



August 2013

Friends,

Ever felt like God has you in some weird place that you don't understand? I once heard a pastor speak about this. He explained how God can have us oriented in a way that is uncomfortable, foreign, confusing. He was holding his baby daughter one day as he was thinking about this. He turned her upside-down and backwards where she couldn't see him. She had a little hesitation and then started laughing. Her childlike faith knew that her daddy had her and would not drop her. She trusted that although it felt weird, Daddy was still in control. So, why don't we feel that type of giddy trust with our Daddy?

I have felt upside-down and backwards lately. I know without doubt that God has me in His hands, but I still get frustrated that things aren't what they used to be. He has me doing things that feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar. I want to know why. I want to know when it will stop feeling this way. So, *DO* I fully trust Him? Maybe not.

We have a child just starting to go through puberty. His emotions and moods are like a roller coaster. And we know this is just the beginning. Relating to him is different. Reaching him is different. We don't know from one day to the next what is going to work and what won't. Some days, he is a bit clingy and wants to be right beside us, talking to us, having fun as a family. He jokes, he laughs, he is kind to his brother. Other days, he has a permanent scowl on his face and everything out of his mouth is negative. He is pouty, he is distant, he is mean to his brother. How do you parent a creature like this? The only answer I know is love. God is using this upside-down, backwards position as parents to teach us more about love.

We care for my mother-in-law who has Alzheimer's. Her emotions and moods are like a roller coaster. And we know this is just the beginning. Relating to her is different. Reaching her is different. We don't know from one day to the next what is going to work and what won't. Some days, she is sweet and kind and happy to see us. We take her out and have fun and laugh together. Other days, she is withdrawn and quiet and distant. She hallucinates crazy things that never happened. She will tell stories after we leave about how mean we were to her even though we tried our best to just love her and spend time with her. How do you parent your parent? The only answer I know is love. God is using this upside-down, backwards position as a son and daughter-in-law to teach us more about love.

I started a new job a few months back. I had stayed home with our kids for years and wasn't looking for a job. But, God told me I needed to take this job. I didn't understand why. Then, the next week, we had several really big expenses come up that we never could have paid for without this job. He provided before the needs arose. He is teaching us more about trust and how He is faithful even when we are not. This summer has been hard... having the kids at home, trying to work a new job, wanting to spend time with them instead. God is teaching me to be more dependent on Him for my daily bread. He wants me to need Him to get through this one day before I start planning and worrying about the next and the next and the next day.

We don't serve like we used to. We don't spend time with friends like we used to. We don't host people in our home like we used to. We don't spend time with extended family like we used to. God has redirected us to different things. Sometimes I feel like I am just surviving and not really living. I want true life and I want it to the full. My prayers lately have been for God to show me what He does have us doing that matters for His kingdom. He offers me full, abundant life right where I am. It doesn't have to look and feel like it once did. He is doing a new work.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10

The enemy would have me believe that what I am doing doesn't matter, that I am not as effective for God as I once was. God wants me to trust that He has me right where I need to be. The enemy would have me believe that struggling through parenting and caring for the elderly and helping pay our bills don't mean much compared to some of the things I used to spend my time doing. The enemy wants me to compare myself to others and what they are doing that is effective for the Kingdom. Because it's all so hard, it feels like I'm not doing anything well. And, maybe that's just the point. I am incapable of doing any of this without God directing my every step and without the Spirit giving me what I need for each and every task. He has me doing things that don't come naturally, things that aren't my "giftings." Upside-down and backwards. Do I trust Him there?

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43:18-19

Just like Israel, I am unfaithful. I forget the great things God has done. He has to remind me to keep my focus on Him and the present path He has for me. Don't look back and hope for old things. Be grateful for the new things. Don't we want new things? Don't we want to grow and change and be more and more different from our old selves?

God has shown me over the past couple of weeks that the stripping of pride is a crucial part of growing to be more like Christ. This has to happen periodically so that we are put back in our rightful place – submissive, humble, and broken before our Father. When life becomes too comfortable, when we are doing the things we have done for a long time and those things become routine and easy, sometimes God shakes us up to show us that we are not, were not, will never be in control. Upside-down and backwards reminds us that comfortable and familiar and easy are not part of the grand plan, at least not while we are here in fallen creation. Like a baby girl held in a strange way by her Daddy, we need to just trust and be giddy that He has us.

Trust with me,

And do not forget to do good and to share with others,  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16