apollos allowed correction to interrupt his certainty.

Then Apollos left to take the gospel further into Greece.

Sometimes the greatest changes in the world start in the small unexpected places that most of us ignore in our own lives:

An apostle who allowed God control over his schedule...

A refugee couple opening their life and home...

A talented teacher being teachable...

It is through these seemingly insignificant moments that God's kingdom began moving through Ephesus while almost nobody had reason to notice.

That should challenge the way we measure our own lives.

We tend to measure significance by visibility.

How many people noticed?

How large was the opportunity?

How impressive was the result?

Did anyone recognize what I contributed?

God may be asking a different question:

Were you faithful with what was in front of you?

Paul could not control what happened after his ship left the harbor.

Priscilla and Aquila could not know who would eventually walk into their lives.

Apollos could not know how far one correction would eventually carry him.

None of them needed to understand the entire story.

They needed to obey their part of it.

That may be where this episode meets us most directly.

Perhaps the thing you have been calling an interruption is actually an invitation.

Perhaps the place you keep trying to escape is, for this season, the place where God wants you available.

Perhaps the ordinary routine you dismiss as insignificant is forming something in you that another person will eventually need.

Perhaps someone has already walked into your life carrying a question, a wound, a gift, or a need...but because the moment did not look impressive, you almost missed it.

Perhaps you are Apollos; gifted, capable, and sincere.

And God has placed someone in your life who can show you something you still need to learn.

The gospel gives us the freedom to be all of these people.

We can go when God sends us.

Stay when God plants us.

Teach when truth has been entrusted to us.

Listen when correction is needed.

And release the results when the next step moves beyond our control.

Because the kingdom does not depend upon our ability to see the whole itinerary.

It belongs to Jesus.

The story of Ephesus did not begin with a massive revival campaign.

It began almost invisibly.

A short stop.

A couple who stayed.

A teacher who listened.

A conversation.

That was enough for God to begin.

And maybe the question for us is not:

What enormous thing can I accomplish for God?

Maybe the better question is:

What am I willing to place in God's hands today?

My schedule.

My home.

My work.

My attention.

My experience.

My table.

My willingness to listen.

My willingness to stay.

My willingness to go.

You have no idea what God may eventually connect to one ordinary act of obedience.

Priscilla and Aquila did not know who was coming through the door.

Paul did not know what Ephesus would become.

Apollos did not know where one conversation would eventually take him.

They only knew what faithfulness required next.

And sometimes that is all God allows us to know too.

LIVE IT TODAY

Look at the next seven days of your actual life rather than imagining some future version of yourself with more time, influence, money, or opportunity. Choose one place God has already put within your reach: your home, workplace, neighborhood, church, family, classroom, schedule, or an existing relationship. Then ask: “Jesus, what would it look like for me to make room for You to use what is already here?”

Choose one concrete response:

Open your home.

Schedule the conversation.

Stay ten minutes longer.

Listen before speaking.

Invite someone to coffee.

Encourage the person you keep overlooking.

Return to the responsibility you have been treating as temporary.

Receive correction instead of immediately defending yourself.

The goal is not to manufacture a dramatic spiritual moment.

The goal is to become available.

Do the faithful thing that is already within reach and leave its eventual significance with God.

JOURNAL PROMPT

What interruption, ordinary responsibility, relationship, or unexpected change in my current life am I dismissing because it does not look important?

And what could faithful availability look like there?

Write honestly about why you may be resisting it. Is it an inconvenience? Restlessness? Pride? Fear? Desire for something more significant? Then write one sentence beginning:

“If God is at work here, I want to be willing to...”

Finish that sentence as specifically as you can.

PRAYER PROMPT

Jesus, interrupt my plans when necessary. Help me recognize the people and places that You have already put in front of me. Give me courage to go when You send me, patience to stay when You plant me, humility to learn, and generosity to make room for others. Teach me to obey without needing to see the entire outcome, and help me release what I cannot control, trusting You to complete what belongs to You. Amen.

The Next Episode Devotional:

A War of Endurance

Companion to Episode 2

It is available for free at www.KingdomsCollide.com/ephesus/episode-2

In the next episode, we get to see what consistent faithfulness looks like even when we are not seeing the results that we desire. It serves as a reminder that everyone goes through seasons that we have to endure before we get to the beautiful moment of miraculous breakthrough.

A Note from the Author:

I sincerely hope that you have found something of value in this devotion. Kingdoms Collide is a ministry passion project from a guy that loves Jesus. If you need prayer or if you want to share a kind word with me, I would love to hear from you. Everyone needs prayer and encouragement. I would love to be that for you and for you to be that for me. Feel free to email me at KingdomsCollidePodcast@gmail.com

Every prayer request is confidential and will not be used in any media or promotional material.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Henderson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.