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PAIN'S PERFECT PURPOSE

"...And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Try saying the title of this article out loud. Now clean your computer screen and read on... I've recently gone through one of those trying times we all know are inevitable in life, yet hope they never happen. Think about Job: the first things to go were his family and friends, then all his possessions, then at last he lost his physical well-being... BINGO, that's the one.



Life can be a pain in the neck... literally. Especially when you try to fix a garage door spring, by yourself, by holding the door up with your head (don't try this at home... or anywhere, for that matter). Like many women, I sometimes feel invincible, only to find out that I'm not!

The burning sensation down my back has kept me from sitting up at my computer for more than a few minutes at a time, let alone working effectively with the children's church ministry or my kids choir. It's hard for me to even sing without moving, but then add directing and doing choreography... It's not pretty. To make a long story short, after several visits to my primary physician, a spine specialist, 2 chiropractors and physical therapist, an X-ray and an MRI, 4 prescriptions (one of which landed me in the ER), and a partridge in a pear tree, I have finally found something that is working: acupuncture. My healing is slower than I would like, and I covet your prayers for a full recovery.

So when stuff like this happens, you start to ask a lot of questions, most of which start with the word "WHY?" With all the prayers going up, "WHY" am I not yet healed? I have learned through my journey of faith, which is one step forward and two steps back at times, that the answer is always in the hands of our loving and awesome God, who knows the plans He has for us, plans for a hope and a future... (do I hear an AMEN?). He has the ability to heal me with a lift of His little finger, but at this point He has chosen not to. And no matter how terrific my acupuncturist is (thanks Frank!), if God has not chosen to heal me, there is NOTHING I can, or should, do about it. God will use this, as He uses all things, to bring about His perfect plan for me, my ministry, and all those around me, so I will stand here in the middle of this forest fire until all the useless stuff has burnt away and all that's left is what He wants for me to be.

Here are a few things He's teaching me...

- I can't handle everything. (Are you shocked?) Seriously... many well-meaning people will say that God will never give you more than you can handle, but the Bible doesn't quite say that. It says that God will never allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle, and that He will provide a way out. I truly believe that sometimes God DOES allow you to go through more trials than you can handle so you will turn to Him for help. What good is faith if we are self-reliant and we can "handle" everything ourselves?

- I am a Martha. I feel like I'm in a 12-step program. "My name is Sharon, and I'm a Martha." I'm the one running around like a crazy chicken when I should be like Mary, resting at the feet of Jesus. There are definitely times for taking up your pick and shovel and working hard, but even God rested on the seventh day. I always seem to have 20 juggling pins in the air, afraid that if one falls, they'll all fall. But what did my pride in my misguided belief in my own self-sufficiency get me? To the point where I couldn't lift a grocery bag. Yikes!

- God really does provide for our needs! Our health insurance does not cover diddly squat, so 90% of this has been out-of-pocket, and as we are self-employed with no disability benefits, the bank account has been gasping for air. But miraculously, God has been providing for us through various means, and it appears we will weather this storm. God is so good!

- God doesn't mind our temper tantrums. I have had my share of angry and desperate moments (my husband will attest to this), and I have cried more self-pitying tears than I care to admit. And like a good daddy with his two-year-old, God scoops me up, flailing arms and all, and whispers gently to me that He loves me, and holds me close until I'm finally done bawling. And I can say with resolve that even if He lets me die today, I will praise Him with my dying breath.

- Praising God is great therapy. The Bible tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people. I find moments when I am caught up in the joy of worship, whether with my kid's choir, at church, or just singing on my own, that I can completely forget about my injury. Praising God invites His presence and gives us a taste of Heaven. Although sometimes I get carried away and dance a little too hard. Ouch.

I don't wish pain or heartbreak on anyone, but it's part of the human condition, a result of a fallen world. And God uses it as a refining tool. I seem to always need God to hit me with a two by four to get my attention. If you find yourself getting smacked in the noggin, I encourage you to be still, and remember that God is God and you are not. And He is good, even when life is not. And don't lift heavy objects with your head... that's gotta be in the Bible somewhere...

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