“Dirt” – Family Devotional

March 29, 2020

*Read James 1:2-6*

"Sometimes when you’re in a dark place you think you’ve been buried, but you’ve actually been planted.” -- Christine Caine

When life piles up around us, it is easy to feel like someone dug a hole, stuck us in, and threw dirt back on top of us with the intentions of leaving us there for good. When you bury something, you place it in the ground with the understanding that you probably won’t be seeing it again. You leave it there permanently -- whether it’s something you’re trying to hide, erase from memory, or put to rest because it has no vitality. Something buried is something finished.

This world can leave us feeling finished. Stress, tragedies, overwhelming schedules, anger, depression, addiction -- you name it -- can all cause us to feel trapped in the ground with no escape. We can even feel buried when we attempt to do good things that go unnoticed or unappreciated. Or sometimes, we are put in a scenario where it feels like anything we do is unhelpful, and we question why we were placed there.

The quote above reminds us that life can leave us feeling helpless and hopeless, permanently stuck under trials and testing, but there can still be hope. James 1:2-5 tells us we *will* encounter tests in life, and when we do, we should think of them as occasions for joy. We should see them as opportunities where we’ve been given time to grow and endure, so we can bloom more beautifully above the ground.

Growing takes time and perseverance. It’s not an overnight process. It requires consistent care, water, and sunlight. When you’re buried, allow yourself time to receive God’s nutrition. You may grow impatient and wonder why you aren’t growing quickly through the trials, but you must remember that He is the Gardener who knows how to tend to what He planted.

If you plant seeds, you don’t constantly dig them up to check on their progress. That slows down the process. The same principle applies to baking something in an oven -- if you keep opening the door to check on your food, the heat escapes and you just have to wait even longer for that pie. Trust God’s timing, His process, His wisdom, and His intention. Persevere, and be joyful that God is planning something beautiful for you.

Our current world situation leaves us feeling buried – stuck inside our homes to sit and stay. Instead of thinking of this time as a burial, however, think of it as God’s people being planted. What will come out of the dirt will be something with new life, something beautiful, something precious and colorful.

Dirt is necessary for a burial, but it is also necessary for growth. Consider it a joy, then, when dirt is piled up around you. Wait on God to grow something that will burst forth as strong, colorful, and life-giving on the other side.

*Check out discussion questions on the next page!*

Questions for Discussion

*We encourage you to spend some time praying and talking through these questions together as a family!*

1. Are you getting used to a new routine yet? If so, what’s been working for you? If not, what needs to change?
2. How does this new situation make you feel like you have been buried?
3. How can you see this situation instead as being planted?
4. Re-read James 1:2-6. Are you looking at this opportunity as an occasion for joy? What is the promise (found in verse 4) we receive through endurance and perseverance?
5. We all need wisdom to be navigating this new storm in our lives (verse 5). Have you asked God for His wisdom? How can His wisdom benefit you now?
6. What are you doing to grow closer as a family? What are you doing to grow closer to God?
7. Have you tried anything new as a result of this present reality? What were those experiences like?
8. Just for funsies:
   1. If you have the ability and can safely make it to a store, plant something this week! Whether it’s a flower or vegetable, plant something with the expectation that it will grow with proper care, and think about how that relates to today’s devotional.
   2. Create a board game – using poster board or regular paper, make up a new board game. Use dice or game pieces from other games, think up a theme for your game, and do something new! Flex your creative muscles during this time!
   3. Rearrange your bedroom! There’s something about shifting things around that creates a fresh perspective and new sense of optimism. It might sound silly, but it actually creates a pretty satisfying end result.