

My goodness, it has been some kind of month for this woman. If you follow my blogs, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart if you do, you'll know I have been quiet for the month of October. Not by my choice, I can assure you. Between the spiking fever and cold chills and the severe aching in my joints, it was enough to make me finally see a doctor. They did a covid test on me, which came out negative, but I'm not so sure it was accurate. What started out as a rough first week turned into a month of various illnesses, including the loss of my voice, and living in bed whenever I didn't have to be working at my job. I visited the doctor again yesterday, and praise God, I believe I am finally on the mend.

Not only has my physical body been attacked, but I believe the enemy has been hard at work, trying to bring me down as far as possible. You see, even in my feeling poorly this month, God gave me a victory of which I will forever be grateful. After a long conversation with my grown son, all it took was a simple question from him to help me find an answer I have been seeking all my life. He asked, "Mom, why do you keep carrying this pain around with you?" I imagine a leather satchel, and over the years I have been accumulating these enormous stones, placing them in my bag of pain. The weight of the bag grew heavier and heavier, until finally something had to give.

In my Christian walk, I have heard the sermons and sang the songs about giving it all to Jesus. I truly thought I had let the things of the past go, but for the first time, I realized that wasn't the case. The things that broke my heart were still breaking my heart. A song or a movie, or something unexpected would conjure up the pain all over again, ripping the wound open, unable to heal properly. My dear friend Lori keeps telling me it's time to stop reopening the wounds and start tending the scars. Wiser words were never spoken.

At first, I was imagining myself taking those stones out of my bag, dropping them on the ground. The lighter weight felt good. Yeah, it felt really good to let those things go, to let them remain in the past. They could no longer hurt me. Many days I would wake this month, wondering if the heavy weight had returned. It hadn't. So I found myself taking more stones out of my satchel, leaving them behind. The steps in my heart were definitely lighter, until I finally decided to drop the satchel altogether, and leave it all behind me.

I barely felt good enough to do my morning scripture reading. Usually I would get by with reading my morning devotions from Pastor Rick Warren. I cannot explain it, but I felt God's presence with me all this time. He knew I was unwell, but he kept watch over me each and every day. Then the enemy hit me between the eyes. I have shared in the past how I have stepped out in faith so many times, and God has been there to care for me and the boys, each and every time. Between my achiness and lack of sleep, mixed in with whatever medicines I was taking, I became overwhelmed with doubt and fear, forgetting in an instant all that God had done for me, for us. We all know God is not the author of fear, so that should have been my first clue. In a moment, I was doubting every decision I had made, that I was about to make, what would we do if this or that happened? I was in full panic mode. Again, I returned to a place of peace through the encouragement of my dear friend, Lori, and I know I spoke the words, "Get behind me, Satan!" I remembered again how good our God is, and I knew all would be well.

Ironically, it wasn't until this last week that I lost my ability to speak. I didn't realize how sick I was until I found out that I was on the verge of pneumonia, so I am even more grateful to be feeling better. I have no doubt my forced silence was another lesson in my needing to learn to listen better. I found myself watching people more closely. Appreciating the beauty of a perfectly blue sky, with the ever-changing color of the leaves in the trees, falling, no dancing to the ground. I am once again filled with awe of my Lord. My little dog and I are spending this weekend away in a little cabin by the water. We spent hours today, just sitting on the porch and taking it all in. The great Artist really showed off for me today, and I love him for it.

My friends, I look forward to the next chapter, 'weight-free' for the first time in my life. Of course, life brings setbacks, but that is what Jesus is here for. He's got me, and I have him. I have a few minor plans in the works, but I am not afraid. In my quietness, I am learning to enjoy my own company. I know I have a purpose, and the time I have left will be spent

finding God's purpose for my life. I pray that if you're carrying a bag of stones, please let it, let them go. It isn't worth the time you have wasted. I know this personally.

May God bless you and keep you safe. May his face shine upon you and give you peace all the days of your life.

Blessings,

Lisa Jo

