

What to Hang on to

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4:2-3, NIV

I've been doing lots of sorting throughout the pandemic. My husband Colin and I have been collecting together for 21 years now. Since inheriting a family homestead, I have more than my share of collections and past possessions of bygone eras.

Typically, when time allowed for a change from our regular work schedules, our summers have included finding time for some adventures and vacation time. This past summer seemed so different with the restrictions in place for travel, etc. When my husband and I talked about what special things we might like to do over the summer season, I added renting a dumpster to my list.

When I was a kid, we used to have a public dump a mile down the road. Come Saturday morning, my mom would gather up all the garbage in the house, and my dad would back his truck up to the door and throw it all in. In those days, the Saturday morning garbage run could consist of a huge variety of items: black bags of household refuse, worn out furniture, appliances, tires, and more. As I have established my own household, I have always missed the ease with which we got rid of unwanted items as a kid. Stricter landfill guidelines have changed the way we handle unwanted objects. Having a dumpster in the yard for a few weeks gave me the thrill of being able to throw away anything my heart desired.

The property Colin and I live on was a working farm for many years, and we've had to constantly evaluate demolishing old buildings, selling equipment, and sorting out the past into categories: keep for history/nostalgia; keep/sell for practical purposes; and toss. I actually think it was good therapy this summer to purge things we've been looking at all these years and to try to bring some order to our stuff. Each day we found new treasures and new items to discard. With each large object thrown over the top of the dumpster, the crash at the bottom was a sign of victory and somehow a move forward. The process looked something like this: anything my grandfather made or preserved during his woodworking chapter—keep; any old windows lying around with broken glass—toss; any new, unused hardware items—hang on to/organize for future use. We repeated this cycle for many days, sorting through three generations of items with the question in mind, “Do we hang on to this or do we pitch it while the dumpster is in the yard?”

The items for the dumpster were just inanimate objects that told the story of our land and those who have been part of it for the last three generations. Ephesians 4:2-3 gives clarity on what we really want to hang on to when it comes to the important parts of

our story. When taking stock on where the years have taken Colin and me as a married couple, there are elements to keep and elements to purge. I pray to be more willing to hang on to peace and throw away having to be right. I hope to keep pursuing goals together, while letting go of some independence. I am trusting that patience, encouragement, and love will abide in my marriage for as long as we're together on Earth, and that discontentment and discouragement would be tossed aside, not belonging.

Marriage and family are two very important gifts from our heavenly Father. These are important days for our youth to see us prioritizing these gifts in our lives. Young people will look to their own families and the families and marriages they see on display in the life of the church as guiding models. As they sift through the examples of all relationships, may they see us bearing together in love and hanging on to unity through the Spirit. Lord, I pray the next generation will know what to toss and what to hang on to! ♦



by Dr. Marsha Boyd-Mitchell
Principal, Sussex Christian School
Executive Director,
Christian Action Federation of NB Inc.