

Don't Rob Your Friend of His Presence

I regularly encounter people in crisis. I meet with people when they're at their spiritual, emotional or mental low. Broken and battered, covered in invisible scars, weighed down by the baggage of their past. People struggling to cope with pain, the open fresh wounds of rejection, abandonment, addiction and a myriad of other afflictions that can haunt the human spirit.

These precious souls are often after a word of encouragement, some form of exhortation, a word of hope to get them through the day, and who can blame them?

There is a time and a place for encouragement, and those of us with any sort of mercy/empathy/compassion gifting would argue that the time and place is always and right here. For so very long I thought so too.

But here's why I will no longer believe that offering encouragement should always be a first step...

It's not my job.

Every time I am approached to console or comfort, I now have to step back and see if this space, this void could best be filled with something else? Someone else?

If I speak words of encouragement when I encounter these precious people, then it is I who has become their lifeline, their Saviour, if only momentarily. And although all the warm and fuzzies are flowing, I have in fact done them a great disservice; I have robbed them of the opportunity for God to meet them, exactly where they're at.

I will not steal from them the opportunity to experience His

presence.

I will not rob them of the opportunity to see an eleventh hour rescue.

I dare not deny them the life-changing grace experience that comes when a King steps off His throne, and into a murky mess, just to comfort those under His reign, His kids.

I will not dare usurp Him, robbing from Him the opportunity to connect with His kids in a new way, a raw way.

I heard a beautiful truth spoken by Kate Jutsum of Bethel SOZO Australia & New Zealand, she said (and I paraphrase as its from memory only):

“God is so good at working all things together for good, that you may even be tempted to think it was Him that sent the bad situations to begin with.”

Yes! He is an expert at turning the impossible into the possible, of igniting hope from the dead ashes of hopelessness. He is the God of the miraculous. He is the God of freedom and He is the God of perfect timing.

My 12 year old daughter has had a truly horrible year, a year where she has had to navigate the difficulties of dealing with humans and all the shifting and oft confusing dynamics that accompany them. But out of her despair has stemmed the opportunity to learn some great and new lessons.

As I chatted with her the other day, we did a recap, an almost debrief of the year that has been, and I asked her what she had learned.

My goodness, she has learned much, and at such high price, bearing a heavy burden for such young shoulders. But these are lessons that now learnt, will serve her well throughout her hopefully many years on this earth, lessons that could not have been learned, had the pain been absent.

And yes, I've tried to speak life-giving words of encouragement to her throughout this difficult period, but only once I'd been adequately satisfied that she'd gone to her Daddy God first!

There were things He needed to show her Himself.

As ridiculously cliché and 'new age' as this may sound, there truly is a gift in the present.

Within this present time you are now in, be it a season of immense joy or one of deep pain, there is a gift, a revelation, a piece of knowledge waiting to be unwrapped.

If you are one of these precious people, stuck in a spiritual, emotional, physical or mental low, I acknowledge your pain, and because I acknowledge it, I don't dare rob you of any gift that may be found here, by speaking words of platitude, words that can only offer momentary comfort, when there is for you a treasure waiting to be unearthed.

There will come a time for encouragement, there is a time for friends and all the comfort and security that is offered in friendship, but just as Job learned all those thousands of years ago, sometimes the answers, the comfort, and the eventual restoration must come from God himself.

Don't rob yourself.

Don't settle for immediate and temporal comfort, when eternal comfort and revelation are freely on offer.

I don't discount your pain, I don't dismiss it. I acknowledge it, and I add no 'but'.

All I seek to do is offer you a perspective that perhaps you may not yet be able to see from the darkness that has sought to surround you.

There is hope, and He is waiting for you to seek Him alone and Him alone.

Adapted from Perfectly Flawed, *a blog by* **Bek Curtis.**