

6 Ways to Build Yourself Up in Faith in Times of Trouble

Today I am at my home and it is quiet and peaceful and I'm feeling blessed to be here. The kids are sleeping soundly (and late-woohoo!) I debated if I should enjoy this blissful quiet asleep or awake. I opted for awake. So rarely do I get a moment of solitude and quiet. I'm so thankful!

For the past 4 months we have been staying with family and I cannot say how thankful I am for it. But it would be a lie to say it hasn't been difficult, stressful and exhausting on many levels. And it would definitely be a contradiction of all that I've been sharing for the past few months in my blog. Sometimes blessings can be difficult. The blessing of a place to stay during our transition is huge, the stress of that blessing is also huge.

Sometimes I wonder if a blessing can't also be a burden. I'm sure there are many that will disagree with me because it sounds wrong to say a blessing can be a burden, but I believe it's true.

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

I think I've known for a long time that I can find a blessing even in my burdens, but I haven't flipped it around before. I haven't realized that my blessings can sometimes be burdens as well.

But the more I've pondered, the more I'm thinking this is true.

Parenting is absolutely a blessing, but I cannot deny it is a burden to be sure. Dealing with my children and the

responsibility of raising them well can most definitely be a burden. A welcome burden, but a burden nonetheless.

As a parent, I burden my children with chores to give them the blessing of understanding the value of work done well, of responsibility and of being part of a family. I'm fairly certain that none of them would refer to those things as blessings ... well, at least most of the time.

A home is a blessing, but when there are issues, it can most definitely be a burden. Broken things, dripping things, creaky things, wobbly things ... just lots of things that aren't fun, but I'm sure thankful for the shelter.

Work is a blessing, but it seriously can be a burden.

It's a bit embarrassing to think that at the moment I'm having to remind myself to be thankful for my blessings.

Shouldn't that be a given? Unfortunately, I think it has been easier for me to focus on the burden aspect of the blessing than the blessing part of the blessing.

Maybe I'm throwing that blessing word around too much ... but I can't think of a good synonym for blessing. Benediction doesn't really work. Approval and encouragement don't really apply either. Merriam-Webster defines blessing as "something that helps you or brings happiness." I suppose saying that something that brings me help or happiness is a burden is a bit odd.

But in God's economy, maybe not.

I attend a great Bible study on Sunday nights. The teacher said that when we pray for things, such as patience or courage, God is going to give us opportunities to exercise patience or be courageous. The blessings of patience and courage are going to come with the burden of experiencing situations that require us to be patient and courageous. (That

is one of those think-well-before-I-pray-this-prayer prayers!) The blessing of being a patient, courageous, kind or loving person comes with the burden of having to develop those traits.

We have all probably experienced the phenomenon that blessings don't always come in the ways we expect them. Many of the blessings I've experienced have come by way of difficulties and trials. Those blessings are some of the most precious. Just like labor and delivery—the pain and discomfort brings forth a great blessing!

Maybe the housing situation, although difficult, is not just a blessing of shelter, but a blessing of character-building, of refining, of eye-opening.

Maybe a job, although time-consuming and stressful, is not just a blessing of provision, but a blessing of purpose and ministry.

Maybe parenting, although exhausting and overwhelming at times, is not just a blessing of children, but a blessing of understanding the Father's love for us.

Maybe all the things in our life are so much deeper and richer because God uses everything—those things we perceive as “good” and those things we perceive as “bad”—to bless us both in the present and the future.

I'm blown away right now. I have been so easily frustrated and upset by things in my life and haven't been able to see the good in much. And if I do happen to notice it at all, I'm quickly overtaken by all the feelings of discouragement that keep me from focusing on the blessings for what they are ... blessings. It has been entirely too easy for me to see only the burden and miss the blessing.

I'm not sure that I know exactly how to “fix” myself, but God does. He has definitely given me some great ideas in His Word.

1. Take my thoughts captive (2 Cor. 10:5).
2. Do not be anxious (Phil. 4:6-7).
3. Hide His word in my heart (Ps. 119:11).
4. Take heart (John 16:33).
5. Trust God (Prov. 3:5-6).
6. Keep an eternal perspective (2 Cor. 4:17).

And once again, I'm brought back to the Word of God. Back to the strength and perspective offered there. Back to the power of His Word ... the power of Jesus.

I was reminded recently of one of Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23—maybe this is the prayer we can pray for ourselves and for each other:

"Therefore I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers, so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He performed in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet and made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all things in all ways."

You know, I just have to include the other prayer in Ephesians

3:14-21, which says:

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would give you, according to the riches of His glory, power to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ... There really isn't more to say is there? What a mighty loving God we serve!

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