

....back after four years!!!!

Given the right motivation, my kids will do anything! My eldest, who is now 10, has just sidled up to me and asked if he can play extra computer instead of having a bedtime story! (Our kids are only allowed $\frac{1}{2}$ hour computer time each a day and they've had it!). I think about it. If he gets extra time, they will all want extra time...and it's only an hour till bedtime and the house is a mess! My husband's away for the day, which is unusual on a Saturday. The kids have been brilliant - organising and playing 'fairs' most of the day - setting up 'stalls' with unwanted toys and McDonald's junk, buying things from each other, conducting raffles and 'Guess how many sweets are in the jar' type competitions!! They have tidied up most of their toys but there are still sweet wrappers, raffle tickets and other bits and pieces all over the floor!

So...back to the extra computer time...I say, 'Yes! You can all have 15 mins extra each (I have 4 kids!) if you completely tidy and vacuum the living room and hall.' The excitement!! Off to work they go! All four of them tidying and vacuuming! Ten minutes and it's all done - joyfully and eagerly. They're now settling down to their extra computer time. I've got some quiet to myself, a clean living room....and I don't even have to read bedtime stories tonight!! And my kids think they have the better end of the bargain!

(I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions from this tale! Let's just say it sure pays to find out what motivates your kids!)

Feeling tired, loads to do? When the children are asleep, put some worship music on, lie down and relax. Difficult to do? I know! Make yourself! Just stop. Let God quiet you in his love.

Zephaniah 3:17 says, 'The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save, He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with his love, He will rejoice over you with singing.'

Imagine God singing! Over you! Rejoicing! Receive that kind of love. Let it quiet you. Let God minister to you through the music. (It doesn't matter if you fall asleep!)

'Bring me a.....' game!

A game that all my kids enjoy...and you can just sit still and watch them running around! It can be a race or just for fun. Simply say, 'Bring me something blue!' Your kids all run off and each find something blue to bring you. When everyone has brought you an item, ask them to bring you something else! Some ideas...'Bring me something....big, tiny, smelly, red, made of paper/plastic/wood, round, square, old, new, dead, alive, soft...' Or, 'Bring me a....brown leaf, yellow flower, bit of rubbish, a black sock, an insect...,' depending of course if you're inside or outside. My kids love playing this at the park. For me, it's a great game when I'm tired and my kids want me to do something with them! You will of course end up with a huge pile of items around you! To get rid of the pile, you can reverse the game half way through and say, 'Put back something that is blue, old, square...!'

Moving from the desert.....to a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs (Deut 8:7)

Part 1 (written in Oct 2000 when I had two children - a 2 yr old and an 8 month old - and life was a challenge!)

I feel I'm on a journey! The last few years have not been easy. They have been desert times in many ways. But these last few months God has been moving me on. I can turn round and still see desert; I'm at its edge. But I am also on the edge of a river. Something in my spirit tells me I will be crossing the river soon. There is 'a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs...' (Deut 8:7) ahead of me. God has a place of refreshing and blessing, life and inheritance for me, a place where I can drink 'water from the rain of heaven...' (Deut 11:11) Sound good? Want to come?

.....turn the page!

('Moving from the desert.....to a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs' Part 1 cont.)

The only book of the Bible I've been able to get into these last months is Deuteronomy. There seem to be many parallels between the Israelite's journey from the desert to the Promised Land and what I have been experiencing. I hope what I share below encourages you, whatever stage you are at, that God has wonderful things for us- His heart is to bless and do us good. We don't have to stay in the desert forever!

The Journey

Stage 1 The Desert Years (read Deut 2:1-23)

...Spiritual dryness...feeling I don't know the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit very well anymore...lack of friendship, fellowship & encouragement...loss of vision...nothing much happening in terms of ministry - what does is a struggle and wearying...no life in me to overflow to others.....these are some of the things that have characterized my desert times.

Like the Israelites in the desert, I feel I have been wandering around in the sand for a long time! I am desperate for better things. It is easy to look back to past spiritual highs, to times when I was used much by God, and was flowing in things of his Spirit. Likewise, the Israelites found it easy to look back to the 'good times' in Egypt! (Num 11:5)

It sometimes seems an overwhelming task to 'get back' to that place of intimacy with Jesus, of having the Word alive and overflowing in me again, when right now I can't even find verses in the Bible anymore. It feels like I should go back to Sunday school! Where do I begin? It's like when the Israelites looked ahead into the Promised Land. All they could see were the giants and the fortified cities (Deut 1:28). An overwhelming task. They didn't know where to start, so they didn't. Sound familiar?

So.....why the desert?

'And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these 40 years in the wilderness, **to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart**, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, **allowed you to hunger**, and fed you with manna which you did not know, **that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.**' Deut 8:2-3

There's not much in the desert - there's no food; and there's no one to fight. Even when the Israelites did encounter the descendants of Esau, the Moabites, and the people of Ammon, they were not permitted to do battle. God told them 'do not harass them or meddle with them' (Deut 2:4-19)

.....My desert experience has been similar. I've not had much spiritual food; and there's not been much action!

The Israelites had to stay in the desert until 'all the men of war' had died (Deut 2:14-16). That took 38 years! Hopefully, we don't have to stay in the desert that long, but maybe we do have to stay there long enough for all our own strength to die. Probably different things have to die for different ones of us. Things that have previously been strength to me (friends, fellowship, good quiet times, giftings) have largely disappeared from my life. A loss of identity really. Deut 8:2-3 says that God humbles us to know what's in our hearts. When everything else is gone, all that is left is what's in our hearts. I have been left desperate for change. I am hungry for the reality of Jesus. God has allowed me to hunger. He wants me hungry for Him. I know I cannot survive the way I have been much longer. I really know now that I cannot live on 'bread alone'. I must have the fresh life of Jesus in me - the word that 'proceeds from the mouth of the Lord'.

Somaybe that's why I've been allowed this desert time....

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