

A TIME TO BUILD. A TIME TO GROW.

Posted on September 1, 2017

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Texas Eagle Forum Devotionals (#TEFDevo)

“I listened for God. He said to build things and grow things.” Quite a straightforward proclamation for a 10 year old to make at the breakfast table. But, as many moms know, sometimes God reveals himself through words spoken from a child’s toast and jelly stained lips.

That particular morning, I didn’t catch on to the significance of his words right away. I filed it away as our youngest son’s simple response to his Daddy’s challenge earlier that week to try to listen for God’s side of the



conversation and not always just ramble on during prayer time. As is his way, God has repeatedly used the truth revealed in that fleeting moment as a touchstone in our lives. Those first words from God that my son heard have a firm place in our family lore and spiritual growth because they are rich with meaning. More importantly the concepts of building and growing have continued to cause us to meditate on God’s word, influenced our course, and driven us to action.

Building and growing are similar and yet distinctively different. When building something, you use materials readily available, plan, and create something tangible. Fairly quickly, the hands of man can provide results from building. Growing something is altogether different. It requires that you take what is available to you, bury it, wait, and see if God turns what you have seeded into something tangible. Planting requires faith.

I will rejoice in
doing them good,
and I will plant them
in this land in faithfulness,
with all my heart and soul.
Jeremiah 32:41

Our foremost desire as parents was to be faith planters in the lives of the four children God miraculously sent us. So, to teach the precepts of building and growing, we turned to God’s Word. It was easy to find references throughout the Bible to both building and growing, but it was chapter 32 of the Book of Jeremiah that we

continually found ourselves drawn to. Much like today, the days of Jeremiah's life were filled with some major government turmoil. The people faced God's imminent judgement due to their sinful ways, yet refused to repent. Jeremiah obediently delivered a message from the Lord that foretold utter destruction and capture of the king by enemies. For this gloom and doom prophecy, the king had Jeremiah shuttled to straight to prison. And, as is common for prisoners, he prayed. Jeremiah's prayers were the kind of prayers that my husband challenged my son to have. A two way conversation with God, where concerted effort is given to listening for God's response. Ever faithful, God did respond to Jeremiah with a message that proved once again God's loving kindness. This is where knowing the difference between building and growing comes back in play. God told Jeremiah to buy a parcel of land and make the purchase known publicly because even though total destruction was coming, God deemed it would not be final. In time, God promised to restore not only their land, but peace and safety to the people as well. Have faith amid impending ruination, a season of building and growing was coming.

No matter what it looks like on the ground, remember that nothing is too difficult for God. Expect restoration. The very course of our lives, the big choices, and the small changes have all been influenced by that kind of faith. My dear friend recently shared these words of Mother Teresa with me, "We are called to love the world. And God loved the world so much that He gave Jesus. Today He loves the world so much that He give you and me to be His love, His compassion, and His presence, through a life of prayer, of sacrifice, of surrender to God." This great woman of faith understood these precepts. She lived a life that exemplified the way God works through both building and growing. She knew that both were worthy endeavors at the right time. As Ecclesiastes extols, there is indeed a time to build and a time to plant.

Contemplating all of this brings me to pray that we would all want more. More time listening to God. More focus on prayer. More revelation of God's precepts. Today, consider taking some time to listen for God too. He gave a 10 year old some meaty morsels to chew on and share. He has good things for you too.

