

Remodeling a Home—and a Soul



We are in the midst of a major remodeling project in our home as it is made wheelchair-friendly. Doors are being widened, our closet is being reconfigured so I can reach my hanging clothes, and our bathroom's tub and step-in shower are being replaced by a roll-in shower.

I have been struck by the similarities between remodeling a home and remodeling a soul—otherwise known as the sanctification process. Sanctification means “being made holy,” and holy means set apart. I am being set apart for God's kingdom, for His purposes, and with a plan to make me into the image of His own dear Son (Romans 8:29).

The first thing that happened was that things got moved. Our bed was moved to an enclosed porch, which is a great blessing given the amount of construction dust in our bedroom. Our hanging clothes got moved to rented racks in our dining room, along with all the suitcases and other kinds of things on shelves. (It pretty much looks like a bomb went off in our home!)

When God is remodeling our soul, He also moves things, particularly moving us out of our comfort zone. We get moved into a *discomfort* zone—a change zone, a growth zone. In this part of the process, we can find out how easy it is to make

idols of comfort and the status quo. And like all other challenges and trials, the answer to the test is to trust God and rely on Him.

Before making any changes, the project director went up in the attic to check the load-bearing walls. I was so glad to learn this; it meant that nothing would be torn down and taken out that would weaken our home and make it unstable.

When God is doing the remodeling, He takes into account how we were designed and built (by Himself!). He knows how much stress we can take, and won't violate His own design for us. Just as He promises us not to allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Cor 10:13), He always remembers that we are but dust (Psalm 103:14), and He knows our limits.

The trim around doors was pulled out, and sections of sheet rock were cut out and removed. The garden tub was cut up and hauled away, and the huge mirror over it is now gone. The glass shower was taken out.

I've noticed that part of the sanctification process means God removes the old things in our hearts that have outlived their usefulness—things like coping strategies and childish ways of thinking and living. In order to grow us up to maturity, the old has to go.

They parked a trailer outside our back door, and it was soon filled with sheet rock, wood, marble and glass that needed to be taken to the city dump because it was trash. I mentioned this to the man in charge, who cheerfully agreed that "You gotta get rid of the ugly!" Since I also shared with him my thoughts about the parallel to sanctification, he laughed with me that that's what God does: He gets rid of our ugly. He targets anything that's not glorifying to Himself or helpful to us, and pulls it out. Or calls us to let it go into His hands.

I noticed there is a definite order to things. The open spaces

for closets and bathrooms were widened before installing new doors. The walls were textured before being painted. The bathtub was pulled out, and its faucet and spigot were removed, before the tiler comes to give us a beautiful new wall.

This made me realize that God knows the best order for addressing issues in our lives that need to be changed. Like knowing which are the load-bearing walls, He knows what needs to wait until He deals with other problems first. For example, we often want Him to get rid of nasty habits or addictions, but He's more interested in working on our hearts so that the change in our behaviors is a more (super)natural, organic result of growth.

Remodeling a house means a lot of inconvenience. I have to go to a gym that has a roll-in shower because our other shower is in a bathtub, and I can't climb in and out of bathtubs anymore. We are having trouble finding some things that were moved temporarily. There is dust everywhere. I can't have people over very easily. These are all temporary, but they are still inconvenient.

God's remodeling process also feels inconvenient because there are so many adjustments to new ways of thinking and reacting and living. We have to practice new ways of thinking when God makes changes in our belief system and our trust system. Adjustment means change, and change is rarely convenient!

The owner of a construction company that does these remodeling jobs for mobility-challenged people like me has a picture in his mind of what all these changes will look like in the end. I have a vague idea of what changing the entrance to our bedroom will look like, and how the reconfigured closet will work, and what it will be like to roll into the shower, but he has a very specific plan in mind based on experience and knowledge and wisdom.

My heavenly Father has a very specific plan for my remodeling too. He knows what making me over into the image of His Son means, so I will look like Sue and Jesus both.

And just as I need to trust the architect of our home remodel, even more I need to trust my Father, who knows what He's doing in remodeling my soul and does it all well . . . and in love.

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