

The Purpose in Comfort

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Today's Treasure

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1

Have you ever looked back on your life to see the evidence of God's hand in preparing you for the future? This verse in Hebrews 11 is a definite neon light in the history of my life. God knew a long time ago that this verse would be important to me. As a young woman in nursing school, it stood out to me one day. I typically would underline or highlight something I wanted to remember, but this one got special attention that day! Not only was it underlined and highlighted, but it was also written on a neon sticky note and mounted onto that very page in my Bible. It remains there today, a good number of years later, a marriage and four children later to be exact.

Another verse deserved similar attention. I sat nursing my baby one day during my devotional time, and as I read the Scripture before me these words seemed to leap from the page:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4

I underlined, highlighted, AND it jotted "memorize this" in the margin. As I walk forward in my life, I look back and see these two of many verses that I was given along the way. I believe God gave them to me as preparations for things to come. God knew the future, I did not, but I listened to Him and I memorized these verses.

The first verse, simply put, addresses faith. It is being sure of what I hope for, and positive about what I can't see. I am not sure what the circumstance was that caused me to write that verse on paper. Perhaps it was meant to become a landmark. I returned to that verse many times through the years, but never the way I returned to it when all hope in earthly treasure was lost. The things I hoped for included earthly living, things that weren't bad things. I hoped for a husband who loved me, children of my own, a home, a church. These things were gifts from God. I also hoped for heaven although it was only a distant thought. My grip on earthly treasure was torn from me the day

Ashley entered glory. As the things I had hoped for shattered, my only hope rested in Heaven. I needed to be sure of this hope in heaven, and certain of the things promised that I could not see. Over and over, I return to the great chapter of faith in Hebrews 11 that tells the stories of God's children pressing on through the great trials of life on earth. What led them on? It was faith! Faith in what they hoped for, something far better than could be grasped with earthly hands.

The second of the two verses came a good ten years. At the time I believed I needed that verse for something, but I didn't know exactly what. As a young mother, I began to see one benefit of all those Bible memory verses that I had learned as a child. They were tools for raising my own children. Those verses became the building blocks for discipline and instruction. Most importantly, they became a cushion of comfort to give when I had nothing to offer. As Ashley grew older, she came home from school with troubles as any 10-year-old child does. She also took great heart to the stories she read, the people she met. She was burdened for the lost, broken with the hurting, and compassionate towards the needy. One evening as she lay in bed struggling to fall asleep amid the tangle of worries in her little mind, I gave her a Bible verse on a card. I encouraged her to read it as she fell asleep each night. I wanted her to know that God was the Father of comfort and that He would comfort her in ALL of her troubles.

I may have given that verse to Ashley, but it was really God who gave it for me. Only months later, I laid my weary head on Ashley's empty pillow. Lost and burdened with grief, I sought anything I could find. I reached to her bedside table to find a stack of cards and read... "the God of all comfort. Will comfort me". I treasured this verse anew. I walked forward with my head upon the pillow of God's comfort. I intended that verse for Ashley, but God intended it for me. We read on. "who comforts us in all our troubles. SO THAT we can comfort those in any trouble WITH the comfort that we ourselves have received from God!" In this verse, God not only gave me a pillow to lay my weary head upon, but He also equipped me to go and do likewise. He comforted me in my trial SO THAT I could comfort someone else. God wants me to use what He has given me for His glory. I had a purpose! I was equipped to comfort. In the coming years, I began to reach to other women who journeyed along behind me. They too had buried children. The wounds bleed over and over again, but with good purpose. My hope is in heaven, firmly rooted in the things I have not seen. My comfort came from Christ, who is the Father of comfort, and I am able to comfort others like me because of Him.

This wisdom goes beyond one area of ministry. I am able to encourage, teach and train others to do the same. What good is the comfort I have received if I don't turn around and comfort someone else? Consider the ways in which God has provided for your

future by looking back. How have you been comforted in your troubles? How can you comfort others in return?

PRAYER

Dearest Father of comfort, thank you for knowing me, for loving me, and for equipping me for what is to come. Thank you for the comfort and compassion that You have richly give. Please help me to extend Your comfort to others in need. Let this purpose become a comfort to me each day, as I give to others what You have given to me.