



MAY 2021: THE RIVER OF LIFE - OUR JOURNEY
CHN Series: Aid to Prayer and Reflection

Sister Carol, CHN



The River of Life

She flows gently,
Following her course,
Content,
Giving life to others.

Disaster!
She hits rocky ground,
Breaks into pieces,
Loses direction.

Lovingly she is guided back,
Slowly becoming whole,
And continues her journey,
Sharing herself.

As she enters the desert,
Life is drained,
All hope seems gone,
Will she survive?

Rain comes; she is refreshed,
Springing back to life.
She flows merrily on,
Continuing her journey,
Knowing she is never alone.

Carol, CHN

We all experience a journey in life whether we are a Christian or a non-believer because we are all God's children and made in the image of God. Each person's journey is their own.

We were known to God before we were born, before we were formed in the womb. Jeremiah says "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.." Although we may not all be prophets God does have a plan for each one of us.

The greatest and most important adventure in our lives is discovering who we really are. Yet many of us walk around either not really knowing or listening to an awful inner critic, that gives us all the wrong idea about ourselves.

From a young age we build up our protections. Painful early life experiences determine how we define and defend ourselves. We put on layers of protection and part of our journey is to peel them off so we can grow into the person God created us to be.



Image by Todd Kay from Pixabay

The putting on is easier than the taking off. Although we have the rocky times and the desert experiences, we also have the times of peace and tranquillity; like the flow of the river.

Jesus had his own journey with his difficult times and we hear the anguish in him when he cries out to his Father. Although like Jesus we know that our Father is with us throughout, we often wish that he would just take away the difficulties, but it is through this that we grow.

I liken these painful times to a gardener pruning his plants. The plant must go through the pain of pruning to produce the beautiful flowers or fruit.

On the night before his death Jesus said, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." John 15:1-4

Although many of the words we read in Scripture are directed to other people or countries they can be applicable to our lives. Is it taking scripture out of context? I don't believe so, as they can be as relevant to us today as they were to the person spoken to in the Bible.

If we do not accept this pruning in our life, then we will never grow and many become bitter and live in the 'poor me' and are never really happy.



mlive lawn and garden, fair use

God is a gentle gardener.

I am a great believer in God's timing and that God knows when we are ready for these painful times of growth.

I recently read a book called "Don't let her see me cry" by a woman, Helen Barnacle, who ended up in Fairlea Women's Prison on drug charges. She received the longest sentence than any other woman at that time and, sadly, she was pregnant. She was allowed to keep her baby with her for some time but the baby had to leave. Helen's anguish was awful, as she handed over her child, even though it was her family who were looking after the baby. After each day visit, it was painful to see her baby leave. She resorted to drug taking again.

Helen realised she wanted to be a good mum for her baby. This gave her incentive to attend N.A Meetings and to get an education. She began studying psychology which she completed on her release. Although Helen was not a Christian, I believe that God put the right people in her path and gave her the strength to move forward. The pruning for Helen was painful but she endured it and she did bloom, going on to help other women and working for them so that they could have more time with their children while serving a prison sentence.

We all have a journey in life whether we are Christian or a non-believer and each person's journey is unique to them. There are the rocky times and disasters but also times of peace and still waters.



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Our journey is one of growth. As Christians we know that we have a God who is with us through all those rocky times. We wish sometimes that he would just take them away and make it all better, but our God is one of love and wants to see us grow into a fuller person: unless we have these difficult times we will never grow.

Spend time looking at your River of Life / Journey. Perhaps draw it or represent it in your own way.

Note where were the rocky areas, the deserts, the calm waters.

How did you handle these times?



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“When you pass through the waters I will be with you” Isaiah 43: 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.” Jeremiah 29:11

Jesus said “ I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.” John 15: 1-2



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When were the times you felt you grew and what areas were they?

Are there areas in your life that still need pruning?

If you are resisting, look at the reasons why.

Gracious and loving God, be with each one of us

as we travel the rocky times in our lives.

Help us to put our trust in you, giving thanks

for the love and care you have for each one of us.

We pray this through your son, Jesus Christ. Amen

The Gardener

He admires his rose in her full beauty
He knows she will soon wilt and petals fall.
The time has come.
“I am sorry little one”, he whispers.

And with love and tenderness,
he removes the old growth that had become her burden.

“Rest now. I will nurture and feed you.”
“Trust me. You will bloom again”

Carol, CHN



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