



I've heard the phrase "I just want things to go back to normal" many times the past few days. The things my children often complain about were now their heart's desire. The normalcy of early wake-up times, athletic practice, car lines, and school lunches were all gone. A full plate of activities that was now suddenly empty.

This past weekend, Stephen and I had the blessing of attending a marriage retreat. Over the course of the weekend, God continued to impress upon on my heart two verses. He said, "those are for you" and it would not be until four days later that I understood why.

Ephesians 3:17-18, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."

The word "roots" means different things to many folks. Whether it is physical tree roots, graying hair roots (much like mine lately ☺), or spiritual roots, the best roots are strong and healthy with the ability to sustain the most powerful storm.

My thoughts about spiritual roots immediately ran to two Godly sets of grandparents. One who lived on a farm and one who lived right next door to my house as I was growing up. Both would always make time for me when I would visit. One was often shucking corn outside, while the other was either listening to Christian radio or watching Wheel of Fortune, depending on the time of day. They one thing they both had in common was deep roots – legacies of abiding and dwelling in The Lord.

God brought me back to those verses in Ephesians four days later when He whispered, "What if I don't want things to go back to normal?" What if the root systems that are being developed today are shallow and weak? What if some need replanting? I thought of my three children and the type of roots Stephen and I are putting down. God completely laid this on my heart in regard to making intentional investments. I am sharing in the hopes that it may help encourage your family during these days, as our family reexamines our roots.

- **R - Redeem The Time**

As a busy mom of a 14, 10, and 5-year-old our house is often chaotic. Yesterday, one was playing basketball on the small hoop over his door, one was playing the guitar as she sang, and the other was teaching her class of twenty baby dolls. Many of her students were being placed on the stinky square due to their misbehaving ☺. I thought Lord, how will I manage this for multiple days? He impressed upon my heart, "Julie you will not have this day again. You it wisely." Have the conversation with your teenager you have been meaning to have. Play a game of basketball with your son that you never have the time to do. Join your five-year-old's imaginary class and just relax. Hope she doesn't send me to the stinky square! Strengthen those roots. Time is the best way to do it and you have a lot more of it now.

- **O - Order Your Steps**

Our kids are watching every comment and every step we make. Where do they lead- to the spiritual or to the superficial? My mom died before her dad. At his funeral I knew she would have wanted a particular verse shared. **Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by The Lord: and He delights in his way."**

Papa Carter's steps were always faithful. He read his Bible every day, loved his family, and never did he speak a harsh word about anyone. His steps were greatly affected by how he grew up. He would always walk behind me turning off the lights as I exited a room, ate every bit of food on his plate, and would never even think about missing a church service for any other reason than sickness. He would often talk about how the Great Depression/Recession affected him. His steps greatly impacted those who came behind him. Spend some time thinking about where you are leading those who are following closely behind.

- **O - Opt out of social media (even if just a little ☺)**

This one is hard for me. I love connecting with others. However, God impressed on my heart that strong roots are not formed during screen time. They are formed during conversations, laughter, even in those ugly moments of disagreements and frustration over e-learning, they are running deeper. His word to me was to not spend endless amounts of time watching what others are doing, while neglecting to connect with the ones under your roof.

- **T - Train the littles**

I have been reminded as I have attempted to homeschool that I really never was good at math and do not know how to navigate helping a five-year old and ten-year old very well. I find myself getting easily frustrated, which I never would with someone else's child. The Lord impressed - just as we have to teach math, reading, and sight words, we have to teach them how to read their bible, pray, and keep a journal. Let them learn from each other. Be intentional. Take this time to go deeper with them in how to hear from The Lord. Put this first each day!

- **S - Simple and Strong**

In these uncertain times, trust that God has your BEST in mind. He is a loving Father who desires to give your family so much more. Simple. Strong. Deep Roots. Avoid the constant comparisons about what others are doing. My prayer is that your family experience Ephesians 3:18-19 "...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know that this love surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

During this time, focus on what you can accomplish with your family. Dig deep. Go farther. Use this extra time to reexamine your roots.