

WATCHING, WAITING



Cheryce's blog is Hope and Be:Longing

Cheryce first posted this blog a few weeks ago, and then sent Connections this update—one of those boys is now 20 years old, both are packed (phew) and one has already left for college. All this in just a few weeks time.

I'm packing up two sons for college this fall. Although not really, because they haven't started packing. Just me, in my mind. Wondering if we have extra-long twin blankets or power strips or plastic bin of the size that might squeeze into the crevices called dorm closets.

I want to be prepared—not just with plastic bins, but with my heart. Life moves quickly when two of your sons are 19 and 18, those ages precariously balanced on the precipice between teenager and adult. They sometimes slide down one side, other times the opposite. And I'm finding myself looking to the Lord more often, waiting and watching for direction in this season of parenting.

I read this week in the Old Testament of the Israelites living in the wilderness, and I imagine how those mamas must have felt. They, too, didn't know what tomorrow would bring. Of course, their worries about chariots in pursuit, lack of water in the desert or snakebites make my concerns look pitiful. But still we are all mamas, wanting to take care of our families.

And trying to remember to watch for the Lord for direction.

I wander through Numbers 9 for a few days, reading of the cloud that is the Lord, how it covered the tabernacle in the Israelites' camp in the wilderness. How the entire camp was to remain when it remained and set out when set out.

I notice verbs—covered, lifted, settled, camped, set out, rested, remained, continued—climbing up and down over each other. Rising and falling, not in a pattern predictable by man, but in a

landscape of hills and valleys created by the Lord.

I think about those mamas, watching the cloud that is the Lord. Watching as they set up tents for their families, gather manna day after day, mark the growth of their little boys into young men. All the time watching out for the Lord.

While he rested and remained in sight, they were to do the same. But when he set out, they were to be ready. Ready to roll up their bedding, wrap up their kneading bowls in their cloaks and herd their children at the sound of a trumpet.

"Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time, that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding there, the people of Israel remained in camp and did not set out, but when it lifted they set out. At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out." (Numbers 9:22-23)

I camp on that thought—the remaining and the being ready, the commanding and the setting out. The vigilance required in watching the Lord. The complete faith in his guidance. I know that just a few chapters later in Numbers they will stop watching and run ahead, with deadly consequences. I don't want to read that part yet, so I rest in Numbers 9.

And I determine to watch for the Lord as I parent my boys on the precipice of



adulthood. So I know when to remain and when to set out, in my words and thoughts and actions.

And I praise him for the verbs of Numbers 9, how the Lord covers and settles and abides; then commands and sets out before me.

Follow Cheryce's blog at www.hopeandbelonging.com.

There are probably a lot of parents reading this right now and thinking, "Yes, yes. That's exactly how I feel." This is the time of year when parents with sons and daughters of those precipice ages pack them up, say their good-byes and send them on their way to college. With Wheaton College right across the street from College Church, we will see an influx of new students on Sunday,



August 20. We will have the privilege of not only welcoming the students to our church family, but also reassuring their parents that we will watch out for their sons and daughters. So, next Sunday, look around for new faces, especially if those faces look a bit nervous and sad or anxious, and welcome

them to College Church, take them to the Welcome Center for a visitor's bag, walk over to Commons, or encourage them to check out the special work College Group will be doing to say "welcome."