

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

July 2010

Dearest Friends,

It's a warm summer morning here in Colorado as I write this. The hummingbirds are zipping around Stasi's garden, buzzing in and out of the delphiniums, shasta daisies, roses, lavender and lupine. It seems the whole world is blooming, and we are *loving* it. Soon the tiny fawns will be sneaking through the yard with their mama deer.

We sat out on the porch late into the night last night, lanterns glowing, laughing, telling stories. Man, I love summer. This is my favorite time of year.

It's not just because it's warm. It's not just because things are a little more laid back. I think what I love is the explosion of LIFE. Everything is green, everything is bursting, lush, blooming. Even the afternoon thunderstorms are filled with life. Nature is rejoicing. Nature is surging with life.

Given the flow of Ransomed Heart, summer is usually the time for us to catch our breath, lick our wounds, cut the grass and be renewed after an intense season of ministry and battle, not to mention the day-in and day-out demands of living. This summer in particular we are taking rest seriously. Although we are a family that loves adventure – as soon as the weather is good I'm usually wondering what can we climb, raft, chase, jump off of – I have even held back on adventure this summer because I have finally realized there are things that replenish and things that drain, and I need replenishment.

To help me find a more “Sabbath like” rhythm this summer, I've been enjoying a book called Sabbath by Dan Allender. Enjoying it immensely. It is helping me re-think my whole image and approach to Sabbath. Permit me to share a few choice quotes:

The Sabbath is an invitation to enter delight...it is not merely a pious day and it is not fundamentally a break, a day off, or a twenty-four hour vacation. The Sabbath is a feast day that remembers our leisure in Eden and anticipates our play in the new heavens and earth.

We love to tell others how much we work, how much we still have to get done, and how overwhelmed we are with the exhaustion of our labor...Boasting about work is a national pastime.

Delight doesn't require a journey thousands of miles away to taste the presence of God, but it does require a separation from the mundane, an intentional choice to enter joy and follow God as he celebrates the glory of his creation.

Yikes. These excerpts alone were enough to unnerve me. We are a driven people. We have – most of us – abandoned any real practice of Sabbath in our lives, and we think we can get along without it. I know I sure did. Dan's description of Sabbath as a time of delight, of remembering Eden, of “celebrating our union with God, the abundance of his love, and the wild hope of the coming kingdom” disrupted me. I think most folks equate Sabbath with Sunday, with religious sanctity, devotion, “a day for God.”

But I am coming to a fuller appreciation of Sabbath. I'm seeing it more as a time of richness and renewal, a time of celebrating with God.

You see, there is relief, and there is restoration, and they are *not* the same thing. Relief is falling on the couch at the end of the day with a bag of chips and zoning out in front of the TV. Restoration – Sabbath – is meant to be a time of rich delight, of ceasing labor *so that* we may enter into those things that bring us immense joy. And in so doing we find deep restoration for our souls.

And our souls, dear friends, need deep restoration.

I remember reading something in CS Lewis' autobiography years ago where he was describing his joy in walking through the countryside, how he made it a regular practice. It was his daily Sabbath. He went on to say that he felt automobile travel was disruptive for the soul, that the human being was meant to live at the pace of walking. I dismissed him as an antique. Doesn't it sound quaint? Nobody walks anymore. We're irritated when the guy in front of us drives five miles *under* the speed limit. And doesn't that reveal how given over we are to the pace of the world? Frantic – that is how the world lives.

And then summer comes, and with it God's invitation to enter into life, and joy, and wonder. A time for Sabbath. To play, yes, but play that brings deep restoration. (We Americans attack our vacations as we attack the rest of life, and most folks I know need a few weeks to recover from their "vacations.")

And so I am trying to find some genuine experience of Sabbath this Summer. Reading books, taking walks, drinking in beauty wherever I can find it. Especially drinking in the exuberance of life that creation shouts in summer. I am trying to find more leisure time with God. I am not merely seeking a break; I am seeking restoration.

Though over-quoted till it is nearly banal, the 23rd Psalm does come to mind.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.

Overwhelmed is not inevitable. Exhaustion is not spiritual, or even noble. God not merely created Sabbath, he then commanded us to enter in (He *makes* me lie down in green pastures!). May you find some genuine experiences of that this summer.

For Restoration, and Life,


John