

Unlocking Your Deuteronomy 28 Blessing

A few weeks ago, I was frustrated by my lack of time to do some things. Things like exercise, serious Bible study, sleep ...

My, how things have changed and not in the way I imagined—I don't know what I imagined, but this wasn't it.

So a few weeks ago, I decided to just do it—just get up an hour earlier and have a truly quiet Quiet Time. Novel concept, quiet. But can I tell you? After the first morning I was hooked. I'd missed it so much. Uninterrupted, focused time with God and His Word.

The first morning, my study was wonderful. Unfortunately, the rest of the morning, not so much. I cannot sugarcoat it at all. I woke the girls up with kisses, hugs and “I love yous.” I made them pancakes and got them all set for school and then, I don't know, but something happened from the front door to before-school care—all heck broke loose. The car ride was terrible. Fighting and yelling and grumpiness and on and on and on—and did I maintain my quiet and gentle spirit in the midst of the fray? Ohhhhhh, no. With no plan and no parachute, I jumped in and joined the chaos. When the battle began to die down, my eyes filled with tears and I thought, *God, really? We had such a lovely morning and this is where we are now?* I was so disappointed, so frustrated, and so angry. My image of how things “should be” just fell apart in less than a mile.

Thankfully, by the time we got to our respective morning places, all was a bit better. I wondered, “Is this warfare? Is this the enemy trying to destroy my joy?” Because boy oh boy, it was effective. My joy deflated like our front porch pumpkin in December. I decided while trudging up to my classroom that

I was not going to give up my morning time with God, period. And I was going to add some time in the Word with my kids too. (So there!)

Here I am a few weeks later, not only has that 5 a.m. time with God become my most favorite time of the day, but God has blessed the rest of my days in lovely ways.

For example, I've had time to exercise. I'm up to 2.5 miles running—well, maybe trudging with great difficulty would be a better description. It's not a marathon, nor is it particularly pretty, but it is a start.

And I've been able to go to bed at a reasonable hour almost every night. Work seems to be getting completed without me having to do the midnight bedtime. Girls are in bed earlier, and we've had time to read and snuggle. It's like this one act of obedience, which doesn't even feel like obedience but rather blessing, has changed the whole tenor of my days.

Now it will be, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I am commanding you today, then the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings will come on you and overtake you if you listen to the voice of the Lord your God (Deut. 28:1-2).

I don't particularly feel the need to be set high above all the nations of the earth. I'd just like to handle my little household well. But being overtaken by blessings—that I'll gladly take!

As I've thought about the little changes and the way God has blessed me, I'm overwhelmed. I think that is the overtaking God is talking about. Realizing that God does indeed bless. I don't know that God is asking all of us to wake up early; I just know He was asking me. And I don't know if time to exercise and sleep is everyone's desired blessing; I just know

it was mine.

There are other things that require my obedience that I'm struggling with daily. Things I know I need to do but don't know how to, and with some, I fear the results. I know the blessing will follow, but what will the process be like? Those are things I'm praying fervently about, seeking God's help, direction, timing and more.

These times in the Word, talking with God, have been eye-opening and convicting and comforting (but not always comfortable). He's walking me through some growth that is a bit painful. Dealing with some things that are tricky.

My walk with God through these things resembles my running efforts. I want to do it. I know I need to do it. And I am willing to do it. But I don't enjoy it. I feel awkward, lumbering and I can't catch my breath. It is difficult. It leaves me stiff and sore. I ache in places I forgot about. And sometimes I'd just rather not do it.

My Father and I are walking through my past and my present together. Finding the things that need to be dealt with so I can make healthy, God-honoring decisions and have a bright future. We are finding things that the Holy Spirit and I need to tackle together: needs that aren't quite right, ideas that are a little off-kilter, ways of relating that are leaning, expectations that seem skewed.

It appears I'm lopsided in many ways. Thankfully, my Father is allowing me to lean on Him as we figure these things out. He is strong and stable and able.

Now no discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift up your tired hands, and strengthen your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame go out of joint, but rather be healed (Heb. 12:11-13).

Discipline has such a negative connotation, but it really isn't negative. It's the idea of learning, training, instructing and even nurturing. Sometimes it involves things that aren't all wonderful or enjoyable, but the results are good. Truly.

Running requires discipline. Almost everything does. Work. Parenting. Finances. Health. Everything. I'm finding that getting up for Bible study when the alarm goes off, requires a measure of discipline. Sometimes it's easy; sometimes it's horribly difficult. Running—well, that's still not at all easy, but hopefully, in time, it will be because I've disciplined myself to just do it. My legs will be stronger and my chest won't ache and my breathing won't be labored. I won't want to sit down on the side of the road for “just a minute”. I will be ready, able, and strong enough to run forward.

This past week in my Bible study I read another verse in Hebrews:

Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

I liked the “run with endurance” analogy. And the fact that Jesus understands the struggle of running this race. That He ran it. I also love that the saints are cheering us on.

At the end of my first 5K a few years ago, I was coming down the homestretch and was thinking I'd just really, really like to walk the final few feet, but there were all these people cheering and, ugh, I had to run it. I was so glad I did. And amazingly, I found that I could.

I want to finish this faith race well. Fortunately, I have a great running partner, a crowd to cheer me on and the best prize at the end.

Everyone who strives for the prize exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. So, therefore, I run, not with uncertainty. So I fight, not as one who beats the air (1 Cor. 9:25-26). {eo}

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