

What Would You Say to a Younger You?

I was listening to a podcast in which Jamie Ivey was interviewing Priscilla Shirer. Jamie asked, "Priscilla, what would you say to your 20-year-old self?" Her response was almost lost to me, because I turned the question on myself and got the most surprising answer.

What would I say to my 20-year-old self, now that I'm almost 30 years past that age? "Somebody you're going to be good at and even enjoy manual labor."

My own statement shocked me—first because it was such a strange gut response and second because I never, ever imagined I would be able to say those words. My young-adult self would probably laugh out loud and say, "Yeah, not gonna happen in this lifetime."

But you know what? It has happened.

It's this crazy year I've lived. We decided to move in with my mother-in-law to help out around her place. So I started packing up our house. For weeks I packed boxes, drove a carload of possessions to my mother-in-law's house and carted those boxes into the house and down the hole into the crawl space. More than a dozen times, I filled the car and unloaded items at the thrift shop.

Trip after trip.

I started fixing and improving things around our house, if I could figure out how, and I started painting.

Then we moved in to my mother-in-law's home, and it required weeks of physical labor to sort and smoosh our garage and shed belongings into her garage and shed. We also had to hang

things and rearrange things and fix some things here.

Then it was spring, and the reason we were here was to do physical chores. So I started mowing and improving some flower beds. I even made some trips to the dump by myself, which was something I was never going to do.

Somewhere in all of that manual drudgery, it started not to be drudgery. I don't know when it happened, you guys. But one day I started to go work outside, and I looked forward to it. Getting sweaty and using my body to work hard sounded appealing. I could feel my body getting stronger, and that was really rewarding.

Who is this person, and what have you done with Christy? Christy—the book reading, piano playing, don't-make-me-sweat girl? The girl who mostly always felt like a lazy good-for-nothing when it came to getting her hands dirty? It's like someone just came in and changed who she was when no one was looking.

Now it's fall, and these mature, beautiful maple trees in my mother-in-law's yard are dropping their leaves. You know what? I can't wait to go out and rake and bag those leaves. *Me*.

I know, right?

Here's the thing. I believe so much about Jesus. I believe He can tell a storm to stop and it stops. I believe He can touch a dead person and bring the person back to life. I believe He can use one small basket of fish and bread to feed thousands. But the hardest thing for me to believe is that Jesus will truly make me into a better person.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul says: "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new."

But wow, do I have a hard time believing that. I even wrote an

entire book about it—that Jesus is, indeed, making us into better people little by little. Except every day I fall short in so many ways, of being the person I know God wants me to be, that despair comes easily. Can I truly ever grow as a person? More than that, can I hold onto *hope* of growing strong inside?

Well, I certainly never could have pictured myself as a 49-year-old woman heading out cheerfully to do really physical chores, yet here I am. So yes, I guess Jesus really has been working in me. Seeing this change in myself bolsters my faith in what Jesus will do in my future.

So what about you? Would you tell your younger self to have hope about being transformed into someone better? {eo}

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