

Reflections from my trip to Germany

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The first weekend in February I had the privilege of attending a Euro-wide Women's retreat in Landstuhl, Germany. It was a last minute decision. Matt and I had discussed whether or not I should attend, but we really couldn't afford it. Also, less important issues just impressed us that it wouldn't be wise, when we were planning last year. I didn't know anyone, I was nursing, and we couldn't afford it. No other missionary wives up in this region were interested in going with me, either. Then, I got an email three weeks before the retreat, reminding us it still wasn't too late to come. At that point, Matt and I thought, why not? Let's just trust the Lord to meet the need. Susan Sligh, the event coordinator, then told me someone had donated my fee. I volunteered to play the flute, knowing the Lord would have me be a blessing if I could. Susan wrote back and said she'd been praying for a flutist.



My first overnight trip away from Olivia! I cleaned and cooked and packed until the wee hours of the morning I was to leave. It was rather exciting to board a plane in the dark, and I had every confidence Matt and Olivia would have a great time together. Once I landed in Nuremburg, a really cool pastor's wife picked me up from the airport and we rode together to Landstuhl. I sat in the back seat with one of the women in her church, a divorced German lady who I sensed needed encouragement in the Lord. It was a three-hour ride, and even though I hadn't had any sleep the night before, I asked the Lord to help me be a blessing to her. I gave her my testimony, and the Holy Spirit encouraged me to use a Psalm that I had recently read concerning our hope being in the promises of God, Psalm 78. I fumbled over my words, lost my point in what I was trying to say several times, and felt that I just didn't communicate very well. The lady was gracious, however. Later that evening, we heard Debbie Pryde speak for the first time. And do you know what came out of Debbie's mouth? She quoted the very same verses I had shared with this German lady! Debbie gave more testimony as to how our hope is to be founded in the promises of God, but of course did it with much more clarity than I. I was truly beside myself with joy that I had heard the Holy Spirit, that I had obeyed, and that He was encouraging me through Debbie. I purposed in my heart to again testify of the Lord's goodness to the same German lady the next day. The Holy Spirit again encouraged, as Debbie again had us look at the very same passage of scripture I had quoted to this German lady over lunch, Psalm 104. The Lord evidently was working in this lady's life, and by the end of the retreat I saw her commit some real issues to the Lord with her pastor's wife. I praise the Lord for his mercy and goodness.

These were important lessons for me, in that I know the Lord wants me to listen to him all the time. He isn't going to speak to me just through Debbie, (isn't this how cults start, or groupies are born?) I happened to be really aware of it because I didn't have the distraction of my family for the first time. I came home with a new vision for listening to my husband's sermons, and in opening my heart up to what Matt has to say all the time.... with the same expectation of blessing and encouragement that I went to this retreat with. I enjoyed the theme of "The Lord is my Shepherd," it was far more in depth than I expected. Debbie was used of God to bring light to how the Shepherd cares for us in ways I truly hadn't thought of before. The fear I had of ministering to women has dissipated greatly, partly because of Debbie's practical advice on how to shepherd women, her complete reliance on Scripture, and partly because I was able to see, hear, and speak with other pastor's wives about their own experiences with ministering to women, their husbands and children. I left very encouraged, and challenged beyond measure.

I even met a woman at this retreat who shared with me that she and her husband, formerly of First Baptist in Long Beach (and currently stationed in Landstuhl), had prayed for a decade for Matt to find a wife. She nearly had a stroke when she met me. It was a moment of joy for both of us!

When the Holy Spirit prompts a believer, we do need to openly talk about the things of God, instead of letting his still small voice go unheard and unheeded. He takes such pleasure in our efforts of hearing and doing (James 1), and will reward accordingly. He has so many wonderful promises that if we just believe, we will have the peace and confidence he so richly gives. Psalm 78:4 "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done...vs7a "that they might set their hope in God...."