

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

October 2018

Dear Friends,

Stasi here; I want to share with you an excerpt from my new book, *Defiant Joy*. I hope it encourages your heart today!

God drops things in our laps at just the right time.

He puts barriers in our paths that look like roadblocks, but are really gifts in disguise, beckoning us to take a closer look at what's going on inside. We can either step over them, or choose to pick them up and examine them for the potential they may hold. Failure is actually ripe with goodness. The longing to run away or escape our lives for some greener grass may be the opportunity to seek God in the midst of it, to learn something deeper about both us, and Him. Exhaustion and sadness often hold the door to a more restful and joyful life.

If we will let it, these doors open to remind us of the person we wanted to be, but have left behind in the chaos and disappointments of life.

When the sadness refuses to be silenced and the feelings arise that this is not the life I signed up for, we can either go to shame, or go to God. Is it a sin to want to be happy? Is it wrong to want an inner peace that is not subject to the whims and torrents of the world? I don't think so. God doesn't think so either. We are made for bliss. We are made for inner peace. If it were not so, why would all humanity throughout history seek it with such a driven and frenetic passion?

I need a refuge; I need rest.

Sometimes, not knowing what to do with the overwhelming need that rises in me to simply be left alone by the clamoring within and without, I run away to a movie. Sitting in the dark and eating popcorn provides a little respite. I have a momentary flash of happiness when the opening credits and trademark soundtrack begin to roll. There's the woman holding a torch! There's the world turning with an engulfing light! Yay! But then, after a couple hours, I come out of the movie, and all that I left in the car still awaits me. Too often this temporary escape thing doesn't work out the way I'd hoped.

Not that I'm opposed to temporary escapes. Look at my life, and you'll know that. It's just that sometimes the motive behind them isn't a search for joy or laughter or a shared experience. Rather, it is born out of a refusal – I run away from my own heart out of a refusal to engage it. It takes energy and space to become present to the truth of my inner world, and when I'm overwhelmed, the thought is, well, overwhelming.

Until it can no longer be ignored, because God places a roadblock in my path that forces me to face the fact that I need a Savior.

When I reach the place where I'm pressed to accept my own weakness, it causes me to hold my life and heart open before the merciful eyes of a loving Father. In short, it draws me up short – to see where I fall short in my own strivings. So that I may once again discover the source of my identity, which is found smack dab in the middle of God's loving gaze.

God calls us to run away to Him, not from Him.

He invites us to not fix our gaze on other people's lives (and compare them to our own), but to look to Him for the source of our worthy life. He asks us to find our rest in Him. He is our resting place.

When I'm exhausted, the temptation is to turn from God, thinking he requires more from me than I have to give. I believe I need to muster some passion from a dry well and focus on improving my performance. I think I need to pull myself up from my bootstraps when I'm too tired to put my shoes on. Not so. We are called to be honest, and to bring to God our authentic selves. He asks us to come before Him in the state we find ourselves in. Look at David – the Psalms are filled with his passion. He comes before God when he is desperate, and when he is rejoicing, when he is overcome and distraught, and when he is exultant and victorious. We are invited to do the same.

In every moment, God does not ask us to share life with Him as anyone other than the person we are. We are not meant to be anyone else. We are invited to come to Him with childlike trust that He will not turn his face away. He invites us to tend our hearts in His loving gaze. His arms are open wide. He is the greener grass in which we will find solace, soothing, refuge, and joy.

And as we choose to draw near to Him, to rest in the safety of his gaze, the redemptive work of God gains ground. Joy begins to bubble up, and the Kingdom of God advances in our lives, spilling over into others as well.

Open your heart to Him – to life, to vitality, to the power of God moving within and through you. Ask God to grow your capacity for joy. He can do it!

If you want more on how to find a rich, “defiant joy” in your life today, I hope you'll order a copy of my new book, *Defiant Joy – Taking Hold of Hope, Beauty and Life in a Hurting World*. I also invite you to listen to four new *Ransomed Heart* podcasts this month, where I share how to maintain a posture of holy defiance that neither denies nor diminishes our pain but dares to live with expectant, unwavering hope.

Offered in love,



Stasi