

~ *A Season of Change* ~

Robin Lindberg, STBC Women's Ministry, Refine Fall Retreat, September 27-28, 2019

Yes! Fitbit just updated it's software, so now, not only can I see what percentage of the night I'm awake or in light, deep, or REM sleep, it also gives me a SCORE! But, as a somewhat competitive person myself, I'm looking to get a "winning" score! 83? What?! Where is this fictitious woman who can get a 100? I want to meet her?! (I am such a data nerd. If it can be measured or tracked, I'm all over it!)

I have heard speakers call the speaking slot after lunch "The Slot of Death" because you're well-fed, you're sitting still, you relax, you get sleepy, or nature calls... Well, I will try to keep us engaged and awake, but PLEASE do not worry you will offend me if you need to stand off to the side to stretch your legs or give your rear end some circulation, to refresh your coffee, to answer the call of nature... ;-)

I. Introduction

Well, as Robyn (and my skit-persona) said I am married to a WONDERFUL man, Doug, (whom I didn't always think was so wonderful--but more on that later--I promise, no husband-bashing--spoiler alert, *I* was the problem). We have two amazing young men for sons, who really do live in my house. Again, more on that later.

I know many of you closely, some of you more casually, some of you not at all. I want to give you a little background about myself and what brought me here, to this room, right now.

I was raised by a young, single, hard-working mom whom I adore. Sadly, my mom had been rejected by her church "family" when she became pregnant with me at 17 back in 1964. Her pain led to me being raised with no knowledge of the one true God of the Bible.

Jeremiah 2:13 says

for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.

As you can imagine, my years of living life for myself were filled with a multitude of attempts to satisfy my heart's hunger for value by digging my own cisterns that hold no life-giving water.

- ❖ If boys like me, I must have value, right?
- ❖ If I do what my mom says to go to college, get a job, become independent, that must prove that I have value. That'll be satisfying, right?
- ❖ Okay, if I'm an excellent teacher, that will do it.
- ❖ No, to be married. That's the ticket...
- ❖ NO, MOTHERHOOD. THAT'S what I was made for. I'm going to be the BEST mother and then I'll have value...

Well, no. Tragically no. Painfully no. Coming to the end of myself, no. My efforts were not ascribing to my heart the love, belonging, and worth I was so desperately thirsty for.

I was married and a mom myself with two young sons when God started wooing me, tugging on my heart and mind. He used sound Christian music and his Word to show me that I was a sinner. Who NEEDED a savior. And that was Jesus. And that he LOVED me.

I came to know and trust Jesus later in life, at 35. I consider it a great gift to have the perspective from an adult mind of my life before Christ and my life with Christ.

At the same time, I can only imagine the gift it would have been to grow up in a Christian home with parents who nurtured my faith.

I tell you this because I want to express my love for the two types of women we have here today.

I love those of you who have been born anew in Christ (whether in childhood or adulthood) You are my sisters. We share the same love, the same Lord...

...and I love those of you are here today who wouldn't consider yourself a Christian, or you're just not sure what it really means to follow Jesus Christ. I've been where you are.

I want you to know that I'm going to be talking from the perspective of a woman, who still feels like a little girl inside, who trusts her father, who sent his son, to save her. Because that's who I am!

And you know what? (snicker) It's not even about me. It never was. This is **His** story. His redemptive, restorative story. And I have the privilege of living my life as a valued (little) part of His story. And so do you.

It used to feel like I was going to be young forever. It's actually kind of surprising! The last time I was getting my eyes checked, the woman asked how old I was. I hesitated and chuckled and said 54. She was puzzled and asked if I just turned 54 and said, "Yes, I was just 24 the other day!" Time goes like that, doesn't it?

I have to say, though, that I have enjoyed every age better than the last. That is not to say that every year of my life has been better than every year before it. But I can say that I'm continually grateful what God has taught me and continues to teach me through joys and sorrows, highs and looooooows. It has not all been "pleasant". But all of it has been for my good and His glory. (Roman 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose.)

(Deep breath, smile.)

Ahh...fall. Isn't it such a lovely season? Even without deciduous trees with a riot of colors around us, fall is still a season of change! (It's only going to get up to the mid nineties instead of the low hundreds! Target puts out their pumpkin spice trails mix...:-)

Well, we're going to look at this season of life and the changes it brings in five areas of life. Your notes page has five sections for you to jot notes. Write down what strikes you, what you'd like to remember. Or just listen. :-)

These five areas are taken from a few verses that are likely very, very familiar to you. (As a teacher, I can't just stand up here and talk TO you. I have to interact WITH you, so if I ask a question, it's almost never rhetorical! I really do want to hear from you!)

If I say love the lord your Gooooooood... what comes to mind? Say it out loud. Right!

Moses was reminding the children of Israel of all they had been brought through as they were about to enter the land God had promised them.

4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[b] 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

This is known as the Shema for the Hebrew word translated “hear”. Recited twice daily, this reminded the nation of Israel that God, the one and only true God is to be loved.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record 3 times more, Jesus repeating this. The ruling religious leaders of Jesus’ day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were trying to “trap him in his talk”.

In Mark 12:28-31 we read:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ **There is no other commandment greater than these.**”

No commandment greater than THESE? (Even in the fall of life? ;-) Well, let’s dive in!

Hebrew and Greek scholars will hopefully forgive me for imperfectly correlating the words as follows:

We’ll look at “Love the Lord your God with all your...”

- Heart as our emotions
- Soul as our life as a disciple of Jesus
- Mind as our mind, our intellect

- Strength as our physical selves, our bodies
 - Neighbors as our family, friends, coworkers, and, well, neighbor
- (Repeat)

In each of the areas, the fall season of life brings...changes. What changes and how can I love the Lord with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength through those changes?

God commands and deserves my devotion. He is holy and sovereign and just and good and grace-giving and will not let me go.

It is to this God I owe all my love.

II. Strength

- Menopause/hormones
- Weight
- Sleep
- Exercise

We'll start with the low-hanging fruit: Our bodies, our physical selves.

You get women talking about their bodies and the room will buzz. We have all kinds of reactions about our bodies! I want you to take a moment to chat at your tables about this season of "change". What kinds of changes does the fall season of life bring to our bodies? If you're still in spring or summer, what have you heard or learned are changes that occur in fall? If you're here or past this season, you'll be a wealth of knowledge for your table! I'll give you a minute or two to discuss this with your whole table.

III. Heart-emotions

- Marriage changes (big lesson, trying to make Doug my all in all)
- Children different roles
- Occupation changes

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Philippians 2:1-2

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by

being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

IV. *Soul-life in Christ*

- Don't be surprised to be convicted over more subtle (and some not so subtle) sins as you age.
- Deeper communion
- More opportunity to mentor younger believers

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

V. *Mind*

- Not believing lies
- Memories, loss
- Meditating on his word

2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

VI. *Neighbor as self*

- Patience
- Consideration for others' challenges because of what God has brought you through
- All people

Philippians 2:3-5a

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

VII. *Conclusion*

(Read all the way through from 1-11)

Philippians 2:1-11

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord

and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,[a] 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,[b] 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[c] being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Friends...especially if you're not sure where you stand with the Lord. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We all deserve the penalty of those sins, but Jesus took for us on the cross. He rose again on the third day and is alive. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ in me. This life is often a hard, uphill climb. But it's so worth it. The view just keeps getting better and better. And you never walk alone when you walk with Christ.