

## “Covered in Purple Flowers” May 2, 2010

So...patience and trust were engaged in an ultimate game of tug of war. Can you get a good mental image of that? This great thick, long rope fraught with tension...two great teams pulling with all their might. On one side trust...pull, pull, pull. On the other side patience, hang in there, put your back into it, dig low. Patience...trust...that would be an epic struggle wouldn't it? Which one would prevail?

*Patience:* quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence: an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.

*Trust:* Reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence. Confident expectation of something; hope.

Now the way I've framed this, it rather appears as if these two ideals, patience and trust, are opposites. In reality though, surely they must be cousins because they share some of the same qualities, *but*...they aren't the same. They are just enough different. You could go crazy, like I have, in over-analyzing them. Can you have one without the other? Trust without patience? Patience without trust? Are you a patient person? Are you a trusting person? What makes you impatient? In whom or what do you place trust?

Let me tell you where all this is coming from...a few weeks ago I was in a meeting and we were talking about some exciting new opportunities, but alongside the opportunities came a lot of uncertainty and risk. To a certain degree anytime you embark on any new adventure, there is uncertainty and risk. And for that matter, every day of our life there is uncertainty and risk—each new day holds opportunity and hope, but also risk and uncertainty. Let me just tell you...I do risk very well, but I don't do uncertainty very well at all. But isn't it times like these...exactly these times that we are supposed to rely on our patience and trust? It's often times like these that

we might here Let go and let God. *Let Go and let God.* Well, that sounds good in theory. Let Go and let God, but really...what *does* that mean? You mean you want ME...to let go, and let GOD. Let God...do what exactly?

As I was processing this, I came across the little story that really resonated with me...it was a woman recalling her experience as a little girl hearing this from her mother. She said..."As a child growing up, whenever she was worried about something, her mother use to always say, "Girl, don't worry about it. Just let go and let God." She said, "As a kid, I didn't really understand what she meant. Let go and let God do *what*? Let God worry about it? Naw, I couldn't do that. I couldn't trust that God would worry about it as much as I would. I knew God had tons of other people to worry about too, so I figured my "worry" wouldn't get the amount of attention that it needed. So, I continued to worry. How could you just "let it go" as Mom suggested? If it was something I had to worry about, I had to worry about it, right?"

How many of us can really identify with that? If it is something that important in our life, then we need to be in charge, to control it, to manage every variable...right. That just makes sense...right? Well, it occurs to me that this is the heart of the struggle between *trust* and *patience*. If I had a nickel for every time I held on and let Stan, umm, mmm, mmm. I don't know if you caught that one...Hold on and let Stan...that's kind of the opposite of Let Go and Let God. A lot of us are genius at holding on to every little thing so tightly until there is nothing left for us anyway. We are so intent on getting what we want, when we want it, and on our timetable, we have crowded out friends, families, possibilities...and ultimately...crowded out God.

What would happen, I wonder, if we started with God? More specifically, what would happen if we started by *us* being patient...and *us* trusting God. This, I think, is Letting Go and Letting God...patience, trust...God. I want to fully acknowledge how really scary that is. It is the ultimate expression of vulnerability—we have reversed the equation we know and trust. In

Letting Go and Letting God, we are putting God first, and us last. It's counterintuitive, and it is how Jesus teaches. Jesus had spent a lot of time with his Disciples and other followers being pretty straightforward in his manner, but somehow they just weren't getting it. So he began teaching by using parables. In the midst of this epic struggle between patience and trust, I stumbled across these stories, these parables Jesus was using to shake up his Disciples and followers. They come from Matthew, Chapter 13, let me share them...

Another story. "God's reign is like a pine nut that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge pine tree, and eagles build nests in it."

Another story. "God's reign is like yeast that a woman works into the dough for dozens of loaves of barley bread—and waits while the dough rises." All Jesus did that day was tell stories—a long storytelling afternoon. His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy: I will open my mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world's first day.

Here's the thing, interpreting these passages could go one of a thousand ways, but what I hear clearly is patience and trust. Patience that a tiny seed will some day become a mighty pine tree. Trust that this amazing process where water, yeast and wheat come together, that the dough will somehow rise, and there will be a loaf of bread. But what about US though? That's a tree and a loaf of bread. Perhaps we are willing to be patient and trust there, but what about us...what about putting that same kind of trust and patience into practice in our everyday lives?

Now, this takes me back to a modern day parable I hear recently...you recall I was telling you about this meeting where we were exploring all the exciting new possibilities? However, we...at least I...was holding on to...seeing only the risk and uncertainty. In hearing this, my friend Judy told us this story about purple flowers. As the story goes, she said that she and her husband moved into a house downtown about twelve years ago. It is a cool old house

with this elaborate entrance way that has this gated arbor, and the arbor was covered with wisteria. However, you'd have to know a thing or two about gardening or flowers to know that because it never bloomed. Well, they really wanted it to bloom so they did everything they could think of...they pruned it...they fertilized it...tied it back...let it go...consulted the local 4-H extension...they even had someone from HGTV come out (okay, I made that one up), but they did try everything they could think of and no blooms...no flowers. Then, a couple of weeks ago, on her way home from work, Judy pulled up to the house and much to her utter surprise...the arbor was covered in purple flowers...beautiful purple flowers.

Let me be bluntly honest—I'm looking at her like, uh, nice story, seriously, nice story, but we are talking about needing funding and resources for this project, and you're talking about flowers. THEN...after the long pause, and she could obviously measure the look on my face...she said..."We have to allow time for God to work in our lives?"

I carried that story and that thought with me for two full days before it really, I mean really sank in. And when it did, it was like a crowded intersection in Manhattan at rush hour...all of these seemingly competing ideas bearing down on one singular point at the same time...patience...trust...God. We have to allow time for God to work in our lives. Let Go and Let God. Hmm. Sometimes the most profound is the most simple. Each of us each day is dealt of set of circumstances that sometimes don't work out so well based on what we want—it doesn't fit our timetable. How will we respond? Do we have the patience to Let Go and Let God?