

Lesson Three

Trust – go where God leads, it might be painful and scary, do I trust Him?

As you can imagine, after my first trip to the blackberry patch and the painful scratches acquired there, I was reluctant to go back. I realized that to reach all the berries, I was going to have to put myself at risk by climbing underneath and in-between some of the canes because there was no other way to reach them. There were also several fallen branches and logs that had decomposed over the years. They were covered in leaves and forest undergrowth which made them slippery and difficult to see. I had tripped over one such log on my first trip. I had no idea how many other items could be buried in the area - large stones, debris, even glass were known to be present throughout the forest. Any or all of these objects could be lying in wait to cause me injury. Not to mention the forest animals that may not be too happy about me stealing their tasty treats! Birds, squirrels, ground hogs, snakes, even skunks could have nests or dens nearby and be unaccustomed to dealing with an outsider such as me. Their reliance on the safety of being surrounded by thorns could cause them to be startled by my presence and attack. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more it seemed like a better idea to just buy my berries from the store and let the forest have these. Then I realized that I was filling myself with fear and as a daughter of the King, I should fear no berry!

Making changes in our lives can also be very scary. Many times, we are going where we have never gone before. Many questions may go through your mind: How will those in my

life be affected by my decisions? Will they still accept me? Do I really have the strength to do this?

The first thing to remember is that God is always with you. He will grant you strength when you feel you have none (Habakkuk 3:19), and put words in your mouth that you didn't know were there (Matthew 10:19). In addition to the Lord's presence, it is a good idea to have a frank and honest conversation with someone close to you about the journey you are beginning. Explain your motivations and discuss how this may affect your relationship. The person may be very supportive and even join you! If not, you need to identify the potential for opposition and pray for guidance in how to address the situation in the future.

Secondly, transformation will not and should not be overnight and sudden. Other than smoking, there are very few changes in life that survive when done by "going cold turkey". Small steps allow us to accustom ourselves to new habits and ways of addressing problems so that eventually it becomes second nature and we don't have to stop and think about our response each time we are placed in a questionable situation. Gradual changes are easier for us to adjust to and easier for those around us to absorb.

One of the main factors affecting my ability to lose weight is my family. I am the: grocery shopper, menu planner, chief cook and bottle washer (as my grandma used to say!). Given that, you'd think it would be easy for me to diet since I control every calorie that comes into the house (or not). Unfortunately, this is not the case. I have used excuses like:

"No one in my family will eat kohlrabi. What is it anyway?"

“This person doesn’t like _____.” where the blank can be anything from tomatoes to rice

“Everyone likes my cooking just the way it is”

“I don’t have time to buy and chop fresh vegetables every day”

“Healthy foods are more expensive and we’re on a tight budget”

“I don’t know how to cook healthy” or “I don’t own a wok”

All of the above statements are true, but they are really just covering my fear. The deep dark truth, when I allow myself to think about it, is that I am afraid of trying to lose weight because I am afraid of failure. I have always been an over-achiever. School came easy to me, along with anything else I decided to set my mind on. But losing weight? That seemed to be completely out of my control. I accepted my overweight self. I was comfortable with her. Sure, I wanted to be slim and attractive and fit into my old clothes. I just wasn’t convinced it was something I could really accomplish and since I didn’t know for certain, it was better not to try.

The first step in overcoming fear is to identify it, drag it out of the closet and into the light.

Take a really good look at it. How do I do that, you may ask, especially if it’s hidden deep? I start with a sheet of paper and I write a question to myself, and then write the answer.

Based on the answer, I then write another question until I can narrow it down to the heart of the matter. Picture a funnel. Your first question is at the wide opening and you’re digging down to the narrow end. A typical exchange might go something like this:

Q: Why do I hate my job?

A: Because it's boring

Q: What is so boring about it?

A: It's the same thing day after day and I don't have anything new to learn.

After doing the above exercise, I might decide that there are things I can do on my own to make my job more interesting like re-organizing my files, automating tasks, or offering assistance to others that seem to be overwhelmed. If none of that applies, I can talk to my boss about accepting more responsibility. Hopefully the above illustrates the exercise and how it can be used to better understand emotions and how they can subconsciously affect you.

Once you think you've gotten to the root of the fear, ask yourself, 'what's so scary about it'? And then the really tough question, why do I think God can't defeat this? In the end, that is the root of all fear, a lack of trust in God to take care of us. Fortunately for us, God knows what timid cowardly creatures we are! The Bible has 366 verses on fear; some of my favorites are listed at the end of this chapter. It can be very helpful to memorize a few of them – know them so well that they immediately present themselves when you're scared. God will not ask something of you without providing a way for you to accomplish it. "The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing," Zephaniah 3:17. The Lord also tells us, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast . . . ? Though she may forget, I will not

forget you! See, I have you engraved on the palms of my hands,” Isaiah 49:15b-16. Sounds pretty permanent to me! Resolving our issues of trust with God is instrumental in beginning our new life and growing closer to Him. Remember, Joshua 1:9 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

John 16:33

Deuteronomy 31:8

Isaiah 51:7

Psalm 27:1-2

Psalm 30:11-12

Isaiah 46:4

Isaiah 54:10

Exodus 14:13-14

Luke 12:22-23

Assessment and Further Thought

What excuses do I make to cover my fear of change?

What scares me the most about changing?

What are some ways I can overcome my fear?

Is there someone in my life that I can rely on to be a support in my “cord of three” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12)? Schedule some time with this person to discuss your goals and enlist their assistance.

Verses for study and encouragement

1 Corinthians 6:20 You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.

Ephesians 5:11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 Two are better than one, . . . , If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

Prayer time

Dear Jesus, please forgive me for being afraid and for my lack of trust. Grant me courage to identify and face my fear. Remind me that You are with me always and that You will never abandon me. Help me to recognize all the tools You have provided for me and grant me the knowledge on how to best use them. Please provide someone to be joined in our cord of three to offer me support during this time. Amen.

Additional items for prayer