

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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September 2016

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all your loving care this past month – your kind notes, posts, and emails surrounding Craig’s passing have been such a gift to us. Thank you for your prayers as well; we feel upheld. Lori feels upheld, too.

I thought a few words on soul care would be timely this month – not just because of our story, but because every time I get a chance to have an honest conversation with someone, I’m reminded that there are very few people whose life is a houseboat in paradise right now. It is a time to practice soul care, and so I have been asking Jesus what that looks like for me.

One of the things that accompanies grief is anger – not so much anger at God, but anger at death, anger at suffering, anger at the “wrongness” of the world groaning for the restoration of all things. So a few weeks back I walked into the woods with a box of shells and a Remington 870, and began blasting away with abandon at tree stumps and fallen logs. I felt a keen need to blow things to smithereens, and a twelve-gauge at close quarters certainly does the trick. The explosive concussion of the blasts, flying fragments of wood and clouds of dust made me very happy. I was practicing soul care.

Now, let me put your hearts at ease – I am well. Our team is well. Anger is part of the grief process and you’ve got to do something with it. I realize that I am in a heightened state of sensitivity, in this season of grief, *but* I am finding it revealing for that very reason. I can tell immediately what helps and what hurts my soul, what draws it towards restoration and what simply wears it down even more. It is very enlightening.

Even though I usually enjoy vegging out over international soccer or some nature show, I can’t do TV. Isn’t that fascinating? It simply does not feel nourishing. At this moment the person sitting next to me on this flight I’m on is watching *Gladiator*. Normally, I love that movie, and I watch over their shoulder. The scene right now is the big coliseum battle, but every time I look over, while part of me is drawn in to the fight, the deeper part of my soul cringes; it is not helpful right now. It makes me wonder what I normally subject myself to. There is research that indicates simply watching traumatic events does damage to the soul – and if you consume any TV or movies at all, you have seen *thousands* of traumatic events.

I also needed to give up stimulants for a bit. Caffeine, sugar, nicotine - all those things we use to prop up our daily happiness over time burn out the soul. Because the soul can’t always be “on.” I was in one of those gas station quick marts the other day, and I was shocked at the entire cooler devoted to “energy drinks.” It used to just be Red Bull and a few others; now there are dozens and dozens. They take up more space than *water*. We are forcing our souls into a perpetual state of anxiety, and that is super damaging.

But I did take up comfort food. BLT’s in particular. Yes – I’m completely aware what I’m doing; I am medicating. But sometimes you need a little comfort food. Notice the Psalmist says, “My *soul*

will be satisfied as with the richest of foods” (Psalm 63:5). (I don’t have an eating disorder; food is not on my list of possible addictions. If it is on yours, choose something kinder as your comfort.)

But of course, there is a huge difference between *relief* and *restoration*; much of what provided me relief in the past is not helping my restoration. The state of grief is giving me fresh perspective on what actually helps my soul grow strong, and what doesn’t. Allow me to share my current personal observations, as a way of stimulating your own reflection...

**Helpful:** Generous amounts of sunshine. Gardens, the woods – everything living and green. Long walks. Lonesome country roads. Swimming. Beauty. Music. Water. Friendly dogs (I’ve never understood it when someone says to me, “Yeah – we’re not really dog people.” That’s like saying, “Yeah – we’re not really joy people”). Chocolate. Kindness. Compassion. Not expecting myself to produce the same level of work I normally accomplish in a day. Yard work. Building a fence.

**Unhelpful:** Grocery stores. Malls. Television. Traffic. Draining people wanting to talk to me (friends and family are at this moment wondering which category they fall into. It’s quite simple – draining people are those who live out of touch with their own soul, and thus mine). Airports. The news – especially politics. Social media. Your typical dose of movie violence.

Now – which cluster of the things I’ve just named make up most of your weekly life?

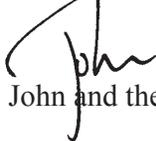
Do you begin to see how essential soul care is?

“Soul care” is not a category for most people. They don’t plan their week around it. Maybe it feels unnecessary; maybe it feels indulgent. It certainly wasn’t a category for me for too many years. But my friends, the harsh reality is this: life is probably going to get worse on this planet before it gets better; all signs indicate it is getting worse at an alarming rate. “If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?” (Jeremiah 12:5). In other words, if you think this is hard, wait till the dog squat *really* hits the fan.

We are going to want our souls strong and ready for the days ahead, not weary and weak. We are going to *need* our souls strong. So we must practice soul care. I, for one, am trying to make room for it as part of my “routine.” It really is helping.

Hope these thoughts are helpful. And thank you again for all your love and prayers! We really do need them!

Love,



John and the RH Team

PS If you would still like to honor Craig with a donation to the McConnell Memorial Fund, you can do so in the envelope provided, or online at [ransomedheart.com/Craig](http://ransomedheart.com/Craig). Those funds will be used to carry forward the boot camps around the world that Craig so loved.