

Daily Devotional, November 30, 2020 My Trust is in You

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.” 1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)

When you think of giving up something or making room for a major change in your life, how often do you think of giving up your job or career? Most of us hang on to “what we do” with a vengeance. It defines us, it sustains us, and likely supports ourselves and our families. But what do we do when we feel a nudge or at times, an unmistakable tug to follow a completely different path, one that you have been drawn to the brink of more than once, and yet have resisted or have been sidetracked from by unseen forces.

After almost 20 years in one profession, and an additional 20 years in my own business, I realized that I could not any longer resist the call. It was time to follow what God had been nudging me to do for some time. That decision did not come easy – plenty of people gave me reason to question my decision. I even questioned it myself. How do you stop doing something that you’re familiar with, successful at, synonymous with – maybe even pretty good at? And when you’re too young to retire and too old to start over – what happens next? All these questions kept me up at night and were constant points of conversation with family and friends. Most people are pretty encouraging – “Go for it” they say, “You’re never too old, pursue your dreams” they offer. Pretty easy recommendations over coffee or dinner. Giving that up was a decision I did not take lightly.

But this is what I knew – I wanted more time with my family, more time with God, and more time to pursue a life of giving back, more time to focus on the little things in every day. So, looking at *what you gain* when you give up something became the great motivator. The demands of a retail career, long days, working many holidays, weekends, and many evenings – I *knew* I wanted to give that up. Having little vacation time because it was hard finding time to vacation – I wanted to shift away from that too. Being confident each day, understanding and achieving in what I was familiar and comfortable with, earning the confidence of my customers and employees, longtime friendships – these things were harder to say good-bye to.

Every day my prayer was – Dear Lord, open my eyes to the possibility of something else. Help me to see where you want me to be. And I discovered 1 John 5:14-15. Those very verses brought such comfort and assurance for me – “We know that we have what we asked of Him” – that gave me such bold faith to realize that God already had a plan waiting for me. But at the same time, I kept hearing the words of Jesus when he was anguishing in the Garden of Gethsemane: “yet not my will, but yours be done.” Luke 22:42

So, when I was encouraged to pursue a career of ministry at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, I eagerly, yet cautiously, received acceptance into a calling that would lead to ordination as a Lutheran pastor, offering the possibility of a new career of shepherding a flock of believers, and of helping others to find their way to salvation. I knew *giving up* what was seemingly important, what had truly defined me, was *really* gaining what was important and what would always define me – more time for family, faith, and serving others. It took many years of discernment, dead-ends and re-routing to get me here — many bumps in the road. Have I ever been discouraged? Yes. Have I ever given up? No. For I have a God who hears me, whether in my weakness or in my strength, my God listens and never fails me. It has taken me longer than most in my profession, but it is always in God’s timing -- not my own. And I thank God for that.

If you are ever doubting whether God is paying attention to your concerns or your struggles in life, rest assured that if you put your confidence in God’s guidance and direction in your life, you have nothing to fear. Sometimes it takes us awhile to realize that God has been trying to get our attention all along. Maybe it is time to turn our attention to God a bit more, and to surrender ourselves to God’s will rather than our own.

Prayer: Lord, I know you have a plan for my life, but I can't see it right now. The path ahead seems dark and unknown. I've been trying so hard to make my own way, to fix my own problems, and trying to navigate my own future, but nothing I do seems to work. So, I'm putting my trust in you. I'm trusting in your plans, even though I don't understand or see them. I'm trusting in you to lead me and make a path before me. For you are wise and all-knowing. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.