

DAY 18

Back To Point Zero...Again

Jennifer Xue

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28

I came to the United States with two pieces of luggage in pursuit of a graduate degree and freedom from persecution. I brought only a few months' worth of living expenses along with me. Being an optimist, I believed in my deepest heart that it wouldn't be that hard to find a job once I had settled in.

Quickly, I applied for a work permit with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now US Citizenship and Immigration Services), which was available for persons from certain countries due to various hardships, including economic, religious, and political persecution. Indonesia, the country where I originated, was included.

Little did I know that God has something else in store for me. He wanted me to taste the hard life of being an international student and, eventually, a new immigrant. He wanted me to learn how to rely on Him than merely on my two bare hands.

After a few months of enjoying the busy life of a graduate student, my grandfather was diagnosed with colon cancer.

My mother was his only child, so she had to bear all the financial responsibilities that came with expensive cancer treatment. He didn't have health insurance because back then in Indonesia there was no government-managed healthcare and private health insurance was somewhat unheard of.

It hit me like a brick when I called home one day and she told me about the diagnosis and the cost of the treatment.

I couldn't concentrate on my studies and decided to drop out. I impatiently waited for the work permit to be issued, so I could start applying for jobs. I had to help my mom.

Then I started working odd jobs, such as making sushi, grooming dogs, and helping an attorney. But my contribution didn't last a long time as my grandfather lost his battle. The doctors said that his cancer had metastasized. I was completely heartbroken.

I had dropped out of school to work, and it didn't help much.

I was very close to my maternal grandparents as my biological father abandoned my mother and me before I was even born. I even called my grandmother "Mamma" and grandfather "Pappa" because they raised me. His passing broke my heart to pieces.

I continued working to support myself in this new land. There was an adage that said, "America is the land of opportunities." At that time, I was alone, poor, and grieving. I couldn't see where the opportunities were and began doubting many things.

I still worked in low-paying jobs and rented a cheap apartment. I was exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally. I wanted to take a break, but I couldn't. I had to support myself.

Gradually, I applied for freelance writing jobs, as I wrote newspaper columns for several years before moving to the U.S. It was during the frenzy of Web 1.0, so I eventually worked for several dot-coms. My earning started to get better.

Alas, only slightly one year later, the dotcom bubble popped, and my income slid down with it. I was back to point zero again.

The exhaustion returned. I started to breathe in thick air, heard eery silence, and moved in slow motion. I felt the sadness of the whole world within while walking around with tons of brick on top of my head.

Looking back, I think I was in a depression. I didn't go to a physician or a therapist, as I thought it was a natural consequence after what I had gone through. And I didn't have any medical insurance.

[Disclaimer: If you are experiencing depression, it's recommended to visit a professional therapist or counselor, so you receive the most appropriate treatment. My experience may not be suitable for you, and this story is by no means a substitute for professional psychological and psychiatric therapies and counseling.]

I stayed in bed for weeks. After all, I didn't have a full-time job.

One day, when I had enough strength to move around, I went to a public library and found C.S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*. The titles fit my condition at that time.

They spoke volumes. Lewis wrote in *A Grief Observed*, “I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process.”

In *The Problem of Pain*, he wrote, “It is natural for us to wish that God had designed for us a less glorious and less arduous destiny, but then we wish not for more love but less.”

Reading Lewis’ books occupied my mind. His deep thoughts slowly awakened my zombie-like existence.

Since then, I’ve been living life to the fullest.

THE LESSON OF FAITH

When I felt that God had abandoned me and left me cold in a dark and dingy alley, He wanted me to rest.

Just like the footsteps in the sand poem, the pair of footsteps, I saw when I was depressed and grieving were not mine. They were His. He carried me on His back through the storm of life, while I was resting.

By experiencing hardships, He actually was training me to be a better self with a much bigger heart. Sorrows made me stronger, and hardships opened my heart for more love.

When you’re tired and exhausted, take a rest.

INTO ABUNDANCE

The Lord woke me up from a zombie-like existence. Today, I’m living my fullest life understanding wholeheartedly that every bump on the road is merely a sign to slow down and take a rest.

From time to time, like in any business, my publishing and property investment businesses experience some cash flow problems. Instead of panicking, I now call such moments “resting periods.”

I’ve gone through a lot in life, including multiple surgeries, deaths of loved ones, and a painful divorce. None defeated me. Instead, they made me stronger.

Low cash flow periods wouldn’t defeat me. On the contrary, they are opportunities to reflect and rest for the next “battle.” It’s great timing to learn from mistakes and maintain my faith in God.

After all, He carried me during my darkest hours, why would He leave me this time around?

APPLICATION

Reflect upon your life. What were the moments when you doubted God’s love for you? What did you do? What did He do?

While “everything happens for a reason” sounds like a cliché, it’s actually not.

God wants us to experience life to the fullest, meaning we get to experience the good, the bad, and everything in between. He wants us to be better because of them. Because, through hardships, we are able to appreciate good things and love more.

And when the pain is too much, it’s time for us to rest and heal.

PRAYER

“God, thank you for the good and the bad things in my life. They make me better and stronger person. Help me, Lord, whenever life is

bad, to always remember that You're asking me to rest and heal so that I can be prepared for a better and stronger tomorrow. I trust my life in Your hands."

DAILY DECLARATION

Whenever things are bad, it's an opportunity to rest and heal. It's God's way to train me to be a better and stronger person.
#FaithIntoAbundance

MEET JENNIFER XUE



Jennifer Xue is an award-winning author, columnist, and serial entrepreneur with proven record and strong dedication in gaining traction, brand awareness, and revenue generation. She is the founder of StyleCareer.com and SiliconValleyGlobe.com among other ventures. Her writing portfolio can be found at JenniferXue.com. When she's not writing, she plays with her dogs and travels the world.

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