

RANSOMED MINISTRIES Heart

- December 2003 Newsletter -

Dear Friends,

Whoa. Is it really *December*? Where has the year gone? Maybe it's just me, and I know I'm beginning to sound like my grandparents, but doesn't it seem like the days are racing by? I'm flipping back through my calendar and find it hard to believe that the last eleven months took place in the same year. It feels like it's been *three* years.

Did we really do our first Advanced training retreats this year? Those men are now holding their own events all around the U.S., and reporting back incredible things. Wow. A wildfire. And I vaguely remember we held a national conference in Washington, D.C., with thousands of guys – bowlers from Ohio to Jesuit priests. We found a temporary headquarters for our ministry. There've been many astounding men's retreats. "I was in deep prayer and I felt something touch my neck on the left side ever so gently and then Jesus spoke to me for the first time in my life, 'Walk with me my son, for I have healed your wounds.'" That kind of thing has happened hundreds of times this year – maybe a thousand.

We held two stunning women's retreats. "It is truly a miracle of God what I have witnessed with my sister. She encountered the living God in the most amazing way." Oh yeah – a woman was raised from the dead – literally – at the August women's retreat. How have I forgotten all this?

Think about it – all the things that have happened to you this year. All the times you've been in your car; all the ups and downs in relationships; all the messages you've heard, how many prayers have you said; the many battles. Whoa. I'll bet if we could see it from His side, we'd see that God has spoken to us a lot this year. Where did it all go?

I'm wondering – what is the effect on us of days and weeks and months absolutely racing by? So many things simply lost; so much forgotten. I don't think it's good on the soul. Or on our walk with God. I feel like I've been pick-pocketed. Like my wallet's been lifted somewhere, sometime but I don't know when.

I know that weighty things have happened this year. A soldier found *Wild at Heart* lying in the sand during a firefight outside of Baghdad (?!). It changed his life. A house church started in China because two people came to Christ through *The Sacred Romance*. Down in Columbia, in some of the worst prisons in the world, *Wild at Heart* groups are being held with hard-core murderers coming to Christ, being healed of their wounds.

And I am only beginning to scratch the surface.

But when we fly through our life we lose sight of these things, lose the confidence they build in us that God comes through. Faith works like this: Our confidence that God is going to come through *this* time is built upon all the experiences we've had of him in the past. When young David was about to face Goliath, he spoke like it was no big deal:

Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth...the Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:34-37)

David had some incredible experiences of God coming through for him. He leaned on those memories; they were a rich part of his present outlook on life, and the battle he was about to face. God has come through; God will come through. O, how we need that assurance.

The battle this year has been intense. Many, many sleepless nights. "Accidents" and physical assaults – curses, and affliction, relational wounds and near-death misses. More direct encounters with the Enemy than we care to tell. And God has delivered, and done more beautiful things than I can remember.

The bottom line is, we all share the same deep longing: To see God come through – to experience the intervention of Jesus. The Scriptures are given to us largely to say, *He can; He does.*

And it's true. It's happening. God is fulfilling our mission: To recover the treasure of the Gospel, see it restore men and women, and through them change the world. Marriages have been recovered from the brink of disaster. Men have been delivered of sexual bondage they've carried for forty years. Men and women rescued from taking their life. "I have been a Christian since I was 9 (I am now 45). This is the first day I truly believed that I am His Beloved." "I cried like never before. That was the closest I have ever been to the Living God!" "This is the real deal. **This is the Christianity I've been looking for all my life!**" He can; He does.

Just wanted to pause, and remember. And thank you.

Remember us.

Love,

John