**FLIP THIS HOUSE**

I absolutely love those home makeover shows. At the beginning of the show there is a home that has been abandoned or has been neglected and abused and by the end of the hour a beautifully restored home stands. We’ve all seen these kinds of houses, not just on television but on our city streets, in our neighborhoods and along the country sides. I often wonder about the families who once labored to build those homes or saved every penny they had to buy them. What is the history? How could something that was once so loved become a place of such ruin? I wonder if years ago babies were brought home from the hospital into these homes or if a child was literally born there. Did children run and play in the kitchen while mama prepared supper. I wonder how these homes were decorated. I think often about a husband or daddy leaving out the front door to go to work or coming home in the evening and being greeted by love. Now that front door is hanging on by a single hinge. What were holidays like in those places? Did families gather there? What was life like once upon a time behind those walls? I would love it if those walls could talk and tell the stories of the families who once nurtured and cared for that home.

Both of my sons have flipped houses. They’ve remodeled their own homes and have restored homes for a living so I began to question them about the process. What steps are necessary to see a home restored to its original beauty? I learned that initially, a realtor or prospective buyer will thoroughly inspect the house and assess the damage. They must decide if the house is worth the cost and effort necessary to see it completed. If it is, then the transaction is made and the owner has acquired legal rights to do whatever he or she wishes to the home. Most often a contractor is hired to oversee the renovations. The new owner knows what he or she wants the house to look like and they work hand in hand with the contractor to see the vision carried out.

An abandoned or abused home will usually be filled with trash. Sometimes it’s the accumulation of junk the former tenants just didn’t want to move, or in worst case scenarios it’s just plain filth. The workers will come in and remove all the trash from the premises. My sons tell me that if a refrigerator or freezer remains in the house, it’s a good idea to leave the door closed until the appliance is moved outside. Food is often left inside and the electricity has long been turned off. Disgusting, I know but a reality nonetheless.

Once the trash has been removed, it is time to start to work on the foundation and the roof. No matter how much you renovate and decorate the home, if the foundation isn’t solid the home won’t stand the test of time. The roof must also be secure and tight. If it isn’t free from leaks, ruin will surely reoccur. Exterior and interior walls are checked for weak spots and rotting wood. Plumbing and electrical wiring have to be updated and made safe. Windows and insulation are checked and, if necessary, replaced. If there are termites, now is the time to treat them. These things, while unseen by most, are the most highly critical things to be done. The solidity of the home for years to come rests on these steps. These steps are not only the most critical, they also take the longest to complete and are the most costly. I’ve known people who have made the decision to do barely enough to get by on the unseen and put their time and money into what people will see. The beauty may last for a little bit but soon the behind the scenes issues surface and they’ve got real trouble. I’m just reminded of the little kid song based on Matthew 7:24-27.

*The wise man built his house upon the rock (x 3) and the rains came tumbling down.*

*The rains came down and the floods came up (x 3) and the house on the rock stood firm.*

*The foolish man built his house upon the sand (x 3) and the rains came tumbling down.*

*The rains came down and the floods came up (x 3) and the house on the sand went SPLAT!*

Once the foundation and roof are solid and in good shape and the utilities updated, many times a new owner will want to restructure the interior walls to ‘open up’ an area. Old walls will come down to give way for a larger living area. New walls may go up in a different spot. Old cabinets may be torn down or refinished to restore beauty. Countertops may be removed to make way for the new. Old carpet or other flooring will be ripped up and thrown away.

When the house is not much more than a shell, it’s time to bring in the new and pretty up the place. Fresh paint will go on the walls. New tubs and sinks will be installed and new fixtures will be put in place. Brand new flooring will be laid and new appliances will be purchased. The house that was once ready to be condemned is now a beautiful masterpiece full of warmth and hope.

An important factor in some remodels is to try to keep with the era of the home. For instance, if the home is one that was built in the 1800’s, it is advantageous to renovate with products that reflect that era. What was the original design of the home? What was the home created to be? The idea behind renovation is many times to restore the home to its original beauty. Each house is different and will bring with it its own set of challenges and its own originality and character. A good realtor or contractor has an eye for seeing what needs to be done to make this house the very best it can be.

