

LINKS PLAYERS MAG 2: EJ IN GOD’S HANDS

“For I know the plans I have for you.” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

YOU MAY FIND THE TITLE OF ERNIE JOHNSON’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY to be deceptive. It is called *Unscripted: The Unpredictable Moments that Make Life Extraordinary*.

You might think that Johnson, the lead sports voice for TNT, sees life’s events as the outworking of fate. He doesn’t. Instead, his writing reflects a certain recognition that while a man may have ideas about what his life will look like, God has the upper hand. And what God gives us can be as surprising as a cancer battle, a disabled child, or a trip to play Augusta National. So Johnson sees life—like the show he hosts throughout the NBA season with Shaquille O’Neal, Charles Barkley, and Kenny Smith—as beautifully unpredictable. And he shared this with us in this year’s Links Players magazine.

No two people possess the same tolerance for unpredictability. We are not all as relaxed as Ernie Johnson. More awkward is that the flexibility in my own expectation and acceptance can vary greatly. Today I am as cool as the proverbial cucumber, taking whatever comes my way with ease. Tomorrow, on edge, I may find it hard to weather the smallest rain cloud.

For those who believe in the God of the Bible, however, we should always find strength in knowing that God knows. What we can’t see coming he has anticipated for ages. Literally.

Theologians have wrestled over the extent of God’s sovereignty. Does he oversee the oxygenation of our every breath? Or is he more hands-off, having already designed the way we each survive in this moment and the next? Arguments like these, though interesting, are rarely helpful.

Instead, we do well to simply look at the words of Scripture. Readers of the Bible sometimes cling to passages for their own comfort. Jeremiah 29:11 is one such verse, as it ends by telling us that God holds for his faithful ones a future and a hope. But ahead of that, we read something more basic: God has plans for us. Other places in Scripture hint at the specificity of those plans (sorry—on earth, they’re individual to us all), but what helps at all times is remembering that he has gone before us in his arrangements. He is unsurprised. And our maintaining awareness of God’s sovereign hand allows us to rest in faith that he’s got it all covered.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2018 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study can be found at https://youtu.be/jWQjW_rg3OI. The Links Players magazine article with Ernie Johnson is available here: <http://www.linksplayers.com/articles/ernie-johnson>.

Opening questions Describe an unscripted event in your life—something you never would have asked for, be it good or bad. Do you see God’s hand in this event looking at it now?

READING Jeremiah 29:1-14; Acts 17:24-28

God’s plans and directions (Jeremiah 29)
 This prophecy must be read in its specific context to understand its promises. Where were God’s people at this time? What did God instruct them to do? What did he eventually have in store for them?

How hard is it for you to see the possibility of a good outcome in times of difficult circumstances? When you see God at work in this detailed way in the lives of the ancient Hebrews, what confidence does it give you for what he is doing in your life?

Times and places (Acts 17)
 How closely is God’s hand involved in our lives? Does this unnerve you (because you are not in control as much as you thought) or does it assure you (because God knows better than you do just what you need)?
