

Your Ephesians 5:1-2 Secret for Serving With a Happy Heart

He was my younger brother, and then one day he was my hero. Mom was suddenly alone five years ago when Dad passed away on a snowmobile in Wyoming. I couldn't breathe in the night thinking about it. We lived 12 hours away, and phone calls every week seemed empty in the face of so much pain and need.

But there were my brother and his wife. They started driving five hours to be with my mom—every weekend at first and then at least twice a month *for years*.

They loved, they served, and they kept her company. My brother helped Mom get her finances in order. He made trips to the dump and changed the oil in her car. So many acts of service that I can't even name them all.

One image sticks in my mind, of my brother and his wife working cheerfully underneath Mom's huge pine tree out back, cutting off the lower branches so it would be easier for Mom to get into the storage building.

Always they have served cheerfully, and that is astounding to me. Never once in these last five years have I heard my brother or his wife complain or groan, as if they were under some burden. They're so happy to be helping, and it's a beautiful, contagious kind of happiness.

"I want to be like them when I grow up," I told the Lord on more than one occasion.

So when my mother-in-law, herself a widow, started to need more help with the lawn mowing and shoveling, I sat up straight and said it louder to the Lord, "I want to be like my

brother and his wife. I want to love like that. I want to help like that, with a happy, energetic heart the way they do it.”

That’s when I ran to the decision.

“How can we best help your mom?” I asked Matt. We talked. And talked some more. We tossed around ideas for a very long time, and then one day, Matt just came out and asked her what she would think of us moving out of our house and moving in with her and her sister, to help with whatever needed to be done.

God had been shaping my heart, and why else would anyone eagerly and cheerfully leave their own home?

So now we live with my mother-in-law, and every time I shovel or take out the garbage or do the dishes, I try to copy the happy heart that I’ve observed in my brother and sister-in-law. They’ve loved and served the way Jesus would do it, and I’m trying to imitate what I saw in them.

In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul tells the followers of Jesus:

“Be imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:1-2b).

I’m so thankful to my brother and sister-in-law for showing me how to live. What a beautiful path they’ve made for others to walk in.

So maybe the best decisions come not at the beginning of something but toward the end of something, after God has been molding a heart to live a life of love. He shapes the desires inside us, whittling away the useless and selfish, until we have a new heart and the decision we face is just an opportunity to act on who we have become.

As you face the next decision in front of you, take time to think about what God has been doing inside you, to prepare you

to imitate Him and to love people. {eo}

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