

[Lessons from the Maple Tree](#) [1]

by: [Marcia Zimmerman](#) [2]

The air hung heavy and still that hot, humid, August afternoon on a little property in New Holland, Pennsylvania. The heat shimmered off the long, gray broiler barns that stood in stark contrast to the brown brick house, which was cool and inviting inside, since my mother had all the curtains and blinds drawn to protect the house from the heat. Lunch was over and the dishes were washed.

"Children," my mother said to me and three of my siblings, "I am going to put the little ones down for a nap, and I want you to bring in the laundry from the line while I am doing that." Groans erupted inside my heart although I knew it would do no earthly good to let them be heard aloud. As I trudged along with my siblings to the clothesline in the yard, even the grass felt hot beneath my bare feet. The towels hung stiff on the line, silent witnesses to the lack of strong, cool breezes in the summer afternoons in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Who felt like doing this job on such a hot afternoon?!

The maple tree stood tall and strong by the clothesline, it's lovely beautiful green leaves spreading their welcoming shade toward me. I stood gazing up into that big, beautiful tree (procrastinating from my work). On impulse, I grabbed a washcloth and climbed onto the lowest branch, declaring that I would do my share of the work, up in the tree. One washcloth is quite a measly contribution to pulling my weight in the work force of the home. I know it now, and I knew it then, but I certainly did not choose back then to let that stop me from acting on a whim, without carefully considering God or others. Impulsive living is that way. It only focuses on the here and now, and not on the effect our actions will have on others and ourselves.

My sister, who was much more dependable and much more diligent than I had proven to be, stopped her work to appeal to my bad behavior. Wrapping her arms around the tree branch on which I sat, she peered up at me with a laugh, and a call for me to come down from the tree. Suddenly, without warning, that tree branch shook just enough for me to lose my balance (remember, I was folding that washcloth!). Down from that branch I tumbled onto the hot grass below. Immediately, searing pain in my right wrist caused me to scream in pain, writhing on the ground, while my siblings looked on in shock and concern at their sister's plight.

My screaming brought my mother to the upstairs window. After looking out and seeing the emergency that was unfolding on the yard below, she quickly called my father, who was at work.

I was sad as my mother cut the sleeve of my favorite dress to help me get ready to go to the hospital, but she assured me that it could be mended. It was far from a fun trip to the hospital. Every bump in the road or shifting of my arm caused tingling pain to radiate through my arm. Once at the hospital, my arm was examined and X-rayed. Then came the news that my arm was broken and would need to be in a cast for six weeks. What a long, long time that seemed to me as an eight-year-old girl.

Six weeks of beautiful summer weather and I could not go biking with my siblings. I could not go swimming with my cousins. I could not swing very easily on the swing set. As much as I

loved to read, now even that became tiring and boring, because it was about the only activity I could do.

Then, almost before I knew it, summer was over. I walked into the hospital with my father that day, six weeks later, and had my cast removed and the doctor's stamp of approval that I was healed. My, how weak that arm was! I remember trying to shell lima beans later that same day, but I just couldn't do it with that weak hand! The next day, school started and I realized that I had spent six weeks of my summer vacation with my arm in a sling.

Children, as I look at the story from the perspective I have now, as a grown woman in my 40's, I have some thoughts I want to share with you. Maybe my story and the unwise choice I made can put a caution in your own heart when you are tempted to disobey your parents, or in some other way to walk outside of God's will.

That day, when I climbed the tree instead of doing the task my mother gave to me, I chose to walk contrary to God's will. You see, He has perfectly arranged for people to walk in protection inside the plan He created for us. He commissioned my parents to be my protectors and my teachers, but I rose up in rebellion that day to live life my own way. God does not smile at that, my friends. Also, in my disobedience, I created a ripple-like effect, much in the same way a stone does when it is thrown into a pond. My wrong decision caused problems which spread out to touch the lives of others besides my own.

My mother, who was putting my siblings down for their naps, had to be interrupted from her task. My siblings didn't get their naps when they should have. My father had to be called home from work to take me to the hospital and we had to wait there until it was confirmed that my arm had been broken. Then my father had to pay money for the hospital visit, the cast, pain medication, X-rays, and gas to drive me to and from the hospital. For six weeks, I could not be depended on to do many jobs around the house, which made it necessary for others to fill in for me and do extra work. I could not do many of the fun summer things with my siblings and friends, that children like to do.

At last the doctor took the cast off, but summer was over and school had begun, leaving little time for those kinds of activities anymore. Then I still needed to have extra help for a number of days after I had the cast off, since my arm was so weak from all the inactivity. This caused continuing inconvenience for others who already had busy schedules.

God was gracious to me in my rebellion. He provided an opportunity in my growing-up years to show me that it is not without consequence when we rebel and go our own way. My parents cared for me in my disability and used the opportunity to teach me things I needed to think about. This whole experience still brings many memories back to me, all these years later, some of learning lessons, but some also of blessing in the midst of my trouble.

A man from our church, who had fallen from a roof while helping to build a new church in New York, called to wish me well when he heard that I had broken my arm. (That still blesses me all these years later!). And my grandma gave me some gum and a scrapbook of pictures and poems which she had made for me. Though I did not deserve any of those things, God still graciously showed me mercy through them, in the midst of a very painful lesson learned.

I did not think of all these things until many years later, after God had taken me through some very difficult experiences to break me of the desire to live life my own way. I am so glad that

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He has pursued me in this way and did not give up on me. I am happy now to live my life the way God planned for me, because it truly is the best way to live. Also, I appreciate that God had my parents there in my life to help me learn lessons along the way. I encourage each one of you to obey your parents, turn your hearts toward God, and live humbly within His will for you in every situation.

God bless you all.

Category: [Godly Home](#) [3]

Remnant Issue: [Summer 2016](#) [4]

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Links

[1] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/article/lessons-from-the-maple-tree>

[2] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/name/marcia-zimmerman>

[3] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/category/godly-home>

[4] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/remnant-issue/summer-2016>