

RANSOMED
HEART
ministries

June 2009

Dear Friends,

Wow. What a first five months of 2009 we have had!

Stasi and I finished a book on marriage (*Love and War*, it comes out at the end of this year!). The team here pulled off a stunning Captivating retreat (our best yet), an incredible Boot Camp and Advanced Boot Camp. We also did a film project (an 8 part series on *Fathered by God*, it comes out in September) and *during* all that we also did the 15 city Tour (for the release of *Fathered by God*). Along with podcasts, re-designing our website, speaking at a few large conferences, several private “crises,” two overseas trips (one to plan our UK Boot Camp for 2010) and a very intense season of spiritual warfare, ‘bout as intense as it ever gets.

I do not like to live like this.

I’ve preached against busyness (in a CD called “The Spirit of the Age”) and I hate that way of life. Far too often we use busyness to give us a sense that we are “really doing something for God,” and just as often it is not from God at all. So we had prayed hard about this schedule, over and over again; I did not trust it at all. But over and over we felt Jesus say, “This is what I want you to do.”

And God did more than sustain us. It proved to be one of the most powerful five months of ministry I think we’ve yet seen. (And so much of that was because you prayed for us! Thank you!!!)

In the midst of this crazy season, I was looking for some reading to feed my soul, to supplement my time in the Scriptures. Browsing the bookshelves in my office, I sort of picked up one book then another, opened it, read a little, and set it back down. *Nope, that’s not what God has for me.* I can’t altogether say why I knew. Partly because it fell flat; partly because I wasn’t interested. But over time you recognize that gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit. *Here, this is what I am saying.*

I found myself moved to grab two books: *No Little People* (a collection of sermons by Francis Schaeffer) and *God in the Dock* (a collection of essays by C.S. Lewis). I hadn’t picked up either of these volumes in a long time. For Schaeffer it had been a very long time. Both have played a vital role at different points in my spiritual journey. They feel like old friends.

I sat down, flipped open Schaeffer to no place in particular, and begin reading. This is what my eyes fell upon:

“Both the Scriptures and the history of the church teach that if the Holy Spirit is working, the whole man will be involved and there will be much cost to the Christian. The more the Holy Spirit works, the more Christians will be used in battle, and the more they are used, the more there will be personal cost and tiredness. It is quite the opposite of what we might first think. People often cry out for the work of the Holy Spirit and yet forget that when the Holy Spirit works, there is always tremendous cost to the people of God, weariness and tears and battles.”

Wow. I love how God speaks to us so intimately. This was the very thing I needed to hear. It was a consolation. There certainly have been weariness and tears and battles.

It was reassuring to be reminded that this is part of the deal, part of what I signed up for when I gave my life to God, and when I asked to be used. Schaeffer was right—it is counter-intuitive. I think most of us assume that if we could only tap into the Spirit of God in a deeper way we would somehow be carried along above the fray. I don't think we equate weariness and tears and battles with the work of the Spirit. But our season certainly proved that they are part of the cost, part of how we share in the suffering of Christ (Romans 8:17).

It was also so reassuring to hear Jesus saying, “You didn't blow it; I asked you to do this. I am in this.” I love the way God used the words of this old friend (I had long ago underlined this passage) to speak to me what I needed to hear. In the midst of a trying time.

It is *so* important that we remember to do this—to ask God what his personal words are to us—especially when we find ourselves in the midst of weariness and tears and battles.

And now it is June, and we get a bit of rest. God spoke to me about that, too. I had been confused and more than a little anxious that we hadn't made any family vacation plans for this summer. That's not like us. We know the year will be hard, we know we need Sabbath, and so we are always very intentional to block out rejuvenation plans in our calendar so that those precious moments don't get stolen. (The awful thing about busyness is that it creates a lifestyle and a momentum—you find yourself wasting your Sabbath times away because you are so used to being busy you just keep on being busy right through what should have been vacation.)

I flipped open to another sermon, and this time Schaeffer was talking about “the spirit of the age” (I kid you not) and how he used to see families enjoying quiet hikes together near their home in Switzerland, but how families have lost that and instead filled their Sabbaths with busyness. Again, God was reassuring me that the reason we have no plans (and the one plan we had made fell through) is because he wants us to spend the summer Sabbath in a quiet way. Which is, of course, just what we need this year. Sometimes adventure is what the soul needs; sometimes it is fellowship and family. But this summer, we need quiet rest.

I thought you'd find this encouraging, both that we had an incredible first part of the year, and that we *do* take Sabbath seriously.

I thought that perhaps God might also speak to you both about *how* he is speaking to you (he speaks in so many ways!) and also perhaps about what you need this summer.

Once again, our profound love and thanks to you—for all your love, your prayers and support. Together, we are changing the world. Really.

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

John