

Think Again Before Beating Yourself Up

Blessings in Disguise — A Story of Gratitude



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DrZeal.Org and amazon.com

This story is an excerpt from *You Can Never Go Wrong By Being Kind* by Zeal Okogeri, originally published on February 10, 2020. It is reprinted with permission from Dr. Zeal Okogeri and Support Kindness, Inc.

While completing my undergraduate degree at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Rutherford, New Jersey, I founded a computer export company. For several years, I was constantly on the move, especially during summer breaks. My business focused on exporting computer accessories to countries like Saudi Arabia, Greece, and Nigeria. Eventually, I expanded by opening a fully staffed subsidiary in Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. I spent so much time in the air that I often lost track of the days, hopping from one country to the next. My travels frequently took me to Greece, where my younger brother was studying in Athens, and to Lagos, where I oversaw the company. It became routine for me to pass through Athens on my way to visit the subsidiary.

One particular trip, I was heading back to the United States from Nigeria, with a stopover in Athens. I checked into the Sheraton Hotel in Ikeja, Lagos, and

everything seemed perfectly in order. The next morning, I was scheduled to fly to Athens with Egypt Air. I was meticulous about my travel arrangements. Never in my life had I missed an international flight—I always made sure to arrive at the airport with plenty of time to spare, because I knew how disastrous it could be to miss a flight.

The night before, I packed my luggage, prepared everything, and felt ready. All I had to do the following morning was take a quick shower, get dressed, and check out of the hotel. My flight was set to depart at 10 a.m., so I called the lobby the night before and scheduled a wake-up call for 6 a.m. I also set my travel alarm clock for the same time, just to be extra cautious. I figured that if I woke up at 6 a.m., left the hotel by 7 a.m., I'd have more than enough time to reach the airport, check in, and even grab a quick breakfast before boarding.

But when I woke up, it was already 9:45 a.m. The panic surged through me like an electric shock. My flight was scheduled to leave in 15 minutes, and I was still in the hotel room, in my pajamas. My heart raced as I picked up the phone and called the lobby. "What time is it?" I asked, almost hoping I had miscalculated.

The receptionist confirmed it was nearly 10 a.m. I was beyond stunned. "Why didn't you call me?" I asked, trying to hide the frustration in my voice. They apologized profusely, explaining that they had called my room every half hour since 6 a.m. I was well-known to the hotel staff because I stayed there regularly. My usual wake-up call routine had failed me. It turned out that I had been in such a deep sleep that I hadn't heard a thing. Not only was this the first time it had ever happened to me in all my years of travel, but it also meant I had no one to blame but myself. And that realization hit me harder than I expected. I had let myself down.

The flood of anger I felt was overwhelming. I started mentally beating myself up, calling myself every unflattering name I could think of. "What's wrong with you? How could you mess this up?" I muttered under my breath. I was furious.

A missed flight meant canceling my plans, notifying my brother in Athens, booking another hotel room for the night, and paying penalty fees to the airline for changing my departure date. And all of it came at an unexpected cost, one I hadn't planned for.

Though I was seething with frustration, I managed to reschedule my flight for the next day, but the penalty fee was steep, and it made me even more upset. Not knowing how to salvage the rest of the day, I hired a car with a driver—something common in Lagos—and spent the day sightseeing. The distraction helped, but the anger and disappointment still lingered.

That evening, when I returned to my hotel room and turned on the television, the room fell silent. The news anchor's voice brought me to a halt. "Breaking news: The Egypt Airline flight that departed this morning from Lagos to Cairo has crash-landed in Cairo."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My mind raced, trying to process the words. I sat frozen, my legs feeling weak beneath me, as I absorbed the shocking news. Thankfully, no one had been killed in the crash, but many passengers had been injured.

I felt a wave of emotion wash over me. The anger I had felt earlier seemed so insignificant now. I had been so furious about missing my flight, but here I was, overwhelmed with gratitude that I had been spared from something so horrific. In that moment, I realized how deeply I had been protected, not just from the inconvenience of missing a flight, but from a far greater danger. I had been so focused on the frustration of my mistake that I hadn't realized I was being guided away from something much worse.

I couldn't thank God enough. In that instant, my entire perspective shifted. Sometimes, what feels like a huge setback, an inconvenience, or a failure in life might actually be a blessing in disguise. We often beat ourselves up over the things we can't control—missed opportunities, lost chances, or failed relationships—without ever realizing that there might be something greater at

work behind the scenes, something that's saving us from even worse consequences.

That experience taught me a powerful lesson: Life doesn't always go as planned, and things sometimes fall apart in ways we can't fully understand. But instead of fixating on the failure or disappointment, it's better to pause and ask ourselves: Could there be a reason I'm being held back? Is this, perhaps, for my own good, even if I can't see it right now?

I now share this lesson with others, especially when they're feeling frustrated or disappointed. Before you start beating yourself up or regretting something, take a deep breath and reflect. Sometimes, a missed opportunity or an unexpected shift in plans could be the universe's way of protecting you from something far worse. Trust that, even in moments of seeming failure, there's often a hidden blessing waiting to be discovered.

By Zeal Okogeri

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