

## **Between Two Gardens**

**Jamie Boiles (August 2019)**

In college, I attended a weekend retreat at OSU and a speaker said, “You are either going into a storm, in the storm, or coming out of the storm.” I have lived my life thinking my spiritual journey would be like an Oklahoma storm. Going into the storm-the sirens are going off, the weather people on TV know this is what they have prepared for; they must stay calm so we will stay calm. In the storm-when the weather people’s voices are raising, “If you are in this area, you have got to be in your storm safe place! Take cover now!”. And coming out--“Val, what are you seeing? Can you see the damage?”.

If things were bad, then I knew things would get better and I would soon be coming out of the storm and assessing the damage. But what happens when the storm doesn’t seem to go a way? Or how am I supposed to process experiencing more than one phase at a time?

But I DID build my faith on this premise. I thought if I pray the right words and believe hard enough then I will get what I ask. That’s what the Bible says, right? I’m a missionary, don’t I have some type of special permission to avoid suffering and pain? But I prayed the right words and the baby still died and evil still attacked our ministry and people still betrayed me.

*But God? Why? Why did you allow this to happen? If you are all knowing and all seeing, why didn’t you prevent this from happening?*

Lysa TurKeurst writes in her book *It’s Not Supposed to be This Way*, “The pain and confusion often found in this life lived between two gardens can leave us feeling suspicious of God, making us wonder if He is cruel and unfair. Ask yourself, ‘Am I willing to believe He is protecting me and preparing me for all that is ahead?’”

This is the wrestling we are faced with living between two gardens--the garden of Eden and the garden of Heaven.

We weren’t promised a happy life or a good life. We weren’t promised the absence of suffering. The truth is we were promised the exact opposite, but yet, I still blame God when things hurt and don’t go the way I want. TurKeurst describes taking suffering as a time to transform our thinking into Biblical thinking, “processing truth instinctively, and trusting God **implicitly**”.

I have come to understand the space between two gardens is the space when I get to know my God a little better. I am required to depend on Him in a different way than before. My spiritual journey isn't as obtuse as it used to be. Things can be hard and painful, and I can still find joy at the same time.

The Message paraphrases 1 Peter 4:12-13 by saying, "Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner."