

New Sight 目養計劃

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Samoutou Family Blog



ABOUT THIS BLOG...



Family of 5
from Gabon, Hong Kong and the UK

Living in Impfondo,
Republic of Congo
Since April 2012

Blog by Joyce the mum,
Homeschooling novice,
Eye Charity founding doctor / director.
Reluctant domestic goddess

Passionate about sashimi,
helping people see
physically and spiritually,
and Jesus

Please do give comments and feedbacks so
that we can improve the way we
communicate with you!

P.S. This is the personal blog of the
Samoutou family
(Views our own)

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ARCHIVES



I don't know how you do it (Confessions of a working homeschooling mum)

MAY 31, 2013

People often say to me, 'I don't know how you do it.' They say, 'How do you manage to run a charity, eye centre, home school, ministry and home in the depths of Africa? I wish I were as good, brave and capable as you.'

If only they see the reality! If only they see how chaotic and comical our lives actually are! At work, I have unknowingly worn trousers that my kids had personalised with Disney stickers. I have walked around with a limp until I realised that I was wearing shoes from different pairs. I was so nervous when I gave speeches that I had to hold my shaking leg to stop my noisy shoe heel from interfering with the microphone. I regularly forget my own children's names when I talk to them, which is one of the reasons why we are stopping at three!

Subconsciously, we often make self-assessments against standards set by ourselves and / or standards we perceive to be set by our friends, family and society. We have this image of what we should be as a person / Christian, as a professional / student, and as a parent / family member. When we do not resemble that image, we feel that we have fallen short. We may even feel guilty believing that we have let ourselves, people and God down. For example, when I say no (again!) to my children's request to paint, I feel like the worst and laziest homeschooling mum denying my children's potential. When I look around my cluttered house, I feel like the disappointing wife who fails to provide a relaxing home for her hard working husband. When I look at the many ancient items that are *still* on my to-do list, I feel like the incompetent apprentice shamed before Donald Trump / Alan Sugar, and wish I were more able. Here are a few things that help me when I start measuring myself against these mythical standards:

1. Recognise your humanity

When I was in medical school, my father always encouraged me to 'try your best and let God do the rest'. And my heart would sink because I always felt like I had not done my best. It was only during my final exams that I realised that my idea of doing my best meant never stopping to take a break, to sleep, and to eat! My idea of doing my best was to be some kind of super-human. Well, super-woman I am not. But a human-being I am! One with flaws and weaknesses; one who gets tired, and who messes up on a regular basis! I'd rather be super-woman, but I am learning to make the most of who I am and more importantly, whose I am! I am a child of God and He's got my back!

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2. Follow your heart

At our first baby shower, friends wrote tips and encouragement on a book as a gift to me. Our beautiful friend Helen Jones wrote, 'Of all the millions of people in the world, God chose you to be the particular parents of this particular child. So when you don't know what to do, follow your heart.' This was the best parenting advice we ever received, especially when well-meaning people gave us conflicting parenting advice and we didn't know what to do. When our first-born was a few months old, it seemed like everyone around us succeeded in getting their babies into a routine. People would ask us what our routine was. Well, our routine was 'not having a routine'! So we tried to implement these methods all the 'good' parents were using to get our baby into a routine. That was the worst 72 hours of our parenting life! Just because it is right for others doesn't mean that it is right for me! I have since learnt that if God has something to say to me, He may well speak through others but He will also talk to me. Not listening to my heart was definitely one of the most painful things in the world. I do not recommend it!


3. Prize faithfulness above results

When we were in Gabon, we enjoyed great 'success'. We were performing over 1000 eye operations and 3000 consultations a year. We were planting a rapidly growing church. We were part of a team that saw over 1700 decisions for Christ each year. So when God told us to leave Gabon and to return to the UK to wait for directions for our 'next step', it did not make any sense to us. Why on earth should we abandon productivity for apparent barrenness? I realised then that I derived a lot of my value from what I do. I needed tangible results to validate my existence. Patiently, God taught me that He is interested in our obedience and faithfulness, and that He is relatively indifferent to our so-called success and fruitfulness. Success and fruitfulness will come as a by-product of obedience and faithfulness, but what God is after is just for us to follow Him.

4. Do your thing

Sometimes people say to us, 'I can never do what you do.' Most people probably won't do what we do, but equally, we also probably won't do what they do. The Bible says. 'How can they go unless they are sent?' There is no way that we can be here in Congo and do what we do without a host of other people. We need to do our thing, and we need others to do their thing, be it to encourage, finance, spread the word, build, ship, sort administration, accounts! While it is good to aspire to be like people we look up to, we will never be any good at trying to be someone else. There will never be another person like you, there are things that only you can do and there are people whom only you can touch. So let's all get out there and do our thing!

If you are one of those people who wondered how I do what I do, well now you know the truth: I probably am not as good / brave / capable as you may imagine me to be; and I too also don't know how you do what you do! We burden ourselves wishing we could be something else, something more, when we can concentrate on excelling in who we are. Let's enjoy the truth that it's not about what we do, but about whose we are, and yes like my Dad said - God *will* do the rest.

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