

You have turned my mourning into dancing; you took off my sackcloth and clothed me with a garment of joy. —Psalm 30:11 (ISV)

It was a sign from God. Not a burning bush, a rainbow, or a plague of frogs, but a wooden sign tucked in the corner of a folksy gift shop in Bluffton, South Carolina. Bold white letters on a black background proclaimed this: *Welcome to Awesomeville! Population: Me.*

Yep. The sign stopped me in my tracks. After thirty-three years of marriage, my husband had left...suddenly, unexpectedly, and permanently. Newly single, I felt like an awkward adolescent, unsure of what to do with my life. But I wasn't sixteen. I was almost sixty. And I had a choice. I could choose bitterness, anger, and fear as my new companions. Or I could embrace forgiveness, hope, and joy. I could choose to exist in Woe-Is-Me Town or thrive in Awesomeville. I knew where I wanted to reside.

I brought my sign from God home to my new little apartment. It still hangs right by my front door. It's a daily reminder that my circumstances don't have the final say in what my life looks like. My attitude, choices, and faith (or lack thereof) set the tone each day.

That doesn't mean my residence in Awesomeville is painless. Plenty of days my heart still aches, and tears seem to come out of nowhere. But I don't have to live in a permanent state of bliss to continue to love life. Life can be hard, but nurturing a relationship with God doesn't have to be. I may be by myself, but as God reminds me daily, I'm never alone.

*Dear Lord, open my eyes to the beauty and blessing of each new day,
even the tough ones. Draw near to me in a way that makes
Your presence more tangible in my life.*

—Vicki Kuypers

Digging Deeper: James 1:1–4

Sunday, August 18

Those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

—Psalm 37:9 (KJV)

It was a day I can never forget. I was at the Alabama cabin my grandfather built years before. To most, it's a modest place. To me, it's always been paradise. The night before, I sat outside, listening to the call of the owl that inhabited the middle part of the little island where the cabin sits. Long ago, my grandfather chose this spot for its perfect sunset and made a deal with the property owner. As part of the agreement, the middle of the island would forever remain common property for all to enjoy. The deal was sealed with my grandfather's trusted handshake.

Now, at the crack of dawn, I woke up to a terrible noise. I rushed outside and found a crew of workers clearing trees on the common property. "What are you doing?" I shouted above the bedlam.

"We're harvesting the trees for the owner," a man shouted back. "Lots of money here."

I soon discovered the man on the other side of my grandfather's handshake didn't match Grandfather's trustworthiness. He had somehow shifted ownership of the common property to his name.

I had no idea if the owl escaped or where the other wildlife had gone. The island looked like a war zone. My heart felt shredded.

Afterward, I tried to avoid the ravaged wasteland that was once a wildlife sanctuary. Then one day I noticed a little bit of green, then some wildflowers, and finally trees popping up everywhere.

I whispered, "Oh, God, I see You here." Today, the middle of the island is lush once more. Last night as I was walking on the property with my family, I heard it again: the call of an owl. It reminded me that sometimes when everything seems lost, all that's left is to wait . . . and trust our Father to make things new again.

Father, when I am defeated, remind me to wait for You.

—Brock Kidd

Digging Deeper: Psalm 62:5; Romans 8:25