

God's Shocking Way of Turning Your Limitations Into Blessings

It was a rambling college town that hosted the race that was to be my last for a long time. It is a town where narrow dirt-and-dust roads lead to horse farms with near-perfect views of the Blue Ridge and millionaires shamelessly drive beat-up old Volvos. Eccentric.

Every year, the allure of this four-miler, with its humanitarian push and socialite atmosphere, makes runners out of walkers and athletes out of those who don't like to sweat. Women train all summer long to run Garth Road on Labor Day weekend.

I was one of many.

I'd placed in my age group in the past and after seeing the winning time from prior years, I decided that I wanted to try to win this race. I spent my summer mornings following a training plan that my friend (who was also a running coach) devised for me. On race day, however, I hadn't accounted for the handful of Olympic Trial-ers who were, unexpectedly, going to run the race this year. I'd also trained at 6:00 a.m. during an unusually cool summer. The start time for this race was 8 a.m. and we ran on blacktop roads in an 80-degree thick heat, that day.

I ignored the weather and I focused on the runners around me edging their feet towards the starting line, and on the split-times I'd written in permanent marker onto my hand.

And three miles later, I passed out.

Well – before I passed out (in delirium), apparently I stopped

to ask the fans lined up along the race course just where I might find the finish line. The heat and the pace set by the top runners and my thick-headedness made for the perfect cocktail. I served myself up a heat stroke.

Weeks later, as I researched the implications of this heat stroke, I came across information that indicated that people who suffer heat strokes are often the ones who don't know their own limits.

Hmmm ...

That was nine years ago. Before children. Before the circuitous path to adoption. Before the pursuit of our children's hearts post-adoption. Before yet-longer years of infertility and losing my dad and rocking a babe to sleep at 3 a.m. and riding the roller coaster of my husband's fledgling business.

And here I am, now, with six children and the most predominant data point I have of myself and my life is this: I'm limited.

I'm grossly limited.

My limitations press in around me, all the time. The babe wakes at the very moment the toddler decides he's ready to potty train, and my 13-year-old wants to talk about her heart. Not only can I not avoid these limitations, but they "are" me. I could add much more to this list, but you probably have your own list to hearken to as you read this. I suspect I'm not alone, and that this issue of limitations is not merely the struggle of the mother of six who moonlights as a writer. But even the mother of two or three (or one) or the woman who finishes a deadline at work just to face another, all while her dry cleaning collects dust, awaiting a pick-up.

At 25, I wanted to conquer my flesh. (I wanted every area of my life to have a six-minute-mile pace.)

But these days, I have learned that what I really want is to surrender it.

More than resenting my failures, I'm starting to (more deeply) resent the days when my heart sinks because I see my failures. This should not be so.

Because in the kingdom of God, it is weakness that incites the miracles. It is weakness that incites the gaze of our Father God. Today, I want *those* stories more than I want a six-minute-mile pace.

More than being able to rock the babe, potty-train the toddler and solve my 13-year-old's problems (all at once), I want that deep peace that comes with surrender to God. The deep peace that accompanies the safest of friendships. (He never asked me to be limitless. He just asked me to be His.)

This surrender is one of the most becoming things I've seen in a person. I've found myself scouring faces for it in the way a freshman does at the senior class on her first day of school. *What is it that I see in these few sages in my life who finally rest at peace in their pursuit of God – who are relentless but not fearful, reaching but not anxious, determined but not proudly ambitious?*

I want that.

You see, being settled within my limitations – seeing them as extensive and forever-lasting and likely growing, as they are – doesn't actually relegate me to a boring and "mundane" life. It sets me up for the miraculous.

I suppose it's touching the part of me that sees the value of putting down my phone and sitting in the quiet, before God, with the acute sense of these limits that I now know I have.

In a given day, faced with all these needs and my inability to even come close to meeting them—I can push harder and plan

better. I can Get Things Done™ and multi-task to keep up and shame myself when I don't. I can scroll for minutes or hours and remind myself of every other person who's hustling and "killin' it" with their life.

But He just asks me to bring what I have. To pray. To watch what He does with my lack.

In a moment where I simply can't meet the expectations of the people and the projects in front of me, I can use the midnight hours to work and sweat or run it around my head in sleeplessness.

But He just asks me to bring what I have. To pray. To watch what He does with my lack.

In the swirl of my children's ever-growing needs I can solicit even more help. Make more appointments. Research more options. Troubleshoot.

But He just asks me to bring what I have. To pray. To watch what He does with my lack.

The quiet spaces in my life offer me perspective: I'm only five loaves and two fish away from some of the greatest miracles in my life.

His simple words in Matthew 14:18: "Bring them here to me."

Perhaps today is your day to put down your phone full of lists and apps and reminders and pins that remind you about the wells that you're not digging and the birthday parties you're not throwing and the workout you didn't finish—and you take what little you have and bring it to Him.

Who knows but that basketfuls of overflow might fill your soul? {eoa}

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