

"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?
To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22 NIV

I made a few notes to myself last week, intending to write my blog based on the scripture above, and how it applied to my state of mind at the time. As I often do these days, I was feeling melancholy, since what would have been my thirty-fourth wedding anniversary came and went without a blip. As much as I know I had to do something to stir the water of a relationship that had grown so very stagnant, I still grieve because I didn't want to fail in my marriage. I wanted to be obedient to God, and fight for my marriage. I had sacrificed much in the name of that obedience, but I was willing. I can't explain why my ex-husband chose to stop trying. I know I hurt him with my brutal honesty about my being unhappy. I just wanted to fix what felt broken. Oh well. It's all in the past now.

The boys and I are settling into our new life, living with my oldest son. It is strange, being sixty years old, living in one of the spare bedrooms of my son's house! Truly, he has given me free reign to do as I like with decorating and we have done much to fix the things that needed to be fixed. I love shopping to buy things that make the house feel like a home. God knew he and I needed each other during this time, and I am so grateful. He is the authoritative voice that these young boys need in their lives. It's hard to be a grandma that wants to spoil, but also a mom that has to make the hard decisions and make them do things they don't want to do. Unfortunately, the grandma in me comes out more often, so I'm thankful that my son has stepped in, being the one who enforces the rules.

My son has gone through a difficult time recently, and I do understand the unfathomable pain that he has experienced. He has handled his healing with much more grace than I have. Recent events have drawn him closer to God in such a real way that it is an answered prayer above and beyond what I could have hoped for. He has abstained from alcohol completely. He has been diligent in taking his daily walk, working out with weights, and reading books and scripture, keeping his mind, soul, and body in prime condition. Bless him, he just started working with a new company, making more money, all while trying to navigate through his own personal hell. His obedience to God and himself is a living testimony.

On the flip side, me, his mom, still feels like a mess. Aside from my pity party last week over my marital failure, I am having trouble getting motivated to do much of anything, other than my job and decorating the house. I try to tell myself that moving from the place that was my home for over twenty years is worthy of a bit of sadness. Yeah, I'll give myself that one. Perhaps I'm just a wimp, but I imagine anyone who has had knee replacement surgery would echo the sentiment that your knee/leg is never the same after surgery like that. I can't get over the fact that there is a foreign object in my leg and I'm aware of it every single day. With that, I don't walk like I should. Most of my walking is when I walk my little dog, Lucky. And then there's the woman in me that wishes she was free to do as she wished, not having to raise two boys on the verge of puberty (God help me), wishing for a nice dinner out with a kind man who doesn't have more baggage than I do.

By the end of my workday, I don't seem to have anything left, so my first thought is to buy dinner out, simply so I don't have to cook. I confess, I was hoping my son would cook every day because he loves to cook and he's so good at it. Now that he has his new job, that is a lost dream. Again, referring back to last week, as I was heading out to buy dinner, my son mentioned to me that maybe I would feel better if I tried to eat better and get more exercise. For a second, it was like he was the parent and I was a teenager again, and I felt ashamed for not doing as I knew I should. I never have been good at making my own self-care, physically speaking, a priority.

Some days, I feel so strong and believe I could conquer the world. I try to spend my time with God in the mornings, and his name is on my lips throughout the day. When I walk Lucky, I love to just stand still and turn my face toward the sun to feel its warmth on my face. This is worship to me. I feel wonderful in that moment, and I cherish it. I don't run marathons, and I am a sucker for bread and pasta, but I love fresh fruit and vegetables too. Even Solomon, in all his wisdom, deduced that there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 8:15 NIV)

When the prophet Samuel spoke the words to King Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice", it was because the king had disobeyed God's command. In his arrogance, he thought that if he offered up a ritual sacrifice to God, his sin of disobedience would be overlooked. Instead, God let him know through the prophet that he would no longer be king over Israel. There is nothing that can be hidden from God. Nothing.

My act of worship, of obedience, is complete honesty. I try to be honest in word and deed, and I place my character on the altar of sacrifice. God never has demanded perfection, he only wants complete devotion, with all my heart. I place each and every day at God's feet. He knows before I wake whether or not I will succeed in my endeavors. Perhaps work will be overwhelming and I don't accomplish all that I had hoped. Perhaps a memory comes to the surface and my heart aches. Often, I feel completely alone, so I place my hurting in God's hands. This is being real, and I believe giving to God our real feelings, our real selves, is to obey him. Your act of obedience and worship may look different than mine, but if it is given to God with a pure heart, even one that is sometimes broken, he will most certainly bless you.

Blessings,

Lisa Jo

