

When we know something to be true, when we know the right direction or the next steps to take, do we actually take them, or do we look around to see what others are doing? Do we set our pace to those around us, our rhythm and movement to the group's, even if the group's is wrong? Do we allow our confidence in the truth to wane and seek to blend in with the majority? Or do we do what we know is right, follow what we know to be true? Do we keep to the pace, rhythm and movement of the Spirit within?

If we are men-pleasers it is perhaps a hard question to ask. But if we are God-pleasers then both the question and the answer is easy. As true followers of Christ we must always maintain our true north. And we must prove to man, not to God (who knows all things), that we believe what the bible says and we prove it by living it!

This weekend was Ava's ballet performance of Cinderella. For months now various groups based on age and ability, have been rehearsing for this drama / ballet performance. Because of the number of children involved in the ballet, two performances were to take place on two consecutive days. Normally, the majority of the dancing and the drama portion are performed by the older girls in the ballet school. These "carry" the show while the younger girls dance one or two dances.

We were surprised to discover that this time, Ava was asked to dance on both Saturday and on Sunday! Thinking that she was going to dance a couple of dances with the older girls simply because of her height, we readily agreed: she would dance on both days!

Imagine our surprise: the second dance of the show begins, and the only girl to appear from behind the scenes is Ava followed by just one other girl! We watch on in total wonder and amazement as the two dance a duet in which Ava is Cinderella and the other girl is Cinderella's father. We are amazed as throughout months of dropping and picking Ava up from ballet classes, she never once mentioned that she would be performing this dance alone! Our shock and amazement continues to grow as we watch her as lead dancer for another troupe of girls! Over and over we are amazed to see our little one leading and dancing her heart out! Of course our camera video never stops rolling and it has been playing on our computer like an infomercial for days now!

We both wonder what surprises await us for the Sunday performance. We know that the second performance will be different: more kids, less room. But we wonder what role Ava will play in the larger groups. As the play begins, we notice that the space for twirling is notably smaller as more and more children fill up the stage. Ava, though not lead dancer is still up front, but cramped and crowded. We watch as our little ballerina begins to dance as the music begins. But wait, what is this? Our totally confident daughter who danced a flawless performance just hours before, is now stumbling and unsure. We watch as she tries to match her movement and rhythm to the leader's steps while trying to follow what she instinctively knows to be right. She shifts her focus from what she knows to be true and begins to focus on what the others were doing!

It is mayhem on stage: not enough room to dance, dancers dancing off beat, off feet, and not so sweet. Everyone seems to be doing something different with dancers spinning in different places. Who was Ava to follow? It's painful to watch Ava's internal struggle. Should she follow the others, or should she listen to the music within her and follow what she knows to be true. At intermission I go back stage to encourage her to not give sway to others around her and not worry about looking to the lead dancer. Instead, I encourage her to stay focused on the music and to allow herself to move to it's impulse.

The pep-talk makes all the difference: Ava's confidence is restored. She is encouraged to stay true to the dance and true to what she knows to be the right timing and steps. And so the performance begins again. At times the majority of the dancers finish before her and have to wait until the music catches up. But Ava? She finishes every pose and step on cue.

Was her performance flawless? No! But most importantly, she didn't allow herself to be lured into a false rhythm of truth. Instead, she stayed true to the music and the internal rhythm, even when it meant she was the only one still twirling, or the one standing still, alone.

The talk helped her. She was able to do what was right and in the process tune out what was wrong. It helped *her*, but the difference was noticed by all those around her.

Is this a lesson for our faith journey or what? How easy is it to begin to look around instead of within. How easy is it to allow the world or others set the rhythm and pace of life instead of yielding to the Lord of the dance and move to the impulse His Spirit. How easy is it to give in just a little, just a step or two and not even noticed when truth becomes distorted. How often do we allow ourselves to get off beat, off path when things get frenetic or when crisis hits?

Do we allow ourselves to morph into the larger community thinking that it will be a better performance or a better outcome if we go with the flow? Do we hold to this even when it is not based on truth, or do we stay true to His Word knowing that lives based on His truth create a beautiful masterpiece that brings Glory to Him?

I've always heard that it is easier to stand in a crowd with convictions than it is to stand alone. While this may be true for some things, this weekend proved something totally different. When Ava chose to listen to the music within and yielded to what she had learned, then a beautiful masterpiece was created. Striving ceased and it became an act of grace and beauty.

When we've prepared for our life's performance; when the music lives within us and the steps flow from obedience and love; when we find ourselves surrounded by others who have prepared and are ready, but we sense that something is not quite right: will we give in and follow, knowing it's not a true representation of the dance? Or will we stay true to the truth of *our* God given journey, *our* God inspired dance? Our decisions always impact those around us. The question is: will our decision be for truth or some impression of false truth?

Let us encourage one another to keep the faith, stay faithful to what we know to be truth, and live our lives in a way that stands out in a crowd and seek to glorify the Lord!

For His Fame!
Daniel, Kathleen & Ava