

# HOWe THINGS ARE...

February 2008

Hello! I am in the middle of moving to a new apartment. It's a couple houses down from the apartment I lived in before this apartment. My new house is apparently in a cell phone black hole. I'll give you the landline there since cell phone reception is if-fy.

My roommate moved out in December (she's getting married; we're still friends and all --- no drama there in case you're worried). But I can't afford to pay rent by myself and also I prefer having a roommate so I'm moving in with another friend. I really like the purging possessions part of moving --- it's amazing how much stuff I've accumulated, plus my new apartment is smaller than my current apartment. I can't imagine people who live in the same place for years (accumulating stuff) and have to move a whole houseful of stuff. The thing is, although I like paring down my "stuff", I don't so much like the logistics of moving, even just a couple blocks away: being unsettled, that period of time when you can't find anything, living out of boxes, the clutter/mess.

Also "stuff"-related: I'm planning a trip to Arizona March 7 - 24. When I joined Wycliffe I didn't know what I was going to end up doing or where and so I just packed up my AZ apartment and put everything in storage --- where it's been for seven years: first in storage I paid for, then in free storage at sister #1's house and when she moved, my stuff went to sister #2's garage. I have stuff at my parents' house too. While it's all well and good to take up storage space in family members' houses, it needs dealing with. This moving into a smaller space has me thinking how much simpler things are with less. I'm feeling pretty ruthless. So I'm moving/paring down my North Carolina belongings in February and then attacking the Arizona belongings in March (and hopefully seeing some of you in between trips to Goodwill).

I'm reading a more literal Bible translation this year. It's a different experience than previous years' Bibles --- I'm reading Jacob and Esau with the whole deception Jacob and mom, Rebekah, work out to get dad, Isaac, to bless Jacob instead of Esau. I'm bothered that Jacob gets blessed (he really does: he gets the blessing from Isaac and later, God blesses Jacob). Jacob lied. He so doesn't deserve blessing. And, couldn't God have at least pointed out lying is wrong? There don't seem to be real consequences and worse, it turns out exceptionally well for the liar. I'm wondering how people are supposed to get moral instruction from this story. Of course, as it turns out, the story isn't about moral instruction --- not that moral instruction isn't important... The story is a fairly remarkable account about mercy and grace. God's mercy is rather infuriating if I'm worried about moral instruction. Jacob doesn't just not get what he deserves (i.e., smiting of some sort for lying), he gets what he doesn't deserve (blessing). And it just gets "worse". Not only does God not hold Jacob's lies against him or my sins against me, He puts the consequences on Jesus. Jacob lies and I do stuff. Jesus dies to take on consequences. And God doesn't bring it up again. God's feelings for me and His blessing are not based on what I do or what I deserve. He sees me. He sees Jesus. This behavior of God's: just incomprehensible, unimaginable...

You could pray for:

- Work --- I'm in charge of a couple new projects. There's a verse in Psalm (131:1) --- "I am not involved in things too difficult for me". I wonder about how that applies to me and work sometimes. Mostly I think the verse is supposed to clue me in that it's God's deal and not mine. These work projects I'm doing impact a lot of people and also apparently rile people up (not because they're bad people; just change is difficult --- and also people happen to have seriously strong opinions). These projects *are* too difficult for me if I think of me and God in partnership. It's not so much a partnership; not I'll-handle-what-I-can-and-pass-off-the-difficult-stuff-to-God. It's just God, who, for inexplicable reasons, has me seated with him doing the good works he prepared for me (Eph 2 paraphrase).
- I'd like peace during the moving upheaval. Praise God I have a place to live, and pray for my new roommate and me as we adjust to each other.
- One of my too difficult for me and riling up people projects kind of relies on having Help Desk staff, which I have now, but potentially won't have in March. God knows what he's doing of course but I would prefer either current staff to be able to stay or qualified new volunteers to appear before the current ones leave in March.

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