



COVENANT
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Experiencing the Father's Love

The idea that God the Father could delight in me and that I could be his "happy thought" were completely foreign to me.

Some of us called the "Turnberry" group get together weekly to live life together around a meal and to spend extended time in conversation and prayer. One of the things we've been doing recently is to go through a book together called "Discovering Our Spiritual Identity" by Trevor Hudson. An exercise early in the book is to describe in writing, being as honest as possible, your current image of God, noting any negative components. Here are some of the negative things I wrote:

He's focused on my performance.
He's reluctant to do good things for me.
He's not one to be bothered with my "minor" concerns.
He's not one to express strong positive emotions, especially towards me.

I started to see that I wasn't really allowing myself to receive His love.

ful for the initiative of these women that resulted in my decision to go.

I made the journey to the conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina with 3 other ECC men: Kelby Benedict, Lane Everitt, and Clayton Jenkins. We stayed in an inexpensive 2 bedroom suite overlooking the ocean, giving our time together a college "spring break" sort of feel. It was indeed a lot of fun, but we were there to do serious business all the same.

At the conference the Shiloh staff made the point that we form our image of our heavenly Father through the "lens" of our experience with our earthly father. My earthly father experience was not a bad one. My father put a lot into raising my four siblings and me. But, while he took very good care of us in many ways, he was not an emotionally available father. So, I needed to rethink my image of God the Father.

The idea that God the Father could delight in me and that I could be his "happy thought" were completely foreign to me.

In many ways this is a follow-on to an article by Mollie Everitt on her experience in going to a Shiloh Place conference called "Experiencing the Father's Embrace." It was the result of hearing about Mollie's experience and getting encouragement from my wife Carol that I made the decision to attend this conference myself. It's an example of how most of the leadership in the Church these days seems to come from the women, making many wonder where the men are. That's another topic for another time. I'm grate-

A question from one of the speakers: Do you know why God created you? To worship Him? No, He has legions of angels worshipping Him day and night. To serve Him? He is all-powerful and has limitless resources at His disposal. He doesn't need us to serve Him. The primary reason He created us is to love us. That's clear from the Genesis creation account. And, according to 1 John, God's very nature is best described as "love."

Many other points were made in support of this, with scriptures noted. The case is overwhelming. But it still wasn't connecting with my heart. I began to re-

Phil Christ



continued

alize that the problem is not with God, but with me. I started to see that I wasn't really allowing myself to *receive* His love. I was not yet comfortable with love. One of the speakers said that it is time to "throw the castle doors open." That really hit me. I started to let down my guard and begin to receive love from Father God.

Another key part of the event for me was to get connected with some spiritual "fathers." There were men and women from the Shiloh staff available to talk and pray with the conference attendees. I connected with one staff member who is older than me, and another one younger. Both were able to minister to me as only spiritually mature men can. It was a rich and invigorating experience that made me want to be available to be a spiritual father myself in the lives of other men.

The younger of the two, Rich, formerly was an engineer by trade. He shared with me the radical transformation God performed in his life by taking him from being a detached, rational engineer-type to a more connected, loving man of God. I argued the same point that I have with others: "My degree is in chemistry, not engineering!" My issues are the same, though. I was inspired by the example of Rich to see that the same kind of change is possible in my own life.

There were so many other things to consider from the event even after I got home. I downloaded a number of mp3 files from the Shiloh Place website onto my iPod, so I could keep going. The late

Jack Frost, founder of Shiloh, made it clear to me that a lot of my thinking is that of a spiritual "orphan": believing that it's all up to me, that I have to strive for everything I can get in life (think "older brother" in the parable of the Prodigal Son), rather than simply resting in the Father's love. He shared a Henri Nouwen quote: "We either live as if we have a home, or we live as if we don't have one." I've spent too many years in the latter camp, for sure. I'm ready to spend more of life living in the "home" of the love of the Father.

The primary reason He created us is to love us.

Sometime after my return I was reunited with the Turnberry group. We reviewed the chapter from "Discovering Our Spiritual Identity." I looked at my previously mentioned handwritten comments from the exercise. I was stunned. They looked so foreign to me. They looked like they were written by someone else! I could no longer see God as cold and distant. I really have begun to see Him as my loving Father who truly delights in me as his beloved son! Amen, Lord, amen.

More recently, I have had several conversations with my Father-In-Law, Carol's Dad. At 80 years of age he's dealing with many of the same issues of learning to relate to God as a loving Father, and he's anxious to learn more. I'm planning on going back to Shiloh Place with him. I'm excited to see what God has in store for us!

