



*Flo Harvey*

Greetings and blessings to you, fellow sojourners on the wonderful but bumpy road of life. I am Flo Harvey, home school mom of eight, part-time florist, and a member of Northridge Friends Church in Wichita, KS.

The last few years for the Harvey family (Mike and me plus 6, now 8, children) have been fraught with numerous trials and tribulations, blessedly interspersed with glimpses of unimaginable delight and wonder. Like many others our journey has involved great struggle, immense growth, and thankfully, deepening relationships with one another and our heavenly Father. I'm even more grateful to be able to cling to him and to the fellow travelers that he has so knowingly placed on our journey. We are truly blessed beyond measure!

I plan to share some of our recent "road trip" experiences this week. I pray a piece of our life's journey, including lessons learned and relearned, will speak to you and provide encouragement on your own journey.

Now, start your engines, open up those Bible "road maps," and together we will cruise the King's highway towards our eternal destination, one day at a time. Traveling mercies to all; now, let's roll!

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 121:1-2*

When traveling life's road we are guaranteed to encounter "road work" along the way. Dreaded detours and costly delays often spring up suddenly, catching us unaware and uncertain of the way to proceed.

A few years ago our family cruised along life's roads, dodging a pothole here and there, when seemingly out of nowhere Mike's job came to an abrupt end. Although his job loss happened three years ago, I still remember sitting in a mid-morning Bible study, ironically praying for a woman whose husband had been unemployed for a significant time. Mike appeared at the door, saying that he had been terminated. The proverbial "rug" had been pulled from beneath us. Even today, I can still recall that "kicked in the gut" feeling as if it happened yesterday.

Given today's uncertainties many people find themselves in the same dark place of detour, uncertain of the way to proceed. Many are out of work, out of finances, out of a home, out of family—out of hope. But this bump in the road gives Christians the opportunity to shine our light on the path ahead. We have hope: the only true hope that can be counted on in a time of crisis. We can offer tangible help with food, money, shelter; but more importantly, we get to demonstrate Christ's love and salvation as the *only* eternal, trustworthy means of help and hope. I wouldn't want to face a detour without him: would you?

*SONG: He Giveth More Grace*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Father, walk alongside us for you truly are our only help and hope. Never leave us. Amen.*

*—Flo Harvey*

*BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 5:7*

Many travelers prepare for unforeseen complications that might arise during a trip. My husband, Mike, will pack two extra days' worth of clothes, tools for mechanical issues, change for toll roads, extra toilet paper, a towel in case of spills or upset stomachs, and other "necessities" too numerous to mention. I, however, pack lightly; if I need it or didn't pack it, I can always find a Walmart nearby.

Times of crisis not only wash away our intended path, but often sweep away the provisions we've made for unforeseen complications, as well as demolish the bridge on which we depended to safely cross the flood waters.

During the beginning of Mike's unemployment we relied heavily on provisions we had collected "just in case." Our savings, Mike's severance pay, some investments, my job, and friends got us through the first year. In the meantime Mike continued to apply for jobs, but one by one, each of those resources became depleted. Then I injured my arm at work, requiring surgery and cutting back my hours. The flood waters seemed to engulf us without a bridge to safety in sight.

Through it all God reminded us that we weren't to rely on ourselves or any safety net: our provision and help came from him. When you arrive at the end of yourself and your earthly provisions, there you'll find God. Some days the provision came literally day to day. In our circumstances he kept us in the palm of his hand with no need unmet.

*SONG: God Will Take Care of You*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Heavenly Father, we are so overwhelmed by your care for us. Thank you for that constant care. Amen*

*—Flo Harvey*

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 16:11*

In this day of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) common opinion says that it is unlikely for someone to truly get lost. Not me: certifiably challenged in regards to technology, I am part of a family full of techno-geeks. I can't turn on the crazy GPS, much less program or interpret the device.

About two years ago God revealed that we might be adding to our family. At the time we had six children, and after the last birth, we were told we could not have more.

My heart had been crying out for more children to love—crazy as that may seem. Immediately my wee brain pictured a cuddly precious baby in our future—I couldn't wait. I knew where I wanted to go. But his GPS (God's Positioning System) would take us somewhere different. Only he could have orchestrated the series of events that opened our home and hearts to a six-year-old mentally and physically handicapped boy and his three-and-a-half-year-old female cousin. This destination was definitely not on my radar, and certainly not part of my romanticized picture. Lost, frustrated, and overwhelmed, I wondered: did we misread the map? Did we not understand or follow the directions?

This journey had far more complications, baggage, and sacrifice than I had imagined. Surely there was some mistake! But through his Word, his people, and his revelation coming to us over the following weeks, God brought assurance that we were not lost. He had planned this exact destination for us and these two little ones. We were not lost but rather found in the arms of the One with a never-failing GPS.

*SONG: All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, may you always walk beside us, guiding and directing our every step. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Proverbs 3:5-6*

Once we realized that our family would look decidedly different than anticipated, we started down the road of adopting Stanley and Kimberly. As a result of our obedience and added responsibility, I felt convinced that Mike would find employment soon. How else could we provide for this family of ten?

