

RANSOMED
HEART
ministries

October 2006.

Dear Friends,

I'm writing you today with the help of "voice recognition software," because both my right *and* left hands are in casts. Back on September 3, over Labor Day weekend, Stasi and I were horseback riding in northwest Colorado. Now, we had done all the "good rider" preparations with our horses – checking them out in the round pen, doing some ground work, making sure they were ready and in a good mood for a ride. As we headed out, me in the lead and Stasi behind me, the horses started acting spooked. Then everything sort of happened in a split second.

My horse bolted. I tried to slow him down, things got rowdy, and the next thing I know I am coming to, face first on the ground, blood everywhere. Left wrist broken, right wrist dislocated, a couple of broken bones in my face. Thank God Stasi only took a few bruises. She also was thrown. A trip to the emergency room, a lot of prayers, and here I am today, having had surgery on my right hand, and both arms in casts for awhile.

Now, I am *not* writing to solicit chocolates, flowers, get well cards, or cigars. Or advice on horses. (*Especially* advice on horses!). I'm writing because God has been doing so much through this story, I wanted to let you in on it -- and also to thank you for your prayers and to let you know I'm doing well. I really am.

But when stuff like this happens, it tests our convictions about God, about prayer, and it surfaces all sorts of issues in our hearts. (*If* we will pay attention.) I found myself wondering -- as you probably do, when crises hit -- *what happened?* Did I not pray enough? Did the enemy break through? Why did God let this happen? Now, let me say right away that I *do* know God intervened in my accident and spared me from a truly awful injury, perhaps even death. The pain and inconvenience I have to deal with for a couple of months is nothing compared to what some of my friends have had to live with for years. But still, when events like this hit, it raises questions in our hearts, it disrupts us and we ought to pay attention to the disruption.

What I have noticed is the collision between two deep desires in my heart: the desire to play an important role in God's kingdom, and, the desire to have a "nice little life." That Sunday morning I just wanted to go for a ride. And to be honest, I don't think I prayed very seriously for our safety that day. There was something in me that said, *do I really have to pray again?* You know what I'm talking about. And I think I ignored some of the signs of what might be unfolding, simply out of a desire not to have to live in the battle of the kingdoms every day. I've seen that inclination in all of my friends as well. We want to play an important role in God's kingdom. But at the same time, there is this other deep desire in us. It's more than a desire really, it's almost an *insistence* that life just be simple and good. I understand, I really do. After all, we were made for Eden. But it is a naïve, and dangerous insistence.

When we became followers of Jesus Christ, we announced our allegiance, we abandoned the kingdom of darkness, we made an enemy. And as we grow in Christ and begin to battle for the hearts of others, we do become dangerous, for God and for his kingdom. And that only ups the stakes. There is no such thing anymore as having a “nice little life.” And for me, having that desire disrupted has been a very good thing. (Don’t you feel a little irritated that I’m talking about this, challenging that insistence?)

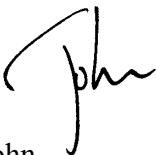
Was spiritual warfare involved in this accident? Probably. The enemy certainly has an interest in shutting me down, and, being a writer, a blow to my hands seems rather suspicious. But that’s not my point. My point is what gets disrupted when crises come into our lives, and how we respond to it. If we’ll be honest, we will find that insistence for a “nice little life” in us, and we will welcome opportunities to expose it and to let it go. I’m not letting go my desire for life. I’m living with a more sober view of my place in God’s kingdom. And, it got me thinking about prayer.

I remember reading a story, years ago, about A.W. Tozer. A young man had come to him and asked him to teach him how to pray. Tozer took the lad for a walk in the woods, at which point he fell upon his face and began to pray. For a *long* time. The lad was disrupted by the encounter. Up till that point, his prayers had been simple, little “Jesus be with me” prayers. But he later wrote to tell about the profound effect it had upon his life to see a man *really* pray. The lad wanted a nice little life. Tozer invited him higher.

I really didn’t want to undergo surgery on my right hand. There were many things I had planned for this fall, things I knew I would lose if I had to have surgery. Many of us prayed fervently that God would simply heal my wrist. Yet surgery was needed. And it caused me to wrestle with my convictions about prayer. Why do our prayers sometimes feel so impotent? I read an interview recently with a well-known Christian author, who said that prayer is pretty much for our *internal* benefit -- it brings us peace, it draws us to God, but not much else. What a sad and un-Biblical view of prayer. Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” making it clear that God’s will is *not* always done on earth *as it is in heaven*, and that our prayers can help to change that. The hope of prayer is that things *can* be different. In fact, when the surgeon got inside my wrist, he was stunned to find so much restored and intact (!).

When we are disrupted by events in our lives, it can be an invitation to remember that the story we are living in is not the story of “nice little life.” It is far better than that. We *do* have a great role in the unfolding of God’s Kingdom. Knowing that, we just released one of our best CD series, The Hope of Prayer. It will encourage your prayer life a LOT, make you more powerful in prayer. We’ve also released new CDs on The Good Heart, and Restoring Hope in a Woman’s Heart. And, all our resources are now on MP3 format, too. Stop by our website and drink from all the good stuff God is teaching us!!

With deep thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.

John