



The Old Barn

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10b).

Recently, our youngest daughter and her hubby celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. I really had to stop for a moment and ask, “Has it been **that** long ago that these ‘babies’ got married?” It was a simple yet beautiful wedding; the location was the lodge at a church camp outside the northern California town of Nevada City. In a rustic setting, surrounded by mountains, pine trees, and lush summer breezes, Lara and Kirk recited their vows, and sang to each other the beautiful Christian song “*Love Will Be Our Home*.” However, life hasn’t been easy for these two: relationship struggles; financial strife; a tearful miscarriage of their third baby, Samuel; unnerving vocational situations; and humbling setbacks which caused them to rely on God and family for “shelter.” Any of these tribulations could have brought many marriages to an unhappy end. But God is so good, and it’s always been evident, even in those difficult situations, that His loving yet correcting hand was firmly planted on them. One of my daughter’s favorite Scripture verses is Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* This precious couple has weathered more in their 20 years of marriage than many people face in a lifetime. Praise the Lord, they’ve submitted and obeyed His instruction and guidance. God’s blessings are poured out on them every day, like the sweet rain storms that replenish the earth each spring.

Funny, about the same time as this special anniversary, I read a story about an old barn sitting in a farmer’s field. Seems a building contractor driving by stopped to ask the farmer if the dilapidated structure was for sale. Puzzled by the inquiry, the farmer asked why the old barn would be of value and interest. The contractor explained he was constructing a new home, and that the barn’s lumber would make a beautiful addition to the rooms of the house. The farmer stood back and took another look at his old building. Here’s a bit of the farmer’s reflection:

“Only years of standing in the weather, bearing the storms and scorching sun, only that can produce beautiful barn wood. Sure, it was a handsome building in its day. But then, there’s been a lot of winters pass with their snow and ice and howling wind. The summer sun beat down on that old barn till all the paint’s gone, and the wood has turned silver gray. Now the old building leans a good deal, looking kind of tired. Yet, that fellow called it beautiful; he said you couldn’t get paint that beautiful. It came to me then. We’re a lot like that, you and I. Only it’s on the inside that the beauty grows with us. Sure, we turn silver gray too ... and lean a bit more than we did when we were young and full of sap. But the Good Lord knows what He’s doing. And as the years pass, He’s busy using the hard weather of our lives, the dry spells and the stormy seasons to do a job of beautifying our souls that nothing else can produce. And to think how often folks holler because they want life easy!”

Our children are growing older; God's plans for them are certain. As parents, we'd take all of the pain and disappointment away from them in a heart beat. But as I look back at their lives, our gracious and merciful Lord has been busy using the "hard weather" to produce beautiful souls...souls that if we allow, will glorify His majesty and creation, as our kids have done.

Life is not easy; but if we try to make each day a celebration and allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and strengthen us, we'll weather those old storms, growing in beauty...God's beauty! Most importantly, because Jesus died and rose again so that our sins are forgiven, we will experience God's ultimate beauty in heaven.

Prayer: Our Father, You have given us abundant life through Your Son. We are weathered through Your mercy and grace. Thank You, Father for Your constant love. Amen.

Scripture references are from the ESV.

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