

A NEW RIGHT SHOE

A few weeks ago I slipped on some sturdy shoes that I had not worn in a while and headed to Target to buy a new journal. As I was walking around the store, I noticed that my shoes weren't as comfortable as I remembered. In fact, it almost felt like my heels were sinking into the floor. I looked down to see what was going on and noticed that the thick soles were literally breaking into black crumbs before my eyes. Not only that, but I could see a very conspicuous trail of black sole pieces on the pristine floor everywhere I had walked. Mortified, I high tailed it out of there just as fast as my rapidly disintegrating shoes would allow.

Now those shoes were of good quality with very thick soles. In the natural, sturdy shoes just don't disintegrate like that. I felt that the Lord was trying to get my attention. And that He wanted me to focus on shoes. So I started flipping back through my journal searching for more clues. On 7/10/2020 in a vision I saw a lady's sling back shoe with a heel and open toe. An on 6/10/2020 I had a dream where I was wearing a dress and there were all sorts of shoes affixed to my dress. There were so many shoes on the dress that you could not see the actual fabric of the dress, only the shoes attached to it. When I sought the Lord in prayer over all this, He reminded me of an incident that happened over a year ago.

One day outside Walmart I saw a man with only one leg sitting in a wheelchair holding a sign. He was sitting alone on a concrete walk area in the middle of a busy parking lot. I approached him and struck up a conversation. He said his name was Steve. He was homeless and living in his 38 year old truck. I asked him his most pressing need. He said he needed detergent, spot remover, and bottled water so he could do laundry. So I ran to Walmart for him.

On 6/22/2019, I saw him again but this time he looked much worse for wear. His beard was grown out and he had open sores running up and down his arms. The change in his appearance was so drastic, that I was quite concerned. Again I asked his most pressing need. He said that he needed a new right shoe. I glanced down at his shoe and noticed something very strange. It looked like he was wearing his left shoe on his right foot! I asked him if that was the case, and he said that it was. I just wanted to burst into tears right then and there, but by some miracle I managed to hold it together. I said I would go get him some new sneakers at Walmart but I didn't think they would sell me a single right shoe - might have to get a pair. It was a very lame attempt at humor, but it kept me from crying.

So I ran and got him new sneakers. When he put on the new right shoe, it was a perfect fit. He beamed from ear to ear. Then he handed the left shoe back to me, saying that he didn't need it. After I got home, I kicked off my sandals and slipped my right foot into my left sneaker. I tried walking around on it, but it was so uncomfortable, that I immediately took it off again. The only reason a person would ever wear a shoe that way would be if they had no other option.

On 7/4/2019 the Lord gave me a vision of a knife. Immediately after that, I saw another vision of me pushing a baby in a baby carriage as we went for a walk. Then I heard the Holy Spirit say "**OBLETION**".

Then I heard “**ALMONDS**”. Then I heard the name “**STEVEN _____**”. I had no clue what the word oblation meant, so I had to look it up.

Oblation: something brought near the altar i.e. sacrificial present, an offering, a sacrifice.

That day I puzzled over the visions and the words, wondering what on earth it all meant. The very next day upon waking, the Lord gave me understanding. The knife, the baby, and the word oblation referred to the Lord testing Abraham in Genesis 22:2, when God asked him to offer his son as a burnt offering. The Lord said to Abraham “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you”.

So the Lord was asking me to give up something that I loved – almonds. And because he mentioned the name Steven _____, I wondered if that person was somehow connected to the visions. So now the question was - who was Steven _____? (I am omitting his last name for privacy’s sake.) The only Steven I knew was Steve, the homeless guy. Were they one in the same? I wondered if this “fast” of sorts would somehow strengthen the prayers that I was already praying for him.

Now to most people giving up almonds might not seem like a big deal. But to me it was a very big deal. You see since 2012, I had eaten the exact same breakfast every single morning – a faux “cereal” of almond meal, eggs, vanilla, stevia and blueberries. Mixed together and microwaved, it tastes like blueberry muffins, which I love, but healthier. So for 7 years, that is what I ate each and every morning. Yes, you might say I’m a creature of habit. But the Lord was asking me to give up my almonds, so that morning I made up my mind to stop eating them. For a long while, I peered into my pantry, thinking - what do other people eat for breakfast? Finally I whipped up an omelet.

While I was praying over this whole situation, the Lord brought to my remembrance a dream that I had in February of 2018. In the dream, I was with 2 other people – a man and a woman. I was addressing a group of young people, but they were not listening to me. Suddenly the young people became angry and violent and viciously attacked the woman that was with me.

In the next scene, the woman, who had been attacked, was lying on the ground, seriously injured and unable to walk or get away. The man said to me “Let’s go, leave her, she’s going to die anyway.” I saw a house up ahead and thought that maybe we could get the woman into the house and hide her from the crowd. Right then while I was deciding what to do, I heard the Holy Spirit suddenly break into my dream and say “**DENY YOURSELF**”. Then man took off without us. End of dream.

That dream was the first time that I heard the Holy Spirit speak during the course of a dream. I searched for the word “deny” in the Bible and found it in Luke 9:23: Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” At the time I really did not understand what that meant. But now it was starting to become clear to me.

Later that day as I was praying, it dawned on me that a pattern was emerging. When the Lord asked me to leave Cincinnati and move over 600 miles to a place I had never been, there was a huge “cost”. I gave up my home of 27 years, my family, and my friends. When He sent me to my mom, with whom I was

estranged, there was a huge emotional “cost”. With my sister, there was a financial “cost”. Now with Steven, the “cost” was giving up something I really enjoyed – my favorite breakfast. Each time I was sacrificing things that I did not want to give up. There was a “cost” to me personally.

I wondered why there was a “cost”. After much reflection, it occurred to me that if we are willing to give up something we love at the Lord’s request, it shows God that we put Him first in our lives. And that we love Him. It shows the Lord that “Your will be done” and not “my will be done”. I absolutely love what David said to Araunah in 2 Samuel 24:24: “And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it from you at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which does cost me nothing.” Isn’t that just beautiful?

I thought about all the people in the bible who “counted the cost” and “laid down their lives” to follow Jesus. Like Ezekiel who had to lie on his left side 390 days and on his right side 40 days to atone for the sins of Israel and Judah. His “cost” of great physical discomfort was the atoning sacrifice for the sins of many people. I thought about God asking Isaiah to run around naked and barefoot for 3 years. Can you imagine that? Now that is a very steep “cost”! I thought about Joseph who was sold into slavery and falsely imprisoned. His “cost” was 13 years of forfeited freedom! One man’s life was laid down for the benefit of many. I thought about how Sheba was sacrificed so that all the rest of people in the town of Abel would live. One person sacrificed for many. I thought about Esther who sacrificed her own personal safety to save the Jewish people. I thought about Ruth who forsook her Moabite God, her home town, her relatives, her friends, and her way of life to follow after Jesus. I thought about Hannah, the barren woman, who promised the Lord she would dedicate her son to God all the days of his life. I thought about Jesus who gave up his life to bear the sins of all. There is definitely a common theme in all these stories.

Forty-nine days later after starting my almond fast, I received another vision. This time I saw a spoon filled with little seeds or grains. I knew that the Lord was telling me that my almond fast was over and I could eat almonds again. I received the good news around 3 AM in the morning. My joy was so great that I almost leapt out of bed to fix my almond breakfast on the spot. But then I decided that it was way too early. So I settled for just doing the “happy dance” in my mind!

Scriptures

John 15:13 Greater love has no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he has enough to finish it? 29Lest perhaps, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31Or what king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first, and consults whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? 32Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation, and desires conditions of peace. 33So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth

his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

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

2 Samuel 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it from you at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which does cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to share forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Romans 12:1 beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that **you present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God..

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or suffer loss? 26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Bible characters who “counted the cost” and “denied themselves” (not an exhaustive list):

- Ezekiel (**Ezekiel 4:1-7**)
- Isaiah (**Isaiah 20:1-6**)
- Sheba (**2 Samuel 20:13-22**)
- Joseph (**Genesis 38-50**)
- Esther (**Esther 4**)
- Ruth (**Ruth 1:16**)
- Hannah (**1 Samuel 1**)