Stanley's adoption was finalized in January 2011. We went to the social security office to change his name for his disability checks, when BOOM: like a car wreck in a foreign country, we were broadsided. We found out that we would have to reapply for Stanley's disability funds based on our income and resources, not on his multiple disabilities.

Stanley still should have qualified for assistance. I only worked part-time, and Mike worked here and there. Our oldest child was a full-time college student, and our assets were drained beyond three old cars, a home in need of repairs, and lots of kids. Then we discovered the problem. Mike's mom gave us a trust that contained a 1/6 share of a small piece of scrub brush property in Colorado. The social security worker incorrectly determined that the entire property belonged to us, pushing our assets over the tiny qualification for available resources. From that month forward, Stanley's disability check—which had helped us cover the costs of these two new unexpected children—was gone. Once again, God reminded us of the promise that he would never forsake us, especially when we felt broadsided, wounded, and dazed. We had to remain obedient and "rely not on our own understanding." God is in the driver's seat, and his driving proved trustworthy.

*SONG: Trust and Obey*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help us to cling to you when we don't understand, so that we might trust you more. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 119:88*

This week while driving to work I ran out of gas. How embarrassing! It happened during one of those “110 degrees in the shade” days that we have in Kansas. Our gas tank wasn’t the only thing to become drained as I sat sweltering in the triple digit heat waiting to be rescued.

When Stanley’s disability funds stopped, we began the appeal process, knowing the decision was based on incorrect information. In the midst of filing paperwork we learned that Kimberly’s biological mother was in an Oklahoma jail. We hadn’t begun Kimberly’s adoption, but received advice to proceed immediately. This situation could simplify and speed up the process.

But, like the van, we were out of gas. Stanley’s disabilities required extra appointments, paperwork, phone calls, and assistance. The appeal process took more papers and calls. We had to find resources, both legally and financially, to file papers for Kimberly. Already drained financially, now we experienced spiritual, emotional, and physical lack. We had essentially been running just above empty for years.

Part of that refilling and refreshing came through participation in the fellowship of our congregation. The act of worshiping together with the body of believers strengthens, renews, encourages, and bathes us in God’s own care. Some Sundays I could only stand with hands uplifted and tears flowing as I was reminded of his love and care. Then, I could face the next day with a new assurance of God’s love.

Let us remember the need to fill our tanks rather than wait for our gas to run out, leaving us stranded and empty.

*SONG: Revive Us Again*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, some days we run low. Revive and refresh us to do your will. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Some of the best trips I've taken have been with friends or family. The fellowship, laughter, and shared experiences (both good and bad) make for a more memorable and meaningful trip. Even now as we load the ten of us into our church's retired fifteen-passenger van, the kids love to relate stories from previous adventures, such as a previous church-sponsored event. They will often say, "Remember when...?"

Our trips, trials, and tribulations wouldn't have had nearly as much adventure, sorrow, laughter, joy, encouragement, grief, or downright fun if not for our traveling companions. Fellow travelers on God's journey have made the trip far more memorable and meaningful. The privilege of "doing life" together has brought tremendous privilege and blessing. What a realization that the one true God put us in this exact place with these particular people, giving us the wonderful opportunity to go through life together!

I see the importance of caring for those God has placed alongside us. A hug; a hello or a card; a smile or word of encouragement; a helping hand or a loving rebuke; dining, working, or worshiping together—all of these things make for better relationships. These ties bind us together, creating a network of care and discipleship that can't be beat. We are far better together than we could ever be apart. God is so incredibly smart! We act as a force that changes the world when we love, live, and learn in community. I encourage you to grab the companions that God has placed in your midst and to take the road trip of a lifetime.

*SONG: Blest Be the Tie That Binds*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you so much for the family and friends you have given to each of us. We are truly blessed.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Hebrews 11*

“Are we there, yet?” asks one child after another, seemingly beginning the minute we leave on a trip. No matter how many ways the timing of the trip is explained, the questions continue, yet they never doubt our eventual arrival. The concern is for the journey, a somewhat maddening reality.

I’ve bombarded God with those same questions, only my questions get more intense. “When will Mike get a job offer? How long will it be? Will we be able to straighten out the misunderstanding with the social security office? How long will that take? Can we get Kimberly’s adoption finalized, or will she go back to her mother? How much do you think we can bear, Lord?” I guess my kids come by it honestly.

Even though Christians are assured of our final destination, we can struggle with the journey. We want to know the details: the ins, the outs, and the what-abouts. Spoiled by our information overloaded society, we expect to have the power at our fingertips “to know” instantaneously.

In his infinite wisdom God knows every detail and chooses not to reveal them to us beforehand. True faith and spiritual growth come through believing even in the midst of unanswered questions and unknown details. God sent his only Son to die for us, ensuring our eternal destination. We must trust that such a God would always cause things to work together for the good of those who love him, even in long and eventful journeys. His promises never change, and neither does our destination. Heaven is just down the road a bit.

*SONG: Because He Lives*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Almighty God, help us in our unbelief. We want to trust you more and grow in our faith. Amen.*

—Flo Harvey