

Faith



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis From destruction, God makes art

When my daughter was 6 years old, she showed an interest in art. Because I’m not artsy person, I did what non-artsy moms do: I signed her up for art lessons.

At one camp, they told us to send the kids in old clothes they could get dirty. After picking her up the first day and noticing the paint splattered everywhere, I understood why.

The art they created was unique, and when I told the teacher how fun and innovative her work was — and how my brain didn’t think that way — she told me the secret to making art is to not be scared of making a mess.

Immediately a bell rang in my head. I knew exactly what my problem was, why I couldn’t make great art with my kids at home — because I don’t like messes.

The root of this is a perfectionist personality, a mindset I acquired as a teenager and will likely spend the rest of my life trying to overcome. Honestly, I think many women and girls share this mindset with me. At some point, we’ve bought into the illusion that life should be perfect — and anything less is wrong or not good enough.

I learned a lot about art, imperfection and finding beauty after destruction while visiting Greece last summer with my family. Words can’t describe how breathtaking this country is, yet its beauty is not the shiny, polished and perfected kind we’re used to seeing in America. No, in Greece there is a natural beauty that has evolved

over time.

Chances are you’ve heard of Santorini, one of Greece’s top tourist destinations. You may have seen the jaw-dropping pictures that look unreal, yet I can attest: the photos aren’t fake. Santorini really is that stunning.

What tourists don’t think about, however, is how the island of Santorini emerged from destruction.

More than 3,600 years ago, there was an epic volcano eruption. The center blew out and created a caldera (crater) that has since been filled with water from the Mediterranean Sea.

Santorini and the islands around it form a circle because they were the rim of that volcano. After the eruption, as Santorini was developed on a fragmented piece of mountain, the wealthy residents took the flat side because they wanted lots of land. They gave Santorini’s cliff side — undesirable at the time — to the peasants.

The peasants, needing homes for their families, had to get creative. They started digging into the side of the mountain and creating cave-like dwellings for homes and businesses. Over time they painted these dwellings white and built charming, unique communities.

Today, the cliffside of Santorini is prime real estate. It’s where everyone wants to be, overlooking the spectacular water. I find it funny how those peasants who initially got a bum deal ended up with valuable assets (worth millions of dollars) to pass on from generation to

generation.

Perhaps the best lesson in Santorini came during a tour of Akrotiri, an ancient civilization that was the “Beverly Hills” of its time. After the volcano erupted, Akrotiri was buried under ashes and preserved by them until 1967, when a Greek archaeologist began excavating in the right place. Within a few hours, the remains of a buried city came to light.

We saw many ancient civilizations in Greece, and what struck me each time was how cool it must be to discover that first clue — to be the archaeologist who finds the first sign, the first artifact, the first piece of evidence that a hidden treasure exists; to see what no eyes have ever seen before and open the door to a brand-new world.

I believe life is a lot like this. I believe even the worst destruction has hidden treasures under the surface. Most people don’t want to get dirty. Most people aren’t willing to dig. Most people don’t consider the possibility that maybe, just maybe, there’s more to a bad situation than what initially meets the eye.

Nobody skates through life without facing their share of heartache or devastation. Some messes we create for ourselves by the poor choices we make, while other messes are imposed on us by the people or things around us.

We can’t stop every mess from happening, but we can trust God’s hand in the story. We can rely on Him to ultimately repurpose what’s broken

and show us the potential of our mess.

From destruction God makes art — but at first it won’t look like art. Only with time, healing and perspective can beauty of this nature emerge. If I’m learning anything regarding the art of life, it’s to not be scared of the mess. To see each trial as part of the story, not the end of the story, a chapter yet not the finale. Our weakest moments are God’s opportunity to do His best work, and just as God had a vision for Santorini, He has a vision for each of us.


I really like and admire those people who take the lemons life hands them and make a new kind of lemonade. I believe they have much to teach us on how to deal with challenges.

When life closes in, maybe it’s time to approach it with the eye and heart of an artist: to think outside the box, dig deep for answers, use the material they have, find value in the mess and create something beautiful that nobody ever saw coming.


Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Birmingham-area mom of four girls, columnist and blogger for The Huffington Post. Her two books for teen and tween girls — “Liked: Whose Approval Are You Living For?” and “10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know” — are available on Amazon and everywhere books are sold. Join her Facebook community at “Kari Kampakis, Writer,” visit her blog at karikampakis.com or contact her at kari@karikampakis.com.

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