

## **PLEASE DON'T GO**

As a parent of grown children, I learned a long time ago that the days of being able to tell them what to do are over. Because we would love to always be able to protect them from things, this isn't an easy season of life from a parental perspective and yet it is very much a reality. I recently experienced this again when my son and daughter in law planned a weekend get away to Oklahoma. My husband is a trained storm spotter. He knows the terminology and all about the weather patterns like inverted troughs, outflow boundaries, vertical shears...well, you get the point. I know how to look at the radar and see where things are and the direction they are moving. That's right...the pictures! He watches because he's very interested in that kind of thing. I watch because I don't like bad weather!!

Anyway, our kids had planned their trip weeks in advance and as the days approached we began to see the forecasts for the area where they would be traveling. I know just enough to get riled up unnecessarily at times, but when my husband starts getting that intense look it's time to take notice. About a week away from their trip time, we were already learning of the potentially severe storms. These weren't just your run of the mill spring storms. These were the big dogs. Knowing that not everyone lives with a weather spotter, I casually mentioned to my son about the weather and ask if they were keeping up with the forecasts. Still hoping the storm patterns would weaken, I wasn't overly concerned...just cautious...but as the days grew closer and the forecasts escalated, I began to take things seriously. The day before they were to leave, my son was at our home and I showed him the forecast on the computer and asked if they might consider rescheduling their trip. I didn't want to fall into control or manipulation but wanted them to be aware. I tried to remain calm on the outside while encouraging them to pay attention but inside my heart was crying out, "Son, please don't go!!!"

Needless to say, they went and we know the devastation that hit the state. On this particular afternoon, they were literally stuck in their hotel room as they were surrounded on all sides by storms. My husband was tracking the storm on the computer and at one critical point two potent storm systems collided a few miles west of them and instead of moving in on them, it took an unexpected sharp turn and headed north. This storm left a trail of destruction. They spent hours watching the weather channel and hearing of all that was going on within just a few miles of them on all sides. I know that during those uncertain hours they, too, were wishing they'd heeded the warnings and stayed home.

As my parent heart was crying out, "Please don't go!" I saw a little insight into the Father's heart. From the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, the Father has allowed His children to have a free will. He instructs. He encourages. He leads. He issues watches and warnings. Yet, He has chosen in His great plan to leave the listening and choosing up to us. Looking back, I know there have been times in my life that He pleaded with me, "Please don't go!" I know that His Father heart grieved when I went anyway and became stuck in the storm as a result of my choices. I know that He has waited patiently (more than once) for me to come home. I know that

when I have been smack dab in the middle of my mess I sure wish I'd stayed home under the shelter of my Daddy's wing. I'd venture to say we've all been there.

As I thought about this, something else occurred to me about this event. I was never angry or upset with my children for their choices. Oh, I wish they had chosen to stay home but anger was never an issue. It hurt me to know they were stuck in the middle of their decision and had to just ride it out. I couldn't help them any way except by prayer...and believe me when I say we prayed!! But I never felt anything but love and compassion toward them. See, many times I have felt like God was mad at me when I'd made those unwise choices but I've come to learn that He just wants me home safe and sound. That's all I wanted for my kids that weekend.

Remember the story of the prodigal son? I'm sure his father cautioned him of the storms that were out there just waiting for him. I'm sure he warned him of the dangers. I'm sure the point finally came when his heart cried out, "Son, please don't go!" and his son left anyway. From that point on we don't see an angry father. Instead, we see a son that is stuck in the middle of a severe storm and a father that is longing for his safe return home. Day after day the father waits and watches for the boy. Day after day he hopes that he will catch a glimpse of him along the horizon making his way home. We never see the father's love for his son grow weak or angry. We only see compassion and love. That's a picture of my Father's heart. I can't help but believe that in all those days of waiting and watching, the father was envisioning what the welcome home party would be like someday....and what a party it was!

When the day came that the prodigal returned, we don't read of any "I told you so". We see a father run to greet his son, wrap his arms around him and welcome him home again. We see grace and full restoration and yes, we see a party! I can tell you that I was sure happy to get the phone call from my son and daughter in law telling us that they were on their way home. There was never a thought of "I told you so". There was only rejoicing when I knew they were back in their own home with their children safe and sound.

There are lessons to be learned in the daily events of our lives and this was one of them. My heart was never to discourage my kids from getting away and having a relaxing weekend together. My heart was for them to be safe from harm and kept. That's what the Father's heart is about. Jesus came so that we could have abundant life. He didn't come to keep us from having fun. He's all about joy! However, as I said before, He does issue watches and warnings for our protection. I hope from this day forward when I am at a crossroad and on the verge of making a wrong turn I can hear, feel and recognize the passion in the Father's heart and remember what I felt like when my heart was crying out, "Please don't go!"