Through Darkness, Light

Reflection by Brenton Reading, Shawnee, KS

When I realized my long anticipated little girl would be developmentally delayed, I was devastated. Not knowing the severity of her delay but recognizing hints that she may never walk, talk, or live to see her second decade, caused the looming challenges and vanishing dreams to threaten hope and strip away faith.

At the time, the only prayer I could muster was a furious “No!” which left me spent and exhausted with a sense of silent absence. In that exhausted stillness I felt a turning from no to something beyond—a kind of surrender to the reality of the moment and then a question. “Why?”

In turning from “No!” to “Why?” my own visceral groan transcended the unknown and split the darkness with a glimmer of light on the horizon. It dawned on me that the dark void was not the end of faith but a temporary space with potential for divine renewal.

The dawn revealed life’s dark moments in new light. Rather than looking back with gratefulness that I never slipped down one of many proverbial slippery slopes into spiritual oblivion, I realized I had already slid headlong into valleys of the shadow of death and yet I need fear no evil because when I make my bed in the depths even there God’s hand will guide me. Each stripping away of the wide and familiar path of faith created space to discover a narrow way winding to new dawns and breathtaking perspectives on once
familiar vistas.

Just as the generations of life are cyclical and at times bumpy, spirituality is similar. The ever changing journey of faith opens the possibility for circling back to know each familiar place and loved one again as if for the first time.

My daughter is now four years old. She walks and even communicates in her own way. She’s not where my boys are, even when they were her age. When I come home she doesn’t scream, “Daddy!” and throw herself into my arms as the boys still often do. Instead, when she realizes I am home she toddles over and stretches out her hand. Grasping my finger trustingly she leads me to a toy she would like to play with, a gate she wants to go through, or stairs she would like to ascend. Without a word she communicates her desire and we travel together to play.

I don’t know what the next stage of life holds for her or me; but, I do know that while this stage is not perfect it is very good. I take comfort in the thought that the Word became flesh to journey with us on our tortuous, winding paths and point us toward a hopeful future. I find that hope encapsulated in one word which reaches out in trust, fills each stage with meaning, calls us to keep going, and drives out all fear... love.

Recalibrate

1. Do you recall a time when life’s circumstances threatened your faith?
2. What helped you to continue your journey of faith?
3. How can a recognition that we are all at different places in our faith and progressing in different ways help us to treat one another with more compassion and love?

Feel free to send any thoughts or comments to Brenton Reading.