

Bare branches

by Annie Downs

Three and a half years ago my life fell apart.

In one emotionally draining [*understatement*] week, I lost it all.

My best friend.

My ministry.

My church home.

My peace of mind.

My understanding of where life was going and what the next day/month/year would even look like.

Something died that week.

Do you know that feeling? I think we all do at some level, right?

The realization that, in a moment, so many things housed in the TRUTH category can be ripped out and put in the THAT'S WHAT YOU THOUGHT category.

Painful. To date, the most painful experience I have ever known.

And though details would make this a juicy story and a real tear-jerker, I've never written about it and I won't.

But. What I will tell you about is how God used that experience to change my entire life.

As Bible teacher and author Beth Moore says, "God allows wounding in your life so that He can bring healing."

And that statement, my friends, can have permanent residence in the TRUTH part of your heart.

In the few months after the total destruction of the life I knew, God began to speak to me of His love. At first, my reply was, "Uh. Yeah. Are You serious right now? Cause hello! You just allowed my life to FALL-A-PART. I'm supposed to label that as LOVE?!?"

[Cause sometimes a sarcastic tone is all I can muster. Forgive me.]

I went to a new Bible study during this LOVE season. My heart was broken and in all honesty, I felt a bit lost in my own skin. So anytime someone invited me to something involving God, I went.

The leader passed out a drawing, a tree with a girl standing in front of the trunk, to each of us. The goal, she said, was to add leaves to the tree with words representing all the ways God is using you in the world, yadda yadda blah blah blah. I stopped listening.

I stared down at my tree. And it looked just like me. Bare. Empty. Dead.

My eyes began to focus and see something coming out of the limbs. I grabbed my Raspberry Crayola marker and began to color.

There, in the empty, in the death, in the absolute absence of life, was L-O-V-E.

Can you see it?

When everything was pruned away, there I was, standing under the tree of His love.

Today, if life seems to have thrown you more curve balls than you can even fathom, if all that was true yesterday is suddenly false, if you are broken in the deepest of places,

I'm asking God to draw near to you.

Because somewhere in your bare branches, He is writing His love to you.

[by Annie Downs, Annie Blogs](#)