

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

February 2017

Dear Friends,

First, a big thank you from the team here at Ransomed Heart. I reached out at the end of last year to ask for your support, and I wanted to tell you the result: We made our end-of-the-year budget, right on target, with a few dollars to spare! God is so playfully faithful to us, and *you* are so faithful too. I didn't want to move on into the new year without saying thank you, so very much! **Thank you.**

It's already February. 2017 is off and running like a downhill skier on Red Bull. I want to share a series of encounters I had to get us into the topic of this letter...

First, a friend shared with me how much he was enjoying a podcast by a thoughtful NPR commentator, and the nuggets of insight were impressive. A few hours later a different friend mentioned how much they were getting out of another podcast. I thought to myself, *I'd better subscribe to those; they sound really good and I feel like I'm not keeping up with the trends.* That afternoon, Stasi said something about some world news event she had just read about, and I thought, *Wow—I am not keeping up on global happenings. I'd better do more of that, too.* During a meeting the next day, someone makes a reference to a well-known ministry when everyone else at the table nods like they knew the story, and I'm wondering, *Wow—I have no idea what is going on in the church world; I need to keep up.* Meanwhile during the same meeting everyone was checking their cell phones for messages, updates, and news.

That evening I finally listened to our *own* podcast—the one Stasi and Cherie Snyder did on trauma (I'm three weeks late)—and I found myself thinking, *Gadzooks—I am not taking care of the unattended trauma in my soul and its lingering effects.* Meanwhile, I am getting ready for another set of upcoming meetings with some leaders, and I feel I ought to be far more prepared with some keen insights on the age, the prophetic, how God is moving in the world, and how we therefore ought to be strategizing.

The cumulative effect of all this—and I am describing a fairly benign and ordinary week—was to have a large part of me feeling woefully ill-informed, and grossly out of touch with all sorts of important matters. Shame was not far behind, followed by that scrambling we do to “get back on top of things.”

Another part of me—a deeper, quieter part—meanwhile was pushing back, wondering, *How in creation do these people have a life with God and care for their souls in the midst of this barrage of media input, global information, social analysis, prophetic teaching, ministry news, and not to mention minute-by-minute updates from their hundreds of Facebook friends?*

How does any human being care for their soul in a frenzied moment like ours?

The simple, honest truth is...they don't.

It is beyond all practical possibilities.

However, the ongoing deluge of intriguing facts and commentary, scandal and crisis, genuinely important guidance, combined with the latest insider news from across the globe, and our friends' personal lives, gives the soul a *medicated feeling* of awareness, connection, and meaning. Really, it's the new Tower of Babel—the immediate access to every form of “knowledge” and “groundbreaking” information right there on our phones, every waking moment. It confuses the soul into a state of *artificial* meaning and purpose, all the while preventing genuine soul care and life with God. Life with God...period. Who has time to read a book? Plant a garden?

Let me say it again, because it is so counter to the social air we breathe: What has become the normal daily consumption of input is numbing the soul with artificial meaning and purpose while in fact the soul grows thinner and thinner through neglect, forced by the very madness that passes for a progressive life.

I am not scolding; I am tossing a lifeline.

The first draft of this letter went on to try and tell you how to care for your soul and have a genuine life with God—not to mention with your friends and loved ones—by giving you little tiny things you could squeeze into such a life. After twenty-four hours, I realized I was simply allowing the madness to go on ruling our lives. I was capitulating and then trying to work around it. And that is neither kind, nor loving.

What I am going to say to you is that sincere followers of Jesus in every age have faced very difficult decisions—usually at that point of tension where their life with and for God ran them straight against the prevailing cultural ethos. The new Tower of Babel is ours. We have always been “strangers and aliens” in the world, insofar as our values seemed so strange and bizarre to those around us. We are now faced with a series of decisions that are going to make us look like freaks to the world. Choices like turning off Facebook every other day (or perhaps completely), never bringing our smart phones to any meal, conversation or Bible study, and cutting off our media intake so we can practice stillness every day.

If we offer anything of value to you here at Ransomed Heart, we offer care for the soul. And so for the sake of sanity and mercy I am going to ask a few questions...

What are you going to do this year to save your soul from the madness that passes as “normal life?” How will you cultivate a life of beauty, goodness, and depth of soul? How will you send your roots deep down into the soil of God?

The good news is, we actually have a choice. Unlike persecution, the things currently assaulting us are things we can choose not to participate in. What needs to go away in 2017 so that you can take your life back?

Offered in love,


John