



*Christine Riffel Herbel*

The many intricate details in life continue to amaze me. Through several major events that occurred this year, God showed me how much he is totally into the details of my life. He cares for me relentlessly. Where I fail as a human to meet the needs of the people around me, God never tires of seeing to my needs and always fulfills his promises.

What a relief to know that God cares so much. Second Chronicles 16:9 tells me “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may *strongly support* those whose heart is completely His” (NASB, emphasis mine). That tells me God is watching over me and is mightily upholding my life.

My husband, DeLayne, and I have three sons: Landon 17, Erich 14, and Carson 11. I teach elementary school, and we worship at First Baptist Church of Durham, about 15 miles from our family farm in rural Lehigh, Kansas. Max and Sadie, our loyal dogs, never give much rest to our 15 cats.

Watch for God in the little details of life. I believe he’s putting details before us to see how many we notice!

*BIBLE READING: Matthew 19:16-26*

During the school year, deep cleaning at our house is limited. When school's out, we spend summer weeks cleaning. I find myself saying, "Why did we keep all this stuff?"

In America, we have so much, especially the availability of material goods. Mega stores and online shopping give us unlimited access to things. I can accumulate so much in a hurry.

Too many material things block my sight of God in more ways than one. If I don't have a detailed system in place for de-accumulating, closets fill and papers to file away become scattered everywhere. Dealing with "things" not only takes my time, but occupies my thoughts.

We were raised by parents whose parents experienced the Great Depression. We tend to keep everything with the thought that if we never throw anything away, we won't have to go out and buy it when needed. In the mean time, the house fills up and a lot of what is kept is rarely used.

So, what should I do? I certainly don't have the answer. But I do know I need a detailed plan to keep my home and life free from excess accumulation. Studying Jesus and his habits, I see this: Live simply. Give a lot. Do without.

These habits are certainly not easily picked up overnight. I have to work at them, daily. Just as I must seek Christ day by day, in the same way I need to watch what crosses my threshold. Does the number of material objects entering my home balance with the number of items exiting? Simplicity is God's way.

*SONG: Cleanse Me*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, Help me not lose sight of your ways. Keep me focused on giving more than I keep.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel

*BIBLE READING: Luke 2:41-51*

With three boys, there are days we go every direction. I can relate to Mary and Joseph after the Passover when they were more than a day's walk from Jerusalem. First of all, imagine *walking* with your family for several days! How many “are-we-there-yets” would you hear? Many people were traveling so Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was with others. Soon, they realized Jesus was not to be found. Frantic, Mary and Joseph headed back toward Jerusalem.

If you've ever temporarily lost your child, minutes seem like hours. When Mary and Joseph get to town, they find Jesus in the temple. A mother goes through mixed emotions at the moment of reuniting: joy—a firm hug to once again see your child safe; then, upset feelings because of the choices he or she made. Verse 48 in *The Message* says, “His mother said, ‘Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you.’” I have to chuckle when I read that.

What amazes me next about the boy Christ is his matter-of-fact, well-thought-out words at the age of 12, “Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?” (v. 49). Have you ever been upset with your child only to find out *you* were the one who was frantic and lost?

Even as a boy, Jesus was in the details of his Father. Oh, that we could adjust our focal point to be crisply aligned with Christ, instead of letting the details of life overwhelm us! Let this truth from the boy Jesus be our inspiration.

*SONG: His Eye Is on the Sparrow*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, keep me focused on you through all the details of life.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel

*BIBLE READING: Luke 24:13-32*

In the 1940s, due to labor shortages in war times, young high school boys were asked to work for the National Park and Forestry Service. Two boys were chosen to work at Yosemite National Park. One boy, after being awed by his beautiful surroundings, knew he didn't have enough film for the summer. Fortunately, he found a shop with the film type his camera required. While in the store, a man—seeing the boy's camera—talked with him. The man asked the boy if he'd like to go along on a photo shoot to Half Dome. Early the next morning, they started out. "I've been waiting for years to get this photo; every detail has to be just right." The photographer continued to teach the boy the details to obtaining the perfect photograph. It wasn't until years later the boy realized he had been in the presence of famous photographer, Ansel Adams. What the boy learned from Ansel Adams left a huge impact on his life.

Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus and came alongside two men. They did not realize in whose presence they walked. Later they said, "Were not our hearts burning?"

Even when we are unaware, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Our every thought, the details of every concern the Holy Spirit experiences with us. The most famous Person walks with us and enables us to do our humdrum tasks and our thrilling experiences. If we feel lonely, we can recall that Jesus is with us. Even better than the world-renowned photographer, we have Christ who gives us all the details to live by, proven in his Word.

