

BLOOM WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED

You may have heard some of the following platitudes....

“true friends are never apart, maybe in distance but never in heart”

“friendship is the golden thread that ties the heart of all the world”

“distance means so little, when someone means so much”

But have you have thought about what they really mean?

I have a story to tell you this morning.

When I was a child, we moved frequently...about once every 4-6 years or so. As a Methodist minister, dad was reappointed to a new charge every few years. About February, give or take, he'd get a call from the district superintendent that I used to imagine went a little something like this...

DS: “so, Jim, you've been in that town for a couple of years now. Your family must be settling in pretty nicely.”

DAD: “yes, as a matter of fact they are. My wife has found a job or some volunteer work that she’s enjoying. And the girls have made some good friends. You know how challenging that can be sometimes.”

DS: “yes, yes. Quite so. Well, I’m calling to tell you to pack up the house. We’re moving you to Timbuctoo, a few hours from where you’ve made such a home for yourself.”

Now, number 1....I know that’s not actually what was said. Or even the spirit of it.

But number 2....It’s how it felt to me at the time, most of the 6 times we moved during my elementary, middle school, and high school years.

Then came the second part of this revelation...Dad talking to Mom. Then the third part, them talking to us. And if the call came too early, the three of us girls waiting to be able to say anything to our friends because you “can’t let the cat out of the bag” too soon!

Again I admit, this is a ****very**** biased opinion. I hated moving! In fact the last move we made before I finished high school, I was going into my sophomore year of high school. I had a group of friends whom I adored – do you remember how difficult that time period can be for pre-teen/teenager? I pouted. I whined. I threatened to move in with my grandparents. (That last one would have made no difference. They lived 45 minutes from the town we were moving to, and 4 hours away from the friends I didn't want to leave.)

You might be wondering why in the world am I telling you all this.

Well, because that last move was the best place I could have possibly ended up. I just couldn't see it at the time.

I am, admittedly, horrible at keeping up with communication. It was one of the biggest reasons I did not want to move that last time. I felt certain that my friends were supposed to be my BFFs....forever! But, I also knew that I did not (and still don't) like to talk on the phone.....and, letter writing, while something I had learned in school,

was not something which appealed to me. That really was something they used to teach in English, some of you remember it I'm sure, along with how to properly address an envelope. --- Who was really going to care about what I was doing in southwest bumble PA when they were carrying on with their lives 4 hours away?

But, you'll probably never guess who or what I found in my first week in that new town? I found that the new parsonage was kind of neat. It was attached to the church, literally shared a wall and had an underground passage between them. I found that one of my soon-to-be classmates lived less than a block away, and had a pool in her back yard which she regularly invited us over to enjoy. ANNNDDDD, I met the coolest, funniest, best looking guy I'd met to date.....and then we did date about 10 years later! Tyler's family was part of that new church. It eased the sting a little.

Now let's get back to the part I wanted to tell you about.

Do you know that God will take care of us wherever we find ourselves? He will use our circumstances for His glory. Regardless of whether we can see the outcome, whether we are willing accept His guidance at first, or whether we pout, stomp our feet, and have a good old fashioned temper tantrum. He waits 'til we simmer down just a little bit, and then says "here's what's gonna happen" and "this is why I brought you here."

Did you know that in the Bible we are told to "bloom where we're planted"? I mean it may not be in those exact words, but the sentiment is there. Let's look at a couple of examples.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 – reminds us to trust in God. If our roots of faith are deep in Him, if we truly believe in Him more than just lip service, more than simply sitting in the pews Sunday morning. We know He has a plan for us. We can trust that even in the toughest times, even in the drought, He will pull us through..... If He brings us to it, He will bring us through it.

1 Corinthians 7:17 – in the middle of a discussion on relationships, this verse reminds us that we are not to be “passive participants” or onlookers in our lives. While God is the author of our life, we are still expected, and need, to put the work into keeping ourselves on His path. We need to remember that the way to Heaven is narrow, and it can sometimes be a challenge to “stay inside the lines” so to speak.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 – the power of Christ works best in our weakness. We usually don’t like to admit that we have weaknesses, do we? We want to feel in control of the situation or like we aren’t reliant on others to get the job done. These verses though remind us that we are weak. As humans we are frail. BUT God is not. And His power shines through our weak spots.

Psalms 27:14 – “be brave and courageous”kind of tempting to just read that part. But the rest of it. That’s the part that we need to hear. “Wait patiently for the Lord.” David even says it twice here....”wait patiently for the Lord.” But the second time it’s said is

following the “be brave” part. Having faith does not mean we will never know or feel fear. We are still human. We have emotions, and as we’ve noted earlier, we are frail – physically and emotionally sometimes. So, even in the midst of our fear, this reminds us that God’s got a plan. He’s working it all out. We may not understand it...we might not like it. But He has a plan, and we simply need to “wait patiently.” That’s really not my strong suit...how about you?

So, how about a couple of quick Biblical examples of “bloom where you’re planted”?

First, Adam & Eve. They initially had the best seat in house. The most beautiful garden. The best housemates and pets ever. Perfect weather every day....what more could they ask for, right? Well, they were human, and therefore prone to making some questionable choices. And due to those questionable choices, they had to move! But even after kicking them out in spectacular fashion, God still provided

for them. Oh, they and we had to work for it much more than originally planned. But still, God did provide!

What about Joseph? His dad loved him. Brothers hated his guts! The jealousy was real, people! He went from favored son, to imprisoned, to being a leader in authority –although in a foreign land. God had purpose for His life. I'm guessing there were many days where Joseph had to "be brave and wait patiently".

One more. The Israelite people. God said to them I'll show you to the promised land. And then the journey just went on forever! I don't know about you, but I'm one of those people who when the GPS tells me a trip is going to take 2 hrs and 36 minutes....I take that as a challenge. "The time to beat". I pretty sure I would not have been pleasant company had I been told the trip was to the promised land and then we wandered in circles for decades.....It would have absolutely tested the depths of my roots in God, and forget about my ability to patiently wait! I'd have said...."pull over. I'm putting my tent

up here. Come back and get me if you ever find that Promised Land place. You'll know where to find me." Good thing I wasn't there. Even better thing that I now have the manual. The handbook. The "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth" book! It's like having the best crib notes ever!

So, getting back to my story for a quick minute. We moved to Portage in the summer of 1993. I met Tyler that summer. A cute, kind of geeky guy, funny as heck. He was 3 years older than me, so come September he went back to college.....and when he came home on break? It was so nice to see him again. We'd pick up right where we left off, getting to know each other and becoming friends.

This happened for the next 10 years as we both worked our way through school. We were friends. We would hang out. We would occasionally write letters –very brief ones from me, longer ones from him because he's much better at this word thing.

We finally got together after 11 years of friendship. And do you know where we lived for the first 2 years of our married life? In Portage. Less than a block from where we'd first met.

Our roots were deep. We weren't so good at the wait patiently thing. God's strength definitely supports us in our weakness and has kept our relationship from crashing too hard against the rough spots along the way.

I tell you this to encourage you.... Bloom where God plants you. He has a purpose. He has a plan. He will guide you and support you. And, who knows, at some point He may even transplant you! Like He did when He brought us to Berwick!