

Lessons from Quilts and Figs

We do not always achieve our goals and reach happiness. When confronted by disappointments and challenges, we have an opportunity to learn important life lessons from two quite different sources: figs and quilts.

For people in the Bible, the good life was symbolized by figs and fig trees (Deut. 8:7-10; 2 Kings 18:31; S. of Sol. 2:13; Micah 4:4). Fig trees and their fresh fruit symbolize prosperity and happiness—a high quality of life. But that was not the reality that many biblical characters experienced. Some could not eat fresh figs but found that they needed to use the dried ones. We can take courage from their stories. We may not be able to sit in peace and prosperity, but with perseverance and ingenuity, we can enjoy a large measure of life's sweetness.



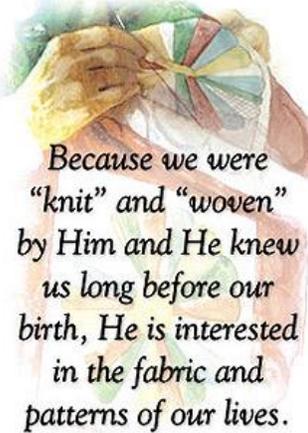
The fig tree is a flowering plant with many species, all producing fruits with different shell colors, either be purple or light green. The productiveness of the fig tree can be likened to the faith that lies within us, and it can be seen as the belief that we have in the highest, God.



Quilts also teach lessons about searching for quality. They offer guidelines on how to cope with reality when it becomes unpleasant. With care and work, something useful and lovely can be created from ordinary materials. Quilts can be a joy to make and provide warmth to both body and soul for many generations to come. Not all the pieces in quilts are lovely. However, in small amounts, when played off against other colors and patterns, when viewed as part of the whole and not individually, these pieces fit and lend their vibrancy to the pattern. A harmonious whole does not have to contain perfect individual pieces.

In a similar vein, we all have some unpleasant life events and negative interactions with others. However, each person can choose how much of an experience to keep and how to trim a particular scrap to fit into the whole. We have options. We can make a quilt—or create a life—that emphasizes the dark elements, or we can use the darker colors to set off and make other parts of the pattern more distinct. All of us can choose how to order our lives. However, we may need help developing, arranging, and completing the pattern of those lives.

In our lives, in our quest for completeness, the people who are God's hands and feet here on earth can help us. We may need to talk to and work with friends, teachers, colleagues, counselors, therapists, or support groups. We also need to ask the Lord to help us. Because we were "knit" and "woven" by Him (Ps. 139:13, 15) and He knew us long before our birth, He is interested in the fabric and patterns of our lives. Our lives may not emerge in patterns that we'd planned for them, but as we employ our experience and God-given insight—as we sort through and work with the scraps and snippets of life (the velvet and burlap, the pastel and bright, the dark and the light, the plain and the intricately patterned)—we can decide how to use each piece to make a harmonious whole.



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