

My Time ~ or God's?

By Steve & Carol Ryerson

It's 6:00 a.m. The alarm goes off, all too early, it seems. I must have my quiet time with God ~ Ha! How do I concentrate on the Lord when I have so much facing me today? Yesterday's laundry did not get folded and the house did not get straightened up. The baby did not sleep well and the 7 year old dawdled all yesterday with his work. I mustn't let that happen again! I still haven't planned for the Sunday school lesson I need to teach Sunday.

Suddenly the phone rings. My mother has been taken to the hospital. I must go! But what do I do about all the work that needs to be done? We absolutely must get to that science experiment that we've been putting off! What am I to do?????

Have you ever felt that way? If so, you are certainly not alone. But what brings on those feelings of panic? Concerns about the things of daily life that must be done, perhaps? Could it be a matter of perspective? Could it be that we are trying to do things that God never intended for us to do during the current season of our lives?

It has been nearly a year since we came home from a speaking engagement and some meetings after nearly two weeks away. God spoke to me very clearly and told me to use my time wisely. What could that possibly mean? I knew something out of the ordinary must be coming up, but what was it? God surely knew and was giving me due warning.

Little did I know what the next twelve months would hold. Within just a day or two, life-changing events began to happen to us at a dizzying pace. My Dad had fallen. Though he was not hurt, the fall caused my parents to decide they needed to move into a situation where help would be close by all the time. Unable to pack, they required my help. I spent at least one day a week over the next month going to their city to pack up their possessions, returning home each time with a van full of treasures that they would not be able to keep in their new home.

During that month, God spoke to us about relocating. It was time for us to resign the church Steve was pastoring. But where were we to go? What about all these things I was bringing to our home from my parents? We needed to be throwing out things ourselves and preparing for a move to a destination known only to God.

With great concern for my Dad's health, we got them moved and mostly unpacked. Our fears were realized when my Dad ended up in the hospital just a week after their move. The next three months were a flurry of hospitalizations ending in my Dad's passing.

Realizing she needed to move to a smaller apartment, my Mother solicited my help in once again packing her belongings, again bringing a van load of treasures (and some not-so-treasures) home with each trip. After a two month wait, the desired apartment became available and we moved her, getting her unpacked once again.

Meanwhile, God had shown us where we were to move, we had done some fix-up on our home in preparation for selling it, and we had finally gotten it on the market.

Oh, did I mention our first grandbaby was born in a distant state and we went to see him? We also visited the city that would become our new home and saw God work a great miracle in the sale of our old home and the purchase of a new one.

Things seemed to be falling into line ~ God was bringing things together, and we would soon get back to "normal."

A middle-of-the-night phone call shattered that illusion as we learned my Mother had been taken

to the hospital. I made an emergency trip to the city where she was. Little did I know that I would spend 17 days of that month by her bedside in the hospital. A few days with her, then home to pack; a few more days with her, then back home to pack. At the end of the month, in the midst of her hospitalization, we loaded up our rented trucks and with heavy hearts left the state with her still in the hospital.

Meanwhile a glitch had come up. We could not close on our new house and move in, but the Lord was arranging another closing. Word of my Mother's worsening condition sent me back to my home state where I spent the last 6 days of my Mother's life at her bedside. We then went through the funeral and the cleaning out of her apartment ~ yes, packing up more of those precious possessions one last time and taking many of them with me.

As I write this, we have closed on our new home and are doing some required repairs before moving in. Things seem to be settling down. We are unpacking, although I am sitting here typing among piles of stuff that have not yet found a home.

I just said it again, "settling down." "getting back to normal."

But what do those phrases mean? You would probably look at me and say, "Why, in six months, you have lost both of your parents, become a grandparent, relocated to another state (8 hours away), begun working in a new church, and Steve has started a new job, not to mention all the caring for your parents and moving them over the months prior to that." Many people have mentioned that on the lists of high stress producers, we have experienced several of them in a very short period of time. We need for things to get back to "normal."

What is "normal?" Does it mean having things go smoothly with no surprises? Not having anything go "wrong" in our schedules?

I have definitely longed for days and weeks like that. I have had days when I would get up knowing that the only totally sure rock in my life was my Lord Jesus Christ. Everything else in our world seemed to be reeling.

In the way most of us view life, we might think that life was spinning out of control. But God gives us His priorities in various Scripture passages, two of which are the following:

Exodus 20:12 ~ Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Philippians 2:4 ~ look out for each other's interests and not just for your own. (CJB)

Sometimes we live in our own little world, caring only for our immediate family. And caring for them is vital. If you homeschool, you know the scriptures that speak of training our children 24/7. There is no need for us to repeat those passages here.

Yet, do we become so involved in our routine with our children and we neglect the needs around us? We plug our ears to the cries of our extended family and close friends who need us?

I know you can look at us and say, "Well, your children are adults, so it is easy for you to take care of other people." That is true. Yet the call in Scripture is there for all of us, not just those of us who are older.

We have several thoughts to offer.

Understand that none of the things which happen in your life come as a surprise to Jesus. That middle-of-the-night emergency phone call was not an emergency to Him. Jesus knew that phone call would come even before I was born. How can we train our children to care about the needs of others if we are unwilling to lay aside the math and science for a few days to help those in need? That is part of the training of our children.

Become involved in a true community of believers who live totally according to Scripture. You will find people who are ready to step in and help when the need arises.

How did I manage to get packed for a major relocation while spending most of the time with my Mother in the hospital? It was only with the help of very dear friends who traveled a great distance armed with boxes, packing, tape, and a delicious lunch. They were packing those items I had not had time to touch even as the men were loading the truck.

As we arrived at our new location, unable to move in, more very dear friends opened their home to us and allowed us to live with them for nearly two months.

Our lives now seem to be regaining some semblance of order. Yet, we don't look upon the last year as "unnatural." The events we have experienced were exactly what God had planned for us. They were "normal" for that year.

It is normal for there to be needs in the lives of our brothers and sisters. We must be ready to help them in their needs even as we allow them to help us in ours.

Follow God's leading. Many times in our lives we have had God tell us to do something we had not planned to do until later. We would obey even though we did not understand, only to have God bring something else into our lives at the exact time we had planned to do the first thing.

Stay close to Jesus. Commune with Him. Study His Word. If you are being faithful to Him, understand that the things you are facing are ordered by Him. They are your "normal" for this time. Thank Him for His faithfulness to you and trust Him to lead you through those difficult times.