

Do It for the Joy of the Journey

One summer my husband, Terry, and I decided to take up something new—tennis. Now for us, this is a stretch. We are not exactly whippet-agile, athletic, coordinated or cool.

Add to that, we don't even look like most tennis players, especially in dress. The first day we showed up at the upscale subdivision court, everyone was in starched tennis whites. I could testify that all activity halted as we came through the gate in scroungy black T-shirts and black cut-offs. Mid-game we met at the net, where Terry whispered, "Why do I feel that our presence could seriously affect the home buyers' market here?"

On our second morning at the court, I shouted to Terry, "The ball's in your court!" Actually, the ball wasn't *in* Terry's court. You might say it was slightly displaced, soaring high *above* it. Before Terry could race outside the court to fetch the ball, a big slobbering dog had the same idea and beat him to it. The dog won, and raced from view, with the ball in its mouth. From the adjacent court, two players, our neighbors, halted all activity and began to belly laugh.

Terry and I met at the net, where I snorted, "This has to be the devil!"

Terry, not one to be out-snorted, snorted back, "It has to be God! Remember, Sandra Louise, it was the Lord's idea we do this!"

True. Terry Robert had a point. It was during this red-faced moment that it became clear to me—perhaps the Lord was directing us to try a new thing, like tennis, not to make us pros but to let us enjoy being ourselves! I was reminded of God's Word that promises us that He loads us with daily

benefits (see Ps. 68:19). Why couldn't joy, smiles and laughter be part of that?

Why does everything we do have to be a serious attempt to out-do, out-shine or out-race everyone (and their dog)? I noticed that in these mornings in our new activity of tennis, I was smiling more, laughing more (probably more at Terry than at me, of course) and starting my day with increased hope and energy than in my pre-tennis days.

Over the weeks I came to see that worse than *losing at* something (or trying your hand at something and not looking like a pro or winner) is *losing out* on something—and missing the opportunity to receive new smiles, and joy and the satisfaction of trusting the Lord that you will benefit in some way from it.

Last week, we celebrated Independence Day. I challenge you to try something new and let yourself be stretched in the blessings and freedom that you might gain from stepping outside your box. Why not write and submit a book proposal or take up scrap booking, photography or even (starch whites optional) tennis?

If a merry heart does good like medicine (see Prov. 17:22), wouldn't that merry heart also strengthen you and bless you in your day?

I am convinced that at times, when the Lord asks us to tackle a mountain that we've never climbed before, He is not calling us to be the first or to be the best. He is simply calling us to the blessings that come from the adventure of the journey.