

Expect the Unexpected

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

I have heard this saying in various forms through the years. And it has played out in many ways in my life. Just when I think I know how things should go, I realize I literally had no idea. It has been true in my husband's, Craig's, life too. I often joke that he is a 45-year-old man who should have been born in the 1920s. He is an old soul who values tradition and believes life was better before technology.

And he had visions of starting his first day of work after college graduation with one company and receiving that gold watch for retirement from that same company 35 years later. But that is just not how it has worked out.

Craig has worked for nearly 23 years for three companies. The crazy thing? He's worked for each of those three companies twice.

His career path has taken twists and turns he never saw coming. And that path has led him to what he believes is a great opportunity as a national sales manager for an agricultural equipment company — one he has worked for in the past. It is a role he began in early December.

No, his career journey is not at all what he expected. I would even be willing to say he has had moments when it is not at all what he desired. We have all been there. However, it has led him to a position that should ultimately be satisfying, challenging and rewarding. And it has taught both of us a few life lessons along the way.

Some life advice

Do not burn bridges. The agricultural world is a small world. New career opportunities may arise, but your character and your reputation will follow you wherever you go. Do not be afraid to take advantage of advancements in your career. But ensure you leave with integrity and maintain those relationships, even when they change.

Relationships matter. No matter the career or the industry, relationships matter. And that is especially true in agriculture. You never know who you may meet in the stalls at junior nationals and what job could result from that chance meeting. Work to build relationships, and take advantage of the networking opportunities available at cattle shows and in any situation. You just never know what might result from those conversations with someone new.

Never say “never.” When I was a senior at Oklahoma State University, I knew exactly where my career would lead. I was going to work full-time for a cattle association publication.

Fast forward 20 years. I have worked full-time for publications in the horse, farm equipment and swine industries. Yes, I have written about beef cattle often in my past 10 years as a freelancer. But I have also written about dairy cattle, soybeans and corn.

I have yet to pursue what I “knew” I was going to do. But most days, I absolutely love where my career has taken me. You never know where you might end up.

A tough season isn't forever

You may be in a tough season of your life — whether it be in your career, in your parenting journey or in your cattle operation. But it is just that. A season. A bad season does not equate to a bad life. Keep working toward your goals and know anything can improve. It simply takes time, faith and perseverance.

It is never too late to set a new goal.

It is easy to get stuck in the rut. To get used to the routine. But do not allow that comfort zone to keep you stuck. Julia Child published her first cookbook when she was 39. Sam Walton opened his first Wal-Mart when he was 44. Samuel Jackson — after being in recovery from addiction to cocaine and heroin — was 46 when he starred alongside John Travolta in “Pulp Fiction.”

Success does not come with an expiration date. Keep working, and never give up. By no means do Craig and I have life figured out. Not even close.

But the twists and turns we never expected have brought us some great opportunities for growth — whether we enjoyed that growth at the time, or not.

You just never know what life has in store. Chances are, though, it will be anything but what you expect. **HW**

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