

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

March 2012

Friends,

A happy March to you. (Actually, this was meant to be our February letter...but we had some problems with our mailing. So, happy March.) As I was praying this morning about what we all needed in this month's letter, Jesus replied with a question: *What is the last thing I said to you?*

It wasn't meant to imply, *Write about what I said to you this morning*. Rather, Jesus was raising the issue of *staying with him*, staying with the words he gives to us. As in, *Do you even remember the last thing I said to you?* Let me explain why.

Every time I fire up my phone or computer, there's another notice: "Software updates available" (there's a new one staring at me even now). And so I go through the rigmarole of updating this or that aspect of my system, or of some sweet little program I have that makes me feel cool and on top of things. Updates. Now, sure – we all want to keep things running smoothly. But there is something about the number and frequency of these "updates" that screams about the world in which we live.

The world is *obsessed* with the new, the latest, the next thing. Gimme the update. Obsessed.

How long was the iPhone out, before there was the next generation iPhone? How long does a movie stay at the top of the charts before the next "blockbuster" pushes it aside? They made great cars last year; but this year's model is pushed as so far superior you feel like owning last year's car leaves you in the stone age. Sure, you have Google...but do you have Google *Chrome*? You thought your HD TV was amazing when you bought it, but do you have 3DHD?? And what about the jigawillion apps – are you up to date on the latest apps? Is it possible to stay up to date??!

I'm trying to point out something so thick in our daily lives most of us aren't even aware that its weird, and costly. The rush to the new is a kind of appetite, or momentum, or current sweeping you along, and it is profoundly robbing your life with God.

So: What was the last thing God said to you, and, what did you do with it?

I am embarrassed to think how many wonderful things Jesus has spoken to me over the past year, and honestly, how little of it remains. (By "spoken," I mean through any of the many ways in which he brings us truth and revelation – his Word, good teaching, the voice of friends, worship, nature, his own Spirit speaking in our hearts.) Really now – what was the last thing God said to you, and, what have you done with it?

This "headlong rush to the next thing" has utterly infected Christianity.

Really now – what if your pastor began 2012 by saying, "I intend to repeat my sermons from last year. Verbatim. I know God has more for us and we moved too quickly past what I had to say."

Even though its true, and it would probably be deeply good for our spiritual lives, he'd lose his job. What if you walked into your local bookstore and a sign on the front table said, "No new books this year; we are carrying last year's features only, in order to help you stay with the truth in them." There were some phenomenal worship songs released last year; they feel ancient now. How about this – what if the evening news began, "We're not going to report on anything new tonight, because what we showed you last week was so startling you are probably still praying about it."

I hope this is helping you see the "lust for the new" saturating even our spiritual lives.

I've noticed this in my own daily relationship with Jesus. Though he has spoken some incredible things to me, and though I can't recall what they were nor if they actually changed my life, I am constantly on the watch for the "next word," always asking him, "what are you saying, Lord?" Now don't get me wrong – I believe we ought to be watching and listening for the fresh things God is saying and doing. But let's bring this into some perspective. The soul does not live at the speed of the Internet. The spiritual life is not an app with updates; it is lived at an entirely different pace than the pace of the world. God gives us all sorts of gifts, and they are simply lost within a day or a week.

I recall CS Lewis lamenting the fact that he must travel by car, and how it did not give him the soul-time as walking once did. Doesn't it sound quaint, and archaic? Car travel?? I just flew from Buenos Aires overnight to Colorado. But who is more in touch with reality? Perhaps a confession will help. Five years ago while on a wilderness father-and-son trip, God spoke to me about a *huuuuge* issue in my life, and gave me his words of counsel on how to get free. And after the trip...I did nothing with it. For five years.

I simply want to try and rescue us from the insane pace of consumption our culture is aiming at us like a firehose. You cannot take in that much content. It's like bingeing.

Let's make this simple, and practical: Where are you recording the things God is speaking to you? You must write them down somewhere – somewhere you intend to look at them again.

Next, *stay with those things* for at least a week – meaning, they become the focus of your thoughts, prayers, meditations. Do not be lured onto the "next thing." Do not read a new passage. It is distraction. The fruit of God's gifts wait on us *staying* with them, lingering with them until the work is done, or the truth taking root in our being. I know, I know, this is going to be radical. But it will do you enormous good.

OK. That's enough for this month :)



John

PS In case you're wondering, we include a return envelope with these letters in hopes that you will want to support this wonderful work. And thank you; we are so grateful.