

December 2021 Newsletter

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in....

Circumstances:

December was a month of many trials in every sense of the word. A change of circumstances was very challenging for the family, work at night shifts. It stretched us all to the point of breaking until we ended up feeling like we threw ourselves into a pit (financial, scheduling/physical, and stress issues). Thanks to the Lord and his people who pulled us back up on our feet again. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

A devotional from Stanley helps me describe it a little more. He is speaking of the reasons God can close doors – be thinking, though, how God works through our decisions which can have positive or negative consequences. For instance, Paul went through this trial and error process to find his way to Macedonia (where the church of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were planted). In Acts 16:6-10, we read, "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

So here are the reasons for God redirecting or allowing the trial and error process (or saying no) by Stanley: "...One reason for God saying no is for protection: perhaps He is keeping us from making mistakes. Another is redirection: He could be sending you a more important path-with better opportunities, deeper satisfaction, or an opportunity to glorify His name. Testing: when God says no, your faith will be tested, and you'll discover what you really believe about Him. Perseverance: through shut doors, you have an opportunity to develop endurance-an indispensable quality for believers. Timing: God may simply be working out the timing for His will to be accomplished fully. Disobedience: God will discipline us so we can truly enjoy the blessings He gives you."

Though ours wasn't necessarily closed doors but change, all of these things were happening at once with us. We began to value each other more, and we were developing perseverance. We were being redirected; we sensed that God wanted something better than we did and though he allowed some trial and error-he was always there to protect us and is always willing to work with us because of His grace and goodness in Jesus Christ. All this has to do with our need for God to help us make decisions and that we always go to and ask God for wisdom.

Definitely, with anyone in a change that isn't easy, I would pray this verse over to find peace- Phil. 4:11-13, "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

One thing that comforted my spirit was Luke 13:10-17, which I will briefly mention. There was a woman crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. Jesus called for her and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity" Then he put his hands on her and immediately straightened up and praised God." So if someone feels like they have veered from God's path and taken a course that doesn't seem right, that seems crooked-metaphorically this lady was on the "wrong" path for eighteen years, and Jesus still was able to straighten her back/ path. That gave us hope to know that even though we have missed the mark in decision making, all we do is trust in the Lord with all our hearts, lean not on our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledge Him, and he will make our paths straight.

Fundraising:

By God's grace and goodness, we have \$24,530.00 in the Partners account as of November. We are still at 50% of the launching target goal with pledges and one-time gifts. Praise the Lord this month; we received some generous one-time donations for January and have a fundraising presentation with a small group this January! We are still waiting on church application responses for raising support.

I definitely want to thank you all for being with us in the highs and lows. As you know, these past three months have been valleys, not mountain tops. When I think of valleys, however, I recall the night Peter, James and John went fishing and caught nothing- the Lord told them to throw down the nets again but on the other side- and they persevered and did it because the Lord said so. When they threw down the nets, so many fish filled the nets they broke! That is the "mountaintop ." So we are praying, seeking, searching, asking, and waiting on the Lord to open doors for the abundance type of answer in John- when two fish and five loaves of bread became 5,000 or when there was no more wine at the wedding, and Jesus provided what was lacking better than the former.

One of the verses that made me think recently is Luke 14:28-30, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

With this verse, I am encouraged to go! The Lord is telling me if you want to get to Peru- you need to get out there and fight the battle. Much like the Joshua in the Bible and the promise land- The Lord would tell him- I have delivered Ai per se, into your hands, and Joshua with his armies would have to go and fight the battles to conquer the city. In this case, the battle, for me, is fundraising at this time.

The Lord is telling me, Do the things you said you would do and don't get discouraged, don't be fearful, because the kingdom of God is for brave people! We are halfway, and I don't want to end up like the verses above say. So the Lord is saying get out there and throw the nets! Call every church you can, try to use the Hope in the Workforce book to teach in churches cause it's only when you search with all your heart that you find me!

Spiritually:

I was touched and encouraged to read 2 Days of The Purpose Driven Life by Warren that had to do with relationships in Christ. I know that forgiveness is always needed for healing and freedom in Christ in my life and yours. I just wanted to share some quotes from his book with you that helped me.

Part of growing and maturing and learning how to get along with others in the Body of Christ, which really takes time and effort, Paul encourages us, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" Eph. 4:3. Keeping the peace can be hard work. "God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God" Mt. 5:9.

These quotes are all regarding restoring broken fellowship.

"Notice Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are the peaceable" who have never disturbed by anything. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who *work* for peace"-those who actively seek to resolve conflict. Peacemakers are rare because peacemaking is hard work. Peacemaking is not avoiding the conflict, nor appeasement to make everyone happy as we see with Jesus- he didn't avoid conflict, and many times he refused to back down on many issues, standing his ground in the face of evil opposition." (Warren 153)

"Most conflict is rooted in unmet needs. Some of these needs can only be met by God. When you expect anyone- a friend, spouse, boss, or family member to meet a need that only God can fulfill, you are setting yourself up for disappointment and bitterness. No one can meet all your needs except God himself. So when we have a conflict, it is always good to talk to God first before the person involved about Reconciliation." (Warren 154)

"Look out for one another's interests, not just your own." The phrase "look out for" is the Greek word *skopos*, from which we form our words *telescope* and *microscope*. It means to pay close attention! Focus on the feelings, not the facts. Begin with sympathy, not resolution..." (Warren 155). "Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while

resolution focuses on the problem. While we focus on Reconciliation, the problem loses significance and often becomes irrelevant." (Warren 158)

"It is a sacrifice to absorb the anger of others while listening to others' feelings and giving sympathy, especially if the anger is unfounded. But remember, this is what Jesus did for you. He endured unfounded, malicious anger in order to save you, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you fall on me." (Warren 156)

"You cannot fix the problem if you're consumed with fixing the blame. Attack the problem, not the person. During the Cold War, both sides agreed that some weapons were so destructive they should never be used. Today chemical and biological weapons are banned, and the stockpiles of nuclear weapons are reduced and destroyed. For the sake of fellowship, you must destroy your arsenal of relational nuclear weapons, including condemning, belittling, comparing, labeling, insulting, condescending, and being sarcastic. Paul sums it up this way: "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that builds up and provides what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you." (Warren 157)

There was some good advice I found in what the Lord has been sharing with me, it isn't easy to make peace, just ask Jesus on the cross (Rom. 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ) but it is sure worth it. May God grant us a listening spirit and one that always seeks peace and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:7 - All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation)

