

Mama's Patchwork Quilt

I was rummaging through the back closet the other day and ran across an old quilt my Mama had made many years ago. I had a little time so I pulled the quilt down and looked at it. Memories flooded my heart and mind. You see, the quilt wasn't like some that are made today, where the quilt pieces are pre-cut to be the same size or bought new at a store all color coordinated. This quilt was made from scraps...leftovers from things my mom had made for all of us over the years. There is no telling how many hours my Mama spent (and still spends) at the sewing machine. I would venture to say that at least seventy five percent of all we wore came from that labor, and the scrap pieces of material were put in a diaper pail (yes, cloth diaper days). These pieces were saved and used for quilts, doll clothes, pillows, ornaments, crafts, etc. So as I looked at this quilt I could remember what piece of clothing was made out of a particular square. Not only did I remember the fabric, I also remembered who wore it and almost what season of life we were in at that time. It's funny how so many memories were attached to a piece of cloth. I could see my Mom washing dishes in a blouse where one square came from. I remembered having a vest or jacket from another. The squares didn't have to color coordinate or match in size to be beautiful. They just had to fit together.

That particular quilt was made from mostly double knit material that was popular at that time. (I know only some of you will understand what I'm talking about!!). It is a thick, stretchy, durable fabric so the quilt is very heavy and strong. That quilt traveled in the trunk of a car to every football game, track meet, tennis meet and stock show my brother and I went to. When my boys started playing sports, even as little ones, my mom gave me that quilt to haul around...and haul it, I did. Again, it made every football game, track meet, tennis meet, soccer game, and stock show. My younger son and his wife were going to be tent camping in the mountains of New Mexico a few summers ago and guess which quilt I pulled down for them? Yep, the old double knit patch work quilt. The amazing thing is, it doesn't look any older or worse for the wear today than when my mom first made it. The trip that summer officially began the quilt's travels into the 3rd generation of my family.

As I sat there on the bed that day looking at the quilt, I wondered just how many laughs and giggles took place under that quilt as my friends and I were bundled up at a ballgame or stock show. I wondered how many sandwiches were put together at track meets sitting on top of that blanket. Babies were bundled up sleeping soundly through noisy ballgames in Mama's or Meme's arms under that old blanket. And it all came from scraps in a diaper pail and sewn together with love.

I looked back up in the closet and there was another quilt Mom had made from different fabric...mostly cotton. I noticed, that because that fabric wasn't as stretchy, it had begun to ravel and pull apart just slightly at the seams from many years of use. I looked back at the double knit quilt and inspected it even further. I found no raveling and no pulling apart. As He so often does, the Lord began to speak to me through just an ordinary moment in my day and used an old quilt to do it.

You see, that old quilt is as the body of Christ should be. Just like the colors and sizes of fabric in that quilt are all different, so we are all different. Our gifts, talents, anointing, and personalities are unique. There are those in the body of Christ who are very outgoing and those who are more reserved. Some have a passion for little children while others love to serve the elderly. Some stand in front of folks and teach, preach and sing while others are behind the scenes making sure everything runs smoothly. Some crave to take the gospel internationally to the nations while others desire to minister in their homes. He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. There are helps and working of miracles. There are a variety of gifts. That's one part of what makes us unique. There are also the differences that come culturally. We all come from different walks of life. Some of us grew up in the city while some were in the country. Some lived in big cities, and others rural towns. Some played sports and some didn't. Some thrive at home while others have a desire to be in the work place. Some love accounting and some, the arts. Some grew up an only child while some had brothers and sisters. All of these things make us who we are. Our design, or the fabric, of each of our lives is unique according to the Creator's plan and yet, when united by Holy Spirit, we are formed perfectly one with another regardless of sizes or colors...just like that quilt. However, without that thread to hold those quilt pieces together, they would still be just scraps in an old diaper pail. What holds us together? Holy Spirit is the thread that makes it all come together into a beautiful piece of work. We call this the unity of the Spirit. When my mom sewed that quilt, she had one purpose in mind. She wanted all those pieces to come together to form something useful...something to serve our family...something to protect us from the cold. The pieces of that quilt were much more useful after being joined with other pieces than they were apart in that old diaper pail. Your piece in the quilt is not insignificant. If my kids had taken that quilt to the mountains of New Mexico with a square or two of fabric missing, the cold night air would have seeped through and they wouldn't have been protected from the cold. If one of those squares had come loose and fallen out, the entire quilt would have been weakened because stress and strain is put on the other pieces. It just isn't as sturdy. Every part of that quilt is vital. I've always been in awe of the Father's master plan. He may 'sew' someone beside us that is so different from us that we can't see how it will possibly work. We may look around at times and think, "What am I doing here?" But in the unity of the Spirit, there is purpose.

Remember when I said that the double knit (stretchy) quilt hadn't raveled or torn like the more stiff, cotton fabric? It is the love of Christ for us and in us that allows us to stretch and give where we need to in order to be durable. By 'stretching and giving' I'm not speaking of compromise, I'm speaking of being compassionate, patient and loving. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstances". (1 Corinthians 13) In that love, we stretch when those around us are going through difficulties, and they stretch for us. Walking in covenant relationship means we are there for each other no matter what the cost. Speaking the truth (Spirit of Truth...Holy Spirit...the thread) in love (stretching and not quitting on each other) is what that looks like. If Holy Spirit sews you into a family, then you fit perfectly to those around you. Be who you are created to be. That patchwork quilt wouldn't hold the value in my heart that it does if it was all the same color. I cherish it because my Mama sewed it from pieces of our lives. The Father sews us together because we are a part of His. **The unity of the Spirit** is what joins us as individuals, one to another, to form something useful and vital to the Kingdom of God. Anything other than that will not hold together; it will not stand the test of time and trials.

That old quilt has now covered my grandbabies. I fully expect to see it hauled to another round of sporting events in the coming years and I am looking forward to telling my grandchildren the stories of those pieces of fabric and their Meme's love for her family that pieced it all together.