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It Takes a Lot of Courage

It takes a lot of courage to be a human being. I recently received a picture of the grandson of a friend of mine. I thought that this baby does not know that yet. Looking into his eyes, it is easy to see that he doesn't know anything about thunderstorms, arthritis or depression. He doesn't lie awake at night worrying about his job or his relationships or his death. His world is as wide as his parents' arms and as safe. That is all he knows.

As he ages, he will learn more. He will learn that bees sting, poison ivy causes itching and other children push and throw rocks. He will learn that when your parents decide to move to another city, there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. All of that is part of growing up. It is part of how we learn what it is to be a human being.

Year after year, we add to our experiences of the world. And gradually we begin to gain a sense of our own power. We open bank accounts and make future plans. We take our vitamins and work out at the gym. We begin to think that if we just do everything right, then everything will turn out right, that human beings can really take charge of their lives.

Until something happens. Our income suddenly disappears, our doctor finds a spot on our X ray, our children have problems in school. In a split second everything changes. "I've lost control!" That is what good people say when bad things happen to them. "I've lost control of my life!" I have said this myself, but it is not true. Human beings do not lose control of their lives. What we lose is the illusion that we were ever in control of our lives in the first place. We keep thinking that there must be some way to work it out, some way to master the human condition so that there are no scares, no surprises, no black holes.

But as far as I know, it cannot be done. Maybe that is why it is called the

human condition. Being human is a condition we live with, a wonderful one in most respects, but one with certain limitations. Some things will budge for us and some will not. We cannot live forever. We cannot control everything that happens to us. That is the human condition, and it can be frightening, because what that means is that we cannot choose all the circumstances of our lives. All we can really choose is how we respond to them, and that is why it takes a lot of courage to be a human being. Believing in Jesus will not put us in charge or get us what we want or even save us from all harm, but believing in him, having faith in him, we may gradually lose our fear of our lives. Whatever the human condition we find ourselves in, we may finally learn to live it, maybe even to love it, only because we believe he lives and loves it, too.

~Written by Pam Pendexter

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