

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS.....(Part 1)

“The most important things in life aren’t things.”

For the past 12-15 years, our front yard has been a series of flower beds divided by brick paths; the outer border, a picket fence. The beds are filled with perennial flowers (the kind that keep coming back) in addition to pots filled with annuals and all kinds of “found” objects. Care and maintenance has been outweighed by the pleasure I have felt from the beauty. I have enjoyed the look and even the work of it for all that time but the time has come for a change. The fence requires replacement and the beds have gotten overgrown to the point of needing to be thinned severely. We started removing bricks and plants last week, some arbors have been taken down, and Dennis started removing the fence. We both have spent quite a bit of time on the heating pad.

Luke 12:15 “Then He said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

I had a plan for the changes that were coming and could picture the end result in my mind. I thought I was prepared for the various phases of the project. Dennis took down 2 sections of fence and I began to feel anxious. The rain came and we were stopped for a few days, then on Saturday while the sun was shining, he took down the rest. It was too late to change my mind/plan but my anxiety was full blown and I really wondered what was happening. After thinking about it, I realized that without the fence I felt very vulnerable; like I wasn’t safe or someone could just walk into my yard (as if they couldn’t before!). Also included was a feeling that my “things” in the yard, collected for years, could be taken (as if the fence had protected them before!).

I had no idea I would feel so strongly about the changes we were making; changes I wanted in the first place. The worst thing was identified by my friend, Joyce, when she said that part of my identity was tied up in the way people had reacted to my yard; the affirmation I had received when people commented on it. Ouch! I’m really having to think through all the emotions that have surfaced, identify them, and deal with them. I would never have guessed this project could affect me this way.

The whole situation reminded me of an incident years ago involving a goose and a duck. There was a time when I had a number of bird-type decorations and one of them was a large ceramic goose which lived on my fireplace hearth. I was very

attached to that goose. I also had a wooden duck that lived on a shelf above the fireplace. Remember the "Spring Break Quake" from 1994? Well, that small tremble caused the duck to dive off the shelf into the back of the goose. (Dennis swears this was an act of jealousy.) If it hadn't upset me so much, it would have been funny to see the duck's head buried in the back of the goose. That was when I was forced to start thinking about "things" and letting go of them. Did my possessions own me or did I own them? I had (still have) a picture of words going around in a circle that says, *"The most important things in life aren't things. The most important things in life aren't things."* Over and over in that circle. That's the way I repeat it even to this day. Letting go...and believe me, it's an ongoing process. I've found I can't say it once and have it stick. I have to say it over and over again until I can let go of whatever it is that I have to focus on at the moment. Jesus knew just how we would all struggle with having possessions and the temptation of holding on too tightly. He warned us saying, **"Watch out! Be on your guard!"** Back to the fence, the yard, my "stuff" in the yard, my "identity" derived from people's admiration: All things unimportant in the eternal picture but exactly when He was speaking of. What's really important in life? Certainly not our things or an identity apart from Him! *"The most important things in life aren't things."* Think about it.
Blessings on your week!
Georgia