

Today marks the one-year anniversary since I had my knee replacement surgery. When I think back to a trip I took to California just prior to my surgery, my dear friend and I enjoyed soaking in the jacuzzi in her back yard. It felt wonderful, and I was completely relaxed. However, when I went to lay down to sleep that night, my knee felt as if it had been pierced with a spear, and the pain was nearly unbearable. That kind of pain is very hard to overcome, I can assure you. As I sit here now, I still experience different levels of pain, but nothing like after the jacuzzi.

Before I left for my trip to Ireland last week, I had been working on moving things around at home and even painted my bedroom walls. I know when I was working around the house, the endless running up and down my stairs took its toll on my knee. While in Ireland, my twenty-year-old brain kept pushing my nearly sixty-year-old body to keep walking, keep shopping, to boldly climb the hills and rocks to be able to stand on the slippery, hexagon-shaped rocks to get that ideal photo at Giant's Causeway. I felt no shame in taking the bus back up the hill that I had bravely walked down just minutes before. After each day's excursion, I would all but crawl to my hotel room door and use my last bursts of energy to take off my shoes, wash and change clothes, only to die in my blessed hotel bed.

It was time to return home this past Saturday. After packing up, I brought my suitcases and bags with me downstairs, and enjoyed my last hotel breakfast before checking out. The ride to the airport went well, and I had plenty of time to shop a bit more and ate a lovely lunch before boarding my plane. To all of our dismay, the plane remained on the tarmac for at least forty-five minutes, as the pilot continued to inform us that there were 'others' on whom we were waiting to make their connecting flights. Logically, I'm thinking, "Won't this hinder my connecting flight when we get back to the states?"

As it turned out, many of us poor Americans found ourselves stranded in Chicago O'Hare airport for a full night, because we missed our connecting flights. All I could think about was getting home to my very own bed, yet there I stood as the attendant handed me my alternate flight, due to leave the next morning at 8:20 AM. My flesh wanted to fuss and moan about how tired I was, but what was the point? For a split second I thought about getting a hotel nearby, but it was now 9:00 in the evening. I had already spent a fortune, and I was exhausted, so I became an airport nomad for a few hours more. I embraced a little bit of that pain when I found a machine that massages your feet while you wait. That was probably the best \$5.00 I have ever spent! I finally made it home by noon on Sunday. Home never looked so good.

I have described in some detail the physical pain I have experienced, mainly due to my left knee replacement. I hope you found the humor that I intended to convey while sharing these few recent events. One kind of pain that isn't as easy to embrace, but oh, so necessary, is that of a broken heart. I had a glorious week in Ireland, truly. But the purpose of this trip was not only to visit what I believe to be one of the most beautiful places in God's creation, but I was on a quest to find courage and peace as well. I continue to seek courage to let God do with my life what he will, no matter the cost to me. And I pray for the peace that will come as I follow his lead.

It can be a hard thing to revel in the beauty all around, only to find yourself fighting back tears as a distant memory is brought to the surface. Certain sounds or smells emit painful thoughts that you thought had been long gone, and you have to pray for understanding once again. Just yesterday, I enjoyed the peace and quiet of my empty house after sending the boys off to school. I had longed for a hot bath since before I left for Ireland. I was laying under the blanket of hot water and bubbles when out of nowhere, I began sobbing because I was struck with the fact that on Friday, my ex-husband would be celebrating his one-year anniversary of being married to the woman he had moved in with before we were even divorced. That kind of pain is hard to embrace.

But embrace it, I did. Embrace it, I will. Embrace it, I will continue to do so. Cleansing tears are good for the soul, and our Heavenly Father holds each one of our tears, because they are special. I don't know how people get through their pain without the love of Christ. Before I became a child of God, my pain was masked by alcohol, food, stuff, and anything that would divert my attention away from the pain. Hiding the pain doesn't make it go away. It only builds and builds until you either hurt yourself or someone else. Jesus is the answer, my friends. He pleads with you to give him your burdens because he can handle them. Embrace your pain and give it to him. He will heal your heart.

Blessings,

Lisa Jo

