



Volume 47 | Issue 1

Article 2

2004

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Recommended Citation

Poston, Linda (2004) "Devotional Cccu Library Directors Meeting "Le'l' The Process Go On" I June 13,2003," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 47: Iss. 1, Article 2.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1765>

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DEVOTIONAL

CCCU LIBRARY DIRECTORS MEETING

"LET THE PROCESS GO ON", JUNE 13, 2003

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We can all recite the saying "The Christian life isn't a bed of roses" - so why do we get so surprised or upset when difficult things happen to us? Why do we somehow feel we have to "have it all together" and never show any signs of need or weakness? I believe we have let the world squeeze us into its mold of "the good life" - free of pain and struggle, full of self-indulgence and the mind-set of avoiding pain and struggle at all costs.

At the 2002 ACL Conference I spent some time reading the book of James in the quiet morning hours - enjoying the little park-like area with the miniature waterfalls. Little did I know that God was preparing me for the year ahead.

The Phillips translation of James 1:2-8 reads as follows:

"When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, *don't resent them as intruders*, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But *let the process go on* until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence. And if in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God - who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty - and he may be

quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he *really wants God's help* or not. The man who *trusts God*, but with inward reservations is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive anything from the Lord, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn." (emphasis added).

About a month later my mother-in-law phoned us to let us know that my husband's father (who had been in a nursing home for about 3 years with Alzheimers) had contracted pneumonia. On July 15th we were awakened at about 4:00 am with a call saying that he had passed away. I went into work that day but we began to make plans to travel to VA for the funeral. We fell into bed, exhausted, only to be awakened at 10:00 pm with a phone call that my father had died instantly from a heart attack. It was a heavy and stressful night as were the weeks ahead - losing both fathers on the same day and traveling to both VA and MN for two funerals.

Then just a little over a month later, I was informed that one of my two full-time support staff positions was going to be eliminated, along with 11 other staff positions across campus, due to budget constraints. I had 3 days right at the start of school to re-distribute all the

responsibilities involved with my Head of Circulation and Acquisitions position. Among these were 12 student assistants ready to begin, many of them new and needing training.

And then a few months later, on December 7th, I was out with some friends for a delightful outing at a local historical estate for a Christmas celebration. As I was walking back down a sidewalk to my car I slipped on "black ice" and broke my ankle. That meant 6 weeks on crutches with a cast to my knee, and then another 3 weeks with an air cast and crutches. All of this in the dead of winter with many more snow storms to contend with!

By this time, I was saying, "What next?" I was feeling a bit like Job! My immediate response to these difficulties was often self-pity, resentment, anger, or frustration! But as God gently reminded me of this passage in James, I began to see glimpses of how He wanted to use these difficulties in my life. I'd like to highlight four phrases from this passage.

1. "Don't resent trials and troubles as intruders, rather welcome them as friends!"

Being in a knee-high cast sure felt like an intruder to me. I couldn't take a shower for 6 weeks, couldn't drive and had to be dependent on others in a way that I never have before! But I saw that God wanted to use this time to teach me a few things!

- To humble myself and allow myself to be served by others, to be dependent on my husband and daughter, and other library staff!
- To see how hectic my life had become; how much running around I did!
- To appreciate the simple things in life - like a hot shower, being able to carry things around, and just general mobility!
- To see the value in quietness - staying at home, reading, spending

more time with God!

2. "Let the process go on"

My first response to losing a position in the library was to work late, to work harder, to do whatever it took to fix the problem. I had been Director of the Library for six years and was proud of what I had accomplished with limited staff and resources and I started to see it crumbling around me. But God convicted me - this wasn't MY library- it was HIS library. He would take care of it. I needed to let the process go on. He was at work in my life as well! I was fighting His process and I realized that how I responded to this "crisis" was setting the tone for how my staff would experience it. I had the choice to "let the process go on" or to fight it! When I made my decision, the situation ironically became easier and I became less resentful, angry and frustrated.

3. "Really want God's help"

I'm thankful that God doesn't leave us on our own but provides all the wisdom we need to address each challenge we face. I feel He has helped me be creative in distributing additional responsibilities and setting a more positive attitude in the work environment.

4. "Trust God"

I don't know what may be facing me tomorrow, next week, or next year - maybe a jammed printer, an unhappy patron, budget cuts, personality conflicts, institutional politics, or the demise of a vendor I use. But God wants me to totally trust Him with the bigger picture - the process He has "designed" for me - to build endurance, promote maturity and to refine me as gold.

My daughter wrote a poem this past year that happens to relate to much of what I've said above. She asks if we are willing to put aside our agenda, our

view of what we need to be or do and stand in awe of a God who is committed to our maturity and a growing relationship with Him. *

"VELVET SHOES"

by Helena Poston

Before I meet you I'll dress up in my
Sunday best
a neatly pressed dress
and my velvet shoes.
I will tie a white ribbon
in my tidily curled hair
wear my diamond earrings
and a smile.

Come just as you are.

I'll just finish up the dishes,
pull myself into a pleasant mood
and wait for you
in my velvet shoes.

Run to me.

Before I meet you
I'll clear the cobwebs from my head,
make my bed,
and bind my wounds
so you won't see
that I'm falling apart.

I am a healer.

I'll be there in awhile
With my shoes and my smile
I'm strapping them on,
Just
a
minute

Listen to me.

I think I'm ready to meet you now
Here I am, Lord
Hope I'm ready

You are standing on Holy ground...
remove your shoes.