*SONG: All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, if I'm hiking a trail or shopping the mall, you are there whether I realize it or not.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel

*BIBLE READING: Matthew 14:13-21*

Each year, the Kansas City Symphony packs up its orchestra and travels to the heart of Kansas' Flint Hills. The event draws more than 5,000 people, some of whose vehicles have never crossed a cattle guard or driven in a bumpy pasture. But we all seek one thing: beauty—whether the acoustically perfect symphony sounds nestled within the natural amphitheater, or the awesome view of miles and miles of lush green rolling hills and blue sky without a single telephone pole or fence in sight.

Logistics for this event are huge! Detailed plans begin years in advance and more than 500 staff work from sunup to sundown to put on this event. At the large food tent, semi-tractor trailers back up to the tent, servicing the never-ending food lines. One whole truck was completely full of just bottled water. And I don't think I've ever seen so many port-a-pots in one place!

I had to think of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Our grassy hillside may have looked a lot like where Jesus sat to teach. With a simple command, he was able to provide food for thousands. He did not need a detailed plan, nor did he order special meals to arrive on time, hot and tasty. In the end, there were even leftovers. And to think Jesus used a small boy's simple lunch offering to get it all started. God is amazing. He didn't need a degree in hospitality management to pull off this event. He is *detailed*. He is God.

*SONG: He Owns the Cattle on a Thousand Hills*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, nothing is impossible for you. With skilled detail, you make your plans known.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel

*BIBLE READING: John 15:13*

Far sweeter than cotton candy are lifelong friendships that last the decades. Those friendships sometimes start unexpectedly and before we realize it, years have passed and the other people we've known as friends have come and gone. But one or more stay with us for life. Recently, Julie, my best friend since kindergarten, passed away at the age of 46.

Many days I wish I could text or call Julie. That's when I try to recall one of the funny experiences we had together, like summer a year ago when we met half-way between Kansas and Texas in Oklahoma at a restaurant along the interstate. We always got in trouble for laughing too much in school. At the table, we started "belly" laughing so hard, we could hardly get our breath. When Julie started laughing that much, she snorted...which accelerated the laughter! Of course, that was the moment the waitress came to take our order.

I truly believe that God brings every person into our life for a purpose. Many times a person's life is likened to a tapestry. Every color under the sun is part of a tapestry, even black. Like the people God allows to influence us, some add bright colors and some darker. The experiences—when woven together—form a beautiful picture. If God has given you rich, deep friendships, you are fortunate. How can you seek out friendships? Start by praying. Be thankful for people you know. You just might be a bigger influence on them than you realize.

*SONG: I Have Found a Friend in Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Best Friend, help me realize that each person you've placed in my life is a gift.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel

*BIBLE READING: John 13:1-9*

December 2009, I drove to Texas to spend a weekend with Julie. Her illness was moving fast and the numbers of her days on earth were short. When I arrived, we visited for a while, laughed a little bit, then one of the first things she asked of me was to help her wash her hair. As she sat in the chair, I gladly lathered up her hair and gave it a good rinse. As I was doing this, I felt so humble. This simple act on my part helped her feel so much better. It was such a small task, but it had a great effect. She was so grateful. I also saw first-hand that people who are dying still have tremendous dignity.

The thought of Jesus washing the disciples' feet came to mind. This was the Creator of the universe performing a humble task. But it was a little detail that needed taking care of. People wore sandals and their feet got dusty. Men's dirty feet needed to be washed. By washing their feet, Jesus not only made them physically clean, he signified to them the value of spiritual washing, and the cleansing of their souls from sin.

Jesus cares for us and wants us to care for others. He is humbly there for us. He not only took time to do humble tasks, but also very detailed tasks. But mostly, he took time to converse with his Father and to serve others. There is a balance there that we all need to seek and find.

*SONG: What Can Wash Away My Sin?*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Great Server, show me ways I can serve others in your name, no matter how humble or detailed the task.*

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*BIBLE READING: Luke 22:17-20*

Saturday evening, I knew my weekend visiting Julie was going to be over as I had to return home to Kansas. About supper time, I told Julie I was going out for a sandwich and asked her if anything sounded good to her. She told me in detail exactly the kind of sub sandwich she wanted, so I went and got it: tuna with all the veggie fixings and extra banana peppers. When I went to the sub shop, I told the man fixing the sandwich this was for my very ill friend and how special she was to me. He said it was a privilege to prepare her sub sandwich. This stranger, as he carefully piled on the fresh ingredients, asked me her name and said he would share this with his church and pray for her. He piled on mounds of banana peppers, our favorite.

Back at the house, after I had prayed for our meal, she asked for a small portion for herself. Eight bites. She ate eight bites. She said it tasted good. Up to this point, she could hardly eat anything. It was the most holy tuna sandwich I'll ever eat. As we shared what ended up being our last supper, I thought of Jesus and his disciples sharing their last supper together. Jesus divided the portions of bread and the cup and shared it with his friends. Jesus knew what he had to do in the next days. Julie knew what she had to do, too; she would meet her Savior three days later.

*SONG: Safe in the Arms of Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, you give us holy moments. I pray I'm not ever in too big of a hurry to miss the details of those moments.*

—Christine Riffel Herbel