Why am I talking about flipping houses on an encouragements page? Well, because it reminds me so much of what the Father does in our lives. First of all, scripture says in John 14:23:

 *Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and* ***make our home with them****.”*

The Godhead is not looking to rent a room for the weekend or for a vacation trip. They want to make their home with us. Unfortunately, due to neglect, abandonment, and abuse we are quite a mess. Thankfully, the Father has already looked us over, assessed the damages and determined that we are worth the cost and effort. Jesus has paid the purchase price.

*“..you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.” 1 Corinthians 6:20*

They now have full access…legal rights to begin the renovation. This process is called ‘sanctification’. From the moment we say ‘yes’ to Jesus, the sanctification process, or the remodel, renovation, and restoration process begins. They own us and just like a house that’s been bought by someone who wants to see it restored, our lives being purchased is a great thing. Without new ownership, the ruination will continue. We, like that house will be in danger of being condemned. But the new owners have a plan and a vision for their home. Jeremiah 29:11 says He has plans for our future and it is a good one. Holy Spirit will now work with us to see it accomplished.

It’s time to go in and take out the trash. Lots of trash has been left behind by previous tenants that have moved on; those we’ve allowed in our lives that may have caused grief or heartache or those that have intruded in our lives and left devastation. There’s old food in the refrigerator. There are old doctrines and even lies that we’ve been fed...stale bread. It has to go. Our foundations must be made solid because most likely we’ve been built on some false (or at least weak) foundations. The foundation we must be built on is that of knowing who Jesus is and who we are in Him and that He is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. We have a choice of allowing the Lord to go deep in us to see the foundation fully restored, or we can shortcut these things and concentrate on looking good on the outside. But just like a house, the shoddy foundation will eventually shift and wreak havoc. Take the time and do what it takes to let Him do the ground work. These things will hold up our entire house forever.

Our covering must be tight and secure. Who are we walking with? Who oversees us? There are walls that must be torn down. Due to heart wounds and abuses, we’ve many times built walls around our heart as a form of survival and protection leading to a calloused heart. Those walls have caused us to be secluded, bitter, afraid and not willing to trust anything or anybody…even the new owners. So the walls must come down and new ones go up. Areas of our hearts need to be opened up to create a larger living space and new rooms may even be built in us that we never knew could existed.

As the bitterness, sin, strife, envy, hatred, unforgiveness and condemnation get hauled out and thrown away, they are replaced by the new. Holy Spirit comes and fills His home with His beauty. He paints the new walls with beautiful colors and decorates the home with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self control. He pretties us up with His very presence. It is a beautiful process as He makes His home in us. In the same way that each house is renewed and restored to its original design, so are we. Not one of us is the same and each of our lives and destinies are uniquely created by the Master Builder. He restores each of us in such a way the He enables us to fulfill the destinies He had planned for us while we were yet in our mother’s womb.

I’ve found myself lately looking at people in the same way I told you I looked at those rundown homes. I see someone and wonder what they were like as a little boy or girl. Were they a happy baby? What were their parents like? What is their story? What were they created to be? What caused something that is so precious and so loved by the Heavenly Father to become so neglected, abandoned and abused? No doubt the Father has assessed the damage and deemed them worth the effort. He has paid the price. He is ready to begin a process of renovation, restoration and making all things new so He can make His home in them. Just as a construction company needs laborers, we are the workers that co-labor with Christ to see these lives restored. Who do we see every day that needs restoration? Who is in our realm of influence that needs to be under new ownership? Who, because of abuse and neglect, is in danger of being condemned?

The following scriptures are like bookends to me when it comes to ‘flipping our house’. The first verse speaks of the destiny God prepared for us and the last verse speaks of the fulfillment of that destiny.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.* Ephesians 2:10

And…

*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* Philippians 1:6

He starts the work and He will finish the work. So, what is our part? Let Him. Let Him tear down and build up. And just as a home needs upkeep and general maintenance so do our lives. Once we are clean, we need to stay clean. Homes deteriorate without upkeep and maintenance. So do our lives. We do daily or weekly cleaning in our physical homes. We need to keep His home clean by repenting quickly when we’ve sinned; by forgiving immediately when we’ve been hurt or offended; exchanging our hurts and wounds with Him and receiving His peace as situations arise. Listen to His voice when an area of maintenance comes up. Remember, He is constantly making us new as we grow from faith to faith, strength to strength and glory to glory. He promises He will never move out on you. He will finish what He started.

Life happens. Hurts come. In this world we will have trouble…but He has overcome the world. He can flip your house.