

# A Year of Transition

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Seventeen months ago, we were at a crossroads in our life and ministry. We had spent nine years in Quebec, and, by no choice of our own, it was over. Due to new immigration laws, it was impossible to continue ministering in Quebec.

We had no idea what we would do next. We cried, we prayed, and we waited. Never in a million years could we have imagined what was to come. After a roller coaster of events and emotions, we headed to Buffalo, New York, to join the church planting team there. It was a time of sad goodbyes and excited hellos for our family.

What I had not counted on was how difficult the transition would be. We were going to be ministering with friends. Piece of cake, right? But you see, for the nine years we ministered in Quebec and the two years before that when we were traveling to raise our support, it was just Danny, the kids, and I. We were a team of five,

then six, then seven, and then eight. We have a big family! Now, we were part of a team with new dynamics and new leadership, and a bit of reverse culture shock. Don't get me wrong; I love our team. It's just that everything in my life



was suddenly different.

Our second oldest daughter married and moved to the other side of the country; we moved from one country to another; and literally everything in my life was changing at a rapid pace. I was having to learn a new leadership dynamic; I wasn't even sure what my place was in the new ministry.

My husband was going into the office every morning instead of working from home, and he was no longer my "boss." I no longer knew what was expected

of me because my situation was new and different. Added to this was the fact that this situation was temporary because we planned to eventually break off from this team and begin a second campus of the church. I felt like I was floundering.

However, God, in His faithfulness, led me through a year of learning, growing, and changing. I learned that God's promises are not dependent on my location, and neither should be my faithfulness to Him.

Here are some things I learned:



## God Had Not Changed.

Scripture tells us in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Though people change and circumstances change, we can rest assured that Jesus never changes. The same God who provided for us in unfathomable ways in Quebec went before us in the details of our move to Buffalo.

We had only a few days to find a house, with only a few prospects. One of the homes we put on our list had a beautiful back yard and absolutely no pictures of the inside. We had

zero expectations when we pulled into the driveway. The previous house (that we thought might be 'the one') was AWFUL. I mean, I can't even describe to you what a disappointment that house was. The moment we walked into this house, with the beautiful back yard, we fell in love. It was perfect for our needs and had been recently discounted! We put in an offer and found out another offer had already been accepted. We were disappointed, but knew there was still hope.

After some ups and downs

and waiting out a contingency, our Christian realtor called us shouting that we had gotten the house. He had prayed with us and for us and was just as excited as we were. God pro-

vided once again. He didn't care about us more when we were in a foreign country than He did now that we were moving back Stateside. His care and provision for us never changed.

Describe a time when your life took an unexpected turn and God proved Himself to you.



## God Never Leaves Me Alone

God was still going to be with me wherever I was because He never leaves me alone. Let's look at some examples of God's presence in the lives of His people.

Joshua 1:5 says: "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you." When Joshua faced the monumental task of going against the Canaanites, God reminded him he would not be alone. The jobs we face may not be as grand as conquering an entire nation. Still, our fears and

insecurities about our tasks are every bit as important to God, and He promises to be with us every step of the way.

Isaiah 41:10 says: "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." When God chose Israel to be His servants and do His will, He did not leave them to their own devices. He promised to be with them, to give them strength, to help them, and to uphold them. He is not a God of unreasonable expectations.

Jeremiah 1:9 says, "Then

the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.'" When God told Jeremiah He had a job for him to do, Jeremiah's response was to remind God he was young. God then reminded Jeremiah under whose authority he was to act, the protection God would provide, and the source of the message he was to deliver.

In a very personal act, the "Lord put out his hand and touched" Jeremiah's mouth. God is a personal God who does not give us a job to do because of how good we are going to be at it. He assigns us a task to do and gives us the tools to do it; our job is to humble ourselves before Him and rely on His

strength rather than our own.

God didn't stay behind in Quebec while we moved to Buffalo. He made the trip with me and has walked beside me through every step of this transition. How often do we forget that He knows our fears, pain, frustration, insecurities, and desires? He doesn't push us into situations outside of our comfort zone to see us squirm and suffer. His purpose is always for our good and His glory. I have often seen the phrase "God never gives us more than we can handle." That is simply not true. God never gives us more than HE can handle. To thrive in these uncomfortable situations, we must humble ourselves before God and submit to His plan. We must be ALL IN.

**Has God ever put you in a situation you thought you couldn't handle? How did He help you? What was the outcome?**



## **God's Plan Had Not Changed.**

Psalm 139 tells us God formed us in our mother's womb, and verses 15-16 go on to say, "My frame was not hid-

den from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed

substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." God has a plan for each of us and is not surprised by the "curve balls" thrown at us. We may be shocked and overwhelmed, but He already knew what was coming and had a plan for us.

That makes Psalm 139:17 special to me: "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" The fact that He knows the things which will knock me off my feet with surprise and is there to pick me up and point me in the right direction is just one more aspect of His bound-

less love for me.

My heartbeat is having people in my home and feeding them. I have what Danny affectionately calls my "cookie ministry." In Quebec, I made homemade chocolate chip cookies for neighbors whose birthdays I knew, neighbors who helped us in some way, and those neighbors who had recently returned from wintering in Florida. Here in Buffalo, I have had the opportunity to open my home to many. I have been able to feed them, love them, and mentor them. They have even given me the nickname, "Mama Dawn." God continues to use our home and my love of cooking to minister to those around us.

**What is God's plan for you? Are you being obedient in following His plan? If you don't know what His plan is, spend time fasting and praying, seeking His direction.**



## **God's Expectations Have Not Changed.**

### ***PROCLAIM***

The great commission is truly clear to all of us. Mark 16:15 says: "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole

creation" (ESV). The imperative given here is to *proclaim*. Not just proclaim in only the terrible places or to the especially evil people, but to the whole creation.

It is easy to think that after being in another country, we

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can't possibly be needed as much in the United States where there are so many churches.

However, that is simply not the case. Acts 1:8 instructs us to be witnesses "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Our call is to take part in spreading the Gospel to every part of the world. No one location is more important than another.

### **MAKE DISCIPLES**

The command does not stop at proclaiming. Matthew 28:19 tells us that as we are going, we are then to make disciples. That does not mean we tell

them about Jesus, lead them in prayer, and leave them on their own to figure it out. Our task is an ongoing one.


A *disciple* is, by definition, a learner, and to learn, one must be taught. We can do this through direct instructional teaching and by example. Titus 2 reminds us we are to "teach what accords with sound doctrine" (verse 1). It goes on to mention the older men and women are to be examples in their way of life and "teach what is good."

As women, it tells us in verses 4-5 to "train the young women to love their husbands and children, be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."

As you can see, no matter where we are called to serve, the people may look, sound, and act differently, but the task is the same. God has not changed; He has never left me alone; His plan has not changed; His expectations have not changed.

**How are you meeting God's expectations of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples? Do you ask God to give you opportunities to share the gospel every day? Are you mentoring someone? Is someone mentoring you?**



In this year of transition, God has given me friends who have encouraged me and held me up in prayer as I acclimated to a new place and leadership structure, a pastoral staff who regularly challenges us in spiritual growth through sermons and teaching, young ladies to mentor and love, and a heart burning with love for the people of my new hometown. God is faithful and deserves my faithfulness and so much more. 

**About the Writer:** Dawn Elliott has been married to Danny for 25 years, is a mother of six, mother-in-law to two, and Memaw to twins (Daisy and Theodore). She is also a homeschool mom and is on the church-planting team in Buffalo, New York.



  
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