

My Mission in the Seasons of Life

By
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Earliest memories for me included church ... sleeping under the pew, singing church songs at home with my family as we got ready to go to church, and loving anything to do with church ... including the annual cleaning day! Cannot remember the first time I heard Scripture quoted, and my first reading book was the Bible ... as far back as 5 years old. Here is one of my favorite verses:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, KJV).

This was my springtime season ... and God blessed me with a loving nurturing home where the family members all served God and worked together training me to do the same. My mission? I had to build my own relationship with God, following in the footsteps of my leaders.

This verse was so often used in my presence, and talked about so freely, I learned what it meant at a very young age.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

God was good, and He filled me with the Holy Ghost in December 1962. I was seven years old. My Dad baptized me in a very cold river on a chilly winter day ... but I was enjoying new life! You see, there was another verse that meant a lot at our house:

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

I remember starting school and being the only one who did NOT wear trousers or cut my hair ... even at that young age. I remember coming home from school and crying to my mom about the teasing and ridicule I received. She always had a verse for me, and this one still rings in my head ... more days than I would like:

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”
(Psalms 119:165, KJV).

That word “nothing” in Hebrew means “they shall have no stumbling block.” I was very young when I learned that no matter what other people say and do, I am responsible for how I act and have absolutely NO CAUSE for offense.

Thankfully, I went through 12 years of school in the same town. There were challenges, but nothing too severe for me to face. In my senior year, I received a pocket-sized Bible as a graduation gift. Inside the front flap was a handwritten message:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

This verse became the touchstone for the next season of my life ... summer was here. Do I work or study? Where can I go to school? What should I choose as my major ... music or business? Do I marry now or later? Who should I marry? Where do I live? My mission during this season was to find God’s will and purpose for ME.

Do any of these questions ring a bell in your memory or your life experience right now? All of us face these same decisions. Thank God for a foundation of TRUTH in HIS WORD to guide me. There was lots of prayer, fasting, and numerous mistakes. But God answers when we seek, and He did not fail me!

I went to university on a 4 year scholarship, studying music education. I loved it! God blessed me with a job teaching private lessons in the area around my home town, and I lived at home. I was able to continue helping out in our local church where my dad was pastor, and that included teaching Sunday school, playing the piano, leading all of the holiday programs, doing outreach and helping with every aspect of church administration except for the money ☺ I was totally involved ... knowing God was leading me to do something else.

One year during senior youth camp, God spoke to me as clearly as I have ever heard. He was calling me to leave my comfort zone and follow His will and plan. How was I ever going to find a husband in a foreign land? Guess what ... that is exactly where God put the man He had chosen for me, and if I had not listened to His voice, I would have missed that season of life entirely.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33, KJV).

- ✓ I followed God’s voice in 1978 to Alaska to take part in the International Youth Corp there. Then, in 1981 I listened and went to Nigeria, West Africa, where I spent 3 months as one of the UPCI’s first AIMers.
- ✓ Africa was in my blood now, and even though I had to return to the US to fulfill teaching obligations, I was able to go back in October of 1983 to continue following God’s leading.
- ✓ Did I forget to mention that a young man from Canada began to write me during 1983 while he was on location in Nigeria, working in the same mission I had been?
- ✓ I obeyed and God sent me a husband ... all the way from Canada to Nigeria ... is that amazing or what?! We were married in Alabama and traveled back to Nigeria 3 weeks later ... but that is another story.

Thus began my trek down the path God had chosen. It was certainly not one I could see ahead of me, but God sees so much farther than we ever could, and He knows so much more than we ever will! I put HIS kingdom first, and He did the rest!

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11, KJV).

God’s plan for you will be different from mine ... but it will still be good ... and especially made for YOU!

Deputation is never easy, but it sure is better with a husband than trying to travel and take care of everything on your own ... at least it was for me. Trusting God to provide your every need can be scary, but He has ALWAYS proven Himself FAITHFUL!

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (I Thessalonians 5:24).
“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil”
(II Thessalonians 3:3).

From Nigeria to Ghana, from AIM work to Superintendent, Area Coordinator, Africa Aflame Coordinator, and Bible school developer. For every job God equipped us for and brought us through, He has always had a purpose and plan and He has kept us in His love and care.

Traveling all over North America and Canada, as well as most of the nations of Africa, and later through other continents around the globe, His hand of protection has been very real.

Raising our daughter in Africa, taking them to that far away land when they were seven weeks old, home schooling them in such a distant location ... none of these things have ever been outside of God’s protection and blessing, and His Word has remained true.

When we brought our girls to North America to attend Bible school ... and left them to go back to Africa, we entered a new phase of life. As we said goodbye to my dad (he went to be with Jesus in 1990); Jim’s parents (his mom died during our deputation for the second term of service in Ghana), then, my mother in 2007, the scene in our land of origin was changing too. The weather was cooling off, and the leaves were falling down.

What now? Where is God leading us? Now we had to let go ... hopefully with grace and the hope of His resurrection. Would He take care of our girls when we were so far away? Is this how our parents felt when we left them for regions unknown? God knew, and He was helping us still, as we clung to His Word ... and a few songs that burst forth without effort:

“His eye is on the sparrow ... and I know He watches me!”

“He didn’t bring us this far, just to leave us ... He didn’t build a home in us just to move away ... He didn’t pick us up to let us down.”

Then, sickness came ... first to me – diabetes became a part of life. In 2010, Jim was diagnosed with a neuro endocrine tumor in his pancreas. We had no idea where God would take us, but He brought us through ... safe in His hands. In the past two years, I have struggled to overcome stage three kidney failure, trusting that God has us both right in the palm of His hand. Winter is setting in ... or well on its way.

As we adjust to a brand new life in North America, after 28 years of living overseas, my touchstone verse STILL holds true ... it is HIM we trust and HE will decide what path we follow.

No matter the season, we have a purpose. No matter the season, God has a reason. No matter the season, GOD IS IN CONTROL!

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace”
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).