

Turning Life's Pressures Into Opportunities

While encouraging a young adult (I'll call him Sam) to achieve some independence—based on the theory that more responsibility would empower him—Sam stiffened his back and exclaimed, “I’m not feeling the thrill!”

His retort made me chuckle and his reluctance—more like dread—to take on new levels of responsibility became clear. But I persisted with the assignment because I knew it was good—and healthy—for him.

Sam’s lack of motivation for the entrusted task hinted at laziness. I was undaunted, however—determined to trudge through the project details with him because I noted that his lack of enthusiasm was not due to an internal sloth, but rather, he was fearful—truly anxious over the unfamiliar.

“I don’t like being forced to take responsibility,” Sam bemoaned. “I understand your hesitancy,” I assured him. “I am, however, not forcing you to take responsibility; rather, I am equipping you to handle what *life* is forcing upon you. This is called being an adult.”

We plodded through like laden lumberjacks, but I got the assignment delegated and organized, complete with deadlines, and Sam took hold of the project with a new confidence. What happened next bolstered my heart.

Sam transformed. He became outgoing, chatting about this and that. He offered to carry out the recyclables. Next he sat down beside me and asked for other dates to put on his calendar. Soon, Sam had committed to two other projects. He hovered nearby for several minutes, casually talking about various things. Finally he was ready to head out. He clutched his backpack, said goodbye, and scurried out the front door.

Seconds later, he reappeared.

"Oops, what'd ya forget?" I queried. Sam entered the room, his hands fidgeting with this coat. "So, I just want to say thanks for helping me get some things together," Sam picked some lint off his coat as he continued. "That was really helpful."

"I'm happy to do it," I said nonchalantly, controlling my excitement. Once again, Sam spun on his heels and headed out the door, whistling as he went. He may not have been feeling the thrill when the heavy lifting started, but once he was equipped and encouraged, I wasn't the only one believing he could do the job—Sam believed in himself too.

I wonder what we all would do if we realized God, our Heavenly Father, is nudging us to believe in ourselves— the way He believes in us.

Inside of you and me are the seeds of greatness; God has not made us to be average. Instead, he has important and life-changing assignments for us to accomplish.

But so often fears—fear of failure, fear of success, fear of inadequacies, fear of embarrassment and others—keep us from believing and pursuing the bigger call of God. We settle for the mediocre, the mundane and the easy.

As a result, many of us don't feel very satisfied with life. We are caught in the lackluster of the daily grind. Simply put, we aren't "feeling the thrill."

But what If I told you that we could view some of life's pressures as our opportunity? Perhaps God is calling us out of the dull into the thrill by pushing us to become more equipped. I've discovered that often life's problems force us to find solutions. Solution-finding people become empowered and successful while problem-identifying people remain victims.

Trials and struggles in life aren't fun, and certainly aren't what we would choose. But when problems come, choosing of another kind *is* ours to do—the choice to win or to lose. We may not be feeling the thrill of the circumstances, but when we overcome our fears and face them, we will feel the thrill of victory.

Some may say, “Well, I prefer the comfort zone.” Maybe. But what if I were to rename the comfort zone with a name that describes what it actually is? I wonder if they would be content in the “conformity zone” or the “adapted-to-mediocre zone,” or the “I settled zone.”

I'm not sure there is true and lasting fulfillment in the comfort zone. I'd rather be nudged out and experience holy agitation and find myself in the thrill of God's amazing and world-changing plan than have false comfort.

How about you? Let today be the day you break out of the comfort zone and take a step of faith into your future.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 8/19/2013

This week ask God to help you overcome the fears that would prevent you from stepping out into the challenges He has prepared to strengthen you and make you more than a conqueror. Ask Him to help you step out of your comfort zone and take a step into your future. As school starts across the country remember our children and those involved in the educational process. Continue to pray that God would send revival into our churches, for more laborers into the harvest field and a great harvest of souls. Pray that our leaders would seek the Lord for wisdom regarding the decisions they make for the nation and the world. Pray for those that are persecuted for their faith, for Israel, and for peace to come to neighboring Egypt. 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 8:37; James 5:16