*Henri Nouwen
quote: "We either
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The Borden's in Nicaragua!

It was exactly 7 weeks to the day, before we were boarding an airplane to Managua, that we had made a decision as a whole family to go to Nicaragua for Spring Break! Just 7 weeks to raise support, brush up on our Spanish, & come up with an itinerary which would carefully map out each day of our trip.

We wrote support letters to fill friends in on our upcoming adventure, met with our church's missions team, met with Jane Mirandette who started the very first lending library in Nicaragua, & we split into family teams to do research. Most importantly, we prayed. With thankful hearts we asked God to go about every part of the trip. For the big & little details, for family unity, & for continued provision.

Our financial goal was met, time off from work & school secured, our responsibilities covered, & our suitcases packed—We couldn't wait to get to Nicaragua & serve!

Our intention was to go & serve—in the libraries & with the Covenant Church & vocational school in Ameya that our church has partnered with for several years now. Our prayer was that God would show us each day how it was that we could most & best love. To our great surprise, God had so much more for us than just serving!

As we reflect back on our missions trip, our 11 days in this amazing country, we see how God gave us a trip beyond what we could have ever asked or imagined! One with such a balance of much needed *rest*, great fun in just *playing* together, & what we had longed to engage in from the beginning: *servicing*. All together as our family of 7!

*The Borden Family—
Mike & Diane,
Wesley, Olivea,
Audrey, Miranda, &
Elaina*

Wesley's Highlights

Rest: Hanging out in the hammocks & swings on the porch of Hotel Villa Isabella.



Serve: Taking desks to a Rural School.



Fun Fact: As a family we wanted to bring back all sorts of really fun souvenir's & gifts for our friends. We wrote out a list & began taking notes on what to buy. In the end, we never had a chance to do much shopping. Wes was glad he bought his personal souvenir at the beginning of the trip. A genuine cow leg water bottle!



Play: Going to the Beach



Mike's Highlights

Rest: Beach...& not having a watch or cell phone for 11 days!



Play: Canopy Tour—Zipline!



Serve: Visiting the Schools.



Olivia's Highlights

Rest: The Beach!



Play: Playing with all of the kids in Ameya.



Serve: Getting to visit the sewing class at the Vocational School in Ameya



Trying out a Treadle Sewing Machine

& teaching the class how to make Fabric Flowers



Audrey's Highlights

Rest: Made to order breakfast EVERYDAY!



Play: Jumping Rope (Thank you to the Fowler's for donating several ropes for us to take!)



Serve: Helping with the 2nd year celebration for the Biblioteca

Miranda's Highlights

Rest: Eskimo Ice Cream EVERY **Play:** Lots of swimming everyday!



Another dream come true!



Serve: LOVING in lots of outrageous ways!



The Borden's in Nicaragua continued

Rest: Taking long walks as a family



Play: Playing with all of the baby turtles.



Serve: Helping out in Ameya.



We made prayer dolls in our Spiritual Formation Class—I loved getting to give them out!

Diane's Highlights

Rest: Nearly EVERYDAY sleeping in (no picture available!), Sunsets with Mike, & the luxury of journeying at a very leisurely pace!



Play: EVERYDAY adventures! Traveling, Hiking Volcanoes, Zip lines, Larger than life Jesus statues, Long walks, Swimming Pools, Oceans, Looking out the window, LOVING just being all together!



Serve: EVERYDAY asking God, "How can we love today?" & then experiencing the day unfold! Seeing my children serve & love in new ways.



Pumping water from the well at Veronica's House

Before we even landed in Denver, we were wondering what's next! When we left for Nicaragua in March, we didn't have anything in mind beyond those 11 days, but it's true—we were all wondering if there was more God had for the Borden family in this beautiful country.

We were in Ameya for such a short time. We were there to serve, but we were also guests & it was clear to each of us that typical life had been put aside so these incredibly generous & hospitable new friends could host us. No encouragement or prompting from us would change how they hosted us—they took time to just be with us, to get to know us. We were honored—but, it's true, a "good" guest doesn't stay more than 3 days, & so we didn't.

Wes & Audrey asked the question first. "What would it look like for us to be in Ameya long enough that we would stop being guests?" And,

well, that's all it took to really get the ball rolling. Crazy?

We couldn't possibly know what was next, but we spent time with Jane, the church staff, council, & missions team to process & seek prayer as well as their feedback. With their support & continued prayers we official began to "try on" the idea of spending an extended time in Nicaragua. Maybe 6 months, maybe a year