



CLEAR VISION

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Soul Food: Wrenched While Wrestling

Post-Operative Reflections

By Rich Blue

You are reading words written on the laptop of the new bionic hip-man. I was first on the operating table Monday, November 17, at 7:30 a.m. and back in my room by 11:00. My doctor was pleased and I was excited to have my wife and daughter at my side cheering me on along with hundreds of people praying for me, sending emails, cards and gifts. Late that afternoon following my surgery, I walked (with the assistance of a walker and 2 PT's) to the door and back and celebrated reaching my primary post-operative goal—to walk the same day of my surgery.

My family and I basked in the blessings of trusting God and living by faith. After surgery, I don't remember the pain being too bad and I was certain the worst was behind me. Sue, however, was concerned about leaving for the night because she was unsure I would stay on top of getting the pain medication I needed and I, of course, was quick to dismiss her concerns. It was 8:00

p.m. and I convinced everyone to go home and get some rest.

I soon found out the last effects of the surgical anesthesia were wearing off; I was unaware of the all night wrestling match awaiting me where I was going one on one

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with my faith being tested by my pain. Once again, I find myself on a parallel path with Jacob (Genesis 25-33) and the incredible terror he experienced when he decided to return home to Canaan and face the wrath of his brother, Esau, whom he had deceived. Jacob's fear of Esau's rage consumed him and he directed most of his energies toward trying to manage a problem that no longer existed, since Esau had forgiven his brother long ago.

If Jacob could have known what was ahead of him, he might have been much more concerned about surviving his all night bout

with God than his much anticipated encounter with Esau. Jesus' advice rings true, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matt 6:34 (NIV) I think of this as the manna principle: God gives us just enough grace for each day, a la "our daily bread", and when we worry about things beyond today we venture outside of the support He has offered.

I was prepared for my surgery and I was unprepared for the post-operative pain of my recovery. My dark night of the soul pushed me to the limits of my faith. I wanted to quit and thought to myself if I knew it was going to hurt this bad, I would never have done the surgery. I couldn't believe some people had both hips done! I learned my pain was bigger than me and I was utterly dependent on others as well as medications to make it through. It was the same

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Soul Food (continued): Wrenched While Wrestling

struggle I had with accepting my need for a prosthetic hip in the first place—my pain motivated me to seek the help I needed.

When Sue saw my battle weary face Tuesday morning, she vowed she would not be leaving my side any time soon. I was a broken and much more humble man—alive but walking with a sore hip for a while. Gone was the bravado and machismo of youthful self sufficiency. I was so relieved to see her and felt for the first time in 12 hours that we could make it. With the help of the nurses and doctors, we were able to get back on top of the pain management and I felt both grateful and confident that together we could handle anything.

My dark night gave me time to reflect on the depth of others' suffering and a new found respect for their faith and endurance. I thought of the Apostle Paul and the incredible pain he endured while being whipped, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked and imprisoned countless times. I thought of the suffering

of POWs, who silently endured torture with no medication or medical attention, and had a new found respect for their character and resolve.

In the midst of the pain, I knew it was my night to wrestle with God and I would not let the opportunity pass without learning the lessons God had for me. I didn't feel like I was entirely alone, yet, I knew I was up against the fight of my life. Hopelessness and despair tag teamed me, trying to wear me down, screaming in both ears, like Job's wife, tempting me to "curse God and die." I had a sense my pain was not punishment; it just hurt beyond anything I had known before.

My lessons from my wrestling match with God were that my power is multiplied when I enlist the support of others; much like

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the collective strength of a cable exceeds the sum of the individual strands. I also experienced the cost of resisting the coaching of

my MKO's (more knowledgeable others), felt most dearly when I did not accept Sue's offer to be with me through the night. Lastly, I had an indescribably intimate experience with

God—a benevolent beating unlike many of my encounters with Jesus—this battle was one in which I was grateful to have survived. My prize is a titanium prosthesis—a mark I will have at my side always reminding me of God's word to Paul, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**" 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV).

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Biblical MKO's (More Knowledgeable Others)

By Nancy Rollins

Brief looks into the lives of influential spiritual leaders found in the Bible.

Moses

I am drawn to Moses because in many ways he was an ordinary man often plagued with fear and doubt, but as he learned to trust God more fully he became extraordinary. In Exodus 2, we see a young Moses who sensed his calling as a leader. Yet, he was impulsive and proud, trusting his own resourcefulness more than depending on the wisdom and timing of God. After forty years of hiding out in the Midian Desert, Moses had a powerful encounter with God and was reminded of his higher purpose. Yet, instead of feeling brash and self-assured, he was full of fear and self-doubt. Notice that God was less interested in using Moses when he was full of confidence, but after years of being broken and humbled by life's lessons and the solitude of the desert God said "*now you're ready.*"

In Exodus chapters 3 and 4, Moses has a dialogue with God that

is an excellent example of his use of the funnel of truth. At CLE, we speak of the funnel as representing our layers of truth where we begin with our excuses and eventually reach our deeper more embedded truth, getting to the truth of our hearts. In chapter 3:13, Moses voices his initial resistance to being the chosen one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt saying, "They won't believe it is you (God) who sent me." In 4:1, he further builds his case saying, "what if they don't listen to me?" In 4:10 he voices his fear that "I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech." In each of these concerns Moses is saying, "I'm not enough." His final plea is what most amuses me. Haven't you thought this as you face a scary challenge? In Ex. 4:13, Moses said "Oh Lord please send someone else to do it." This was his deepest truth-- I don't want the job because I fear I will fail. Notice how God responds with patience, firmness and compassion enabling Moses to move through his self doubt and grow into one of the greatest leaders in all history. D.L. Moody described him

forty years learning something, forty years learning to be nothing, and a final forty years proving God to be everything.

Exodus 3:7, 10-12

v. 7- The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering.

v. 10- So now go I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites of Egypt.

v. 11- But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

v. 12- And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you."

Read Exodus chapters 2-4

Chapter 2 God chooses Moses

Chapter 3 God reveals His plan

Chapter 4 God provides the way

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. Security does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure. " ~Helen Keller

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This newsletter is intended to offer general information only and recognizes that individual issues may differ from these broad guidelines. Personal issues should be addressed within a therapeutic context with a professional familiar with the details of the problems.



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