

On the Edge of Burnout? This Could be Your Answer

My little family has been on a rather intense journey over the last two years, the details of which are probably for another time. But the other day I was reflecting on all the ache and yuck, bombs and mess, stress and struggle, strain and doubt, uncertainty and fragility, weakness and wounding, pain and disappointment of it all and do you know what happened to my heart? I felt THANKFUL! I'm serious—and I'm not trying to be all super spiritual, because that makes me tired. This overwhelming and very deep gratitude came rushing into my heart like a crashing wave as the tide is coming in.

Several months back we were making the trek from Northern California to southern California, and on our drive through this really beautiful part that my heart always loves, all these cars started slamming on their brakes. I looked up and saw the blackest smoke I have ever seen! There was a fire that was devastating the hillsides and jumping across the road. There were fire fighters everywhere on both sides of the freeway, there was a plane making passes overhead and dropping water, and as far as I could see in two directions it was either mountains of black ash or towers of blazing fire. I remember feeling this crushing ache in my heart over that level of devastation. It felt so unjust and destructive to watch that fire consume all that beauty!

Fast forward a couple of months and we are making that same trek again. I'm holding hands with my best friend and reflecting on the fight through the ashes that life can sometimes be. Except this time I saw something I have never seen before on that particular stretch of highway. This time those same hills that had been laid waste with destruction were springing forth with new life and beautiful colors resting upon their shoulders! There was life everywhere! And

not just a little bit—it was strikingly beautiful and diverse. I was immediately struck by what just a little time had done. These were different hills.

That's what my heart feels like now. I look at that devastation that almost completely destroyed us and do you know what I see? I see new life! Its sweeping across the landscape of our hearts and it's so beautiful! I feel acutely aware of the source of that kind of victory, the kind of ability to take devastation and piles of ash and turn it into beauty. It's true what He says you know: The Lord uses *all* things to work together for the *good* of those who love Him. It's crazy because we don't have a lot of answers still. So much of our lives seem to be up in the air. And the truth is, we have some deep wounds that still aren't fully healed and are probably going to take some real time ... but there is life—real life—springing forth again.

And while I know that our journeys are not formulas to be written down and duplicated like bricks in a brick factory—each is as unique as a falling snowflake or an old man's face—I do recognize the fragrance and whisper of the Lord in something. In the same way that those fire fighters had to respond to that fire with years of training and strategy, they also had to respond to that fire with regular and constant assessment and simple obedience. And I believe that is what the Lord is cultivating in his church. If we hadn't made the choice to regularly check in with the Lord and in our weakness say, "I have a lot of training and history and strategy but right now I need to know how to respond to this fire, not the last one, or the one before, but *this* one," I think the devastation could have been way worse. But when we chose to take one step at a time, completely dependent on the Word of the Lord to move us forward or get us out of bed or keep our hearts clean, that simple obedience is what helped put out that fire. And then, on the other side of that fire, the Lord said, "Rest." Because it takes time for land to heal.

It takes time for new growth to push through those ashes.

But what if we didn't listen to that word? What if we decided to keep trying to clean up the devastation of the fire or decided to leave that land all together, to lay ministry down and say, "this is not our land anymore, it's been destroyed?" We would have either burned out or missed out. But instead we heard the word "rest" and we are obeying that word still. During the fire, we had to fight. It was like full force battleground on the daily! But after it was mostly out, maybe still smoldering a bit here and there but the threat was gone, we checked in again. And He said, "Rest." Right in the middle of this ash heap ... just rest.

In the resting there have been a million more little promptings or instructions that have so gently led our hearts right up through the ashes into this newness of life and hope, dreams and peace, tenderness and laughter, compassion and mercy, freedom and confidence. Now that is what I call redemption! That is what I call restoration! Now, don't hear that the struggle is over, because every day is not roses and ice cream, folks. We are working it out and we still have very real and challenging days. But I do see flowers everywhere instead of ashes. Flowers that maybe would have never appeared had that fire not consumed the landscape. Flowers that were brought forth maybe even *because* of the ashes! This is our inheritance as lovers of God. We can't forget to check in, to ask Him for help and to simply obey what we hear. Because H makes everything beautiful ... just in time.

For some of you, you see devastation right now. Your relationships look like a fire is consuming them or the fire came and went and there's nothing visible but a sea of ash. I say to you today: Hold on. Cling to the source of love with both hands and with His sweet help declare, "I will suffer long with you. I will dare to hope all things. I will bear up under this ash heap until the promises we whispered and those

whispered to us spring forth with fresh life and vibrant color across the landscape of our hearts.”

The winter will pass and the springtime will come. He really does give beauty for ashes. And joy really does come in the morning.

Just hold on, friends. Hold on.

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