

Journey of Three Days

I sat on the picnic table overlooking the lake as silent tears ran down my face. It was hot outside — like fry an egg on the sidewalk hot. Sweat rolled down my back as I watched the mosquitoes cluster and buzz around me.

I tried to pray, but the only word that came was “Why?” I refuse to pray that word. So I just sat and cried. The heat made this uncomfortable, but I was unwilling to leave until I had some resolution to this latest job trial facing me. I had met the Lord at this lake many times in the past, so I waited to meet Him again.

It seemed that this job was providing lots of trials. Never had I imagined that my “dream job” would turn into such a nightmare. I was only six weeks into a two-year commitment, but it felt as if I had been there forever. The situation was disintegrating on a weekly basis. I didn’t see any resolution, and it kept getting harder. How would I survive for two years? More importantly, I wondered, is this where the Lord wanted me?

As I sat in the almost suffocating stillness, my heart began to be still. Finally, I heard the whisper of the Holy Spirit, “Press into the heart of God. Embrace the pain.” I didn’t know what that meant. My soul already felt like it had been stripped down to its most vulnerable form. I was feeling raw, like everything I had know about God’s plan for my life had been stripped away and my soul was laid bare — it felt like an open, gaping wound.

I left the lake and began to consider what I thought the Holy Spirit was saying to me. What did it look like to press into the heart of God, and what does it mean to embrace the pain? Once again, the word “why” — the word that had been my constant torment for these months —reared its ugly head, and I continued to ignore it.

Over the next several days, I continued to ponder and meditate on what the Holy Spirit laid on my heart. And, at some point during those lapsed days I had decided to embrace the pain. Now I wanted to know what that would look like. One night, as I started my devotions, I flipped my Bible open to Genesis 22. It was a familiar passage and one that held significant meaning already. This particular time, however, I read it with fresh eyes — as if I had never read it before.

As I read, I once again felt a kinship with the test of Abraham’s faith and the subsequent sacrifice required. All of a sudden Genesis 22:4 (NIV) leapt off the page ... “On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance ...” Suddenly, I knew. I was on a journey of the third day, and I had been on this journey before. It was a difficult one at best — an excruciatingly painful one at its finest. But at least it was familiar.

I began to imagine what Abraham’s journey of three days must have felt like. The Lord told him to sacrifice his only son — the son through whom an entire destiny was to be fulfilled. What agony Abraham must have felt. How was he able to put one foot in front of the other and walk to the place he was going? What thoughts were going through his

head? What did he say to Sarah? His beloved son was to lose his life. It made no sense. The Bible is clear, Abraham never wavered. He kept walking towards the place — that place where the altar was waiting — as he continued his journey. Did he sleep during that time? Did he want to ask why?

While my devotions progressed that night, I had another revelation. Abraham had been on a similar journey where his faith had been tested once before. This “journey of three days” was familiar to him too. Isaac’s birth had been miraculous. He was 100 when his son was born. Romans talks about this test, “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations ... Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead ... Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” (Romans 4:18-19, 20-21)

This job situation was my latest journey, my latest test of faith. I was again faced with the choice: will I press into the heart of God, watching my flesh die so that my soul might have life, and will I again take the “three day journey” to the place the Lord had chosen? Even while I read that portion of scripture the answer was clear. There would be forward motion, albeit with wavering. Someday I would like to be as full of faith as Abraham, but that day has not yet come.

Yet as Abraham journeyed, he held this truth in his heart, “The Lord will provide.” As I continued through my journey, Abraham’s truth became my anthem. “The Lord, He will provide.”

The Bible is full of journeys and tests of faith. Each believer is tested in his or her walk. At various times, He calls each of us to walk a journey of three days. Some journeys go through deserts, some along oceans of loneliness, with waves hitting your beaches with regularity. Some journeys wander through pleasant valleys and some through palaces. I doubt this particular journey of Abraham took his soul through a palace.

Oswald Chambers said, “Faith is unutterable trust in God, trust which never dreams that He will not stand by us.” However, I must confess, over the two years that I was walking a “journey of three days” there were times I dreamt God was not standing by me. Questions of God’s faithfulness plagued me, and the ever pesky question of “why” reared its ugly head often.

God promises us this: “What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true ...” (Romans 3:3-4). At the end of two years, I found God to be true. It looked different than what I thought, it felt different than what I thought, but in the end, as He did with Abraham, the Lord provided. Therefore, we have hope! Let us step boldly into the faith He has called us to, and start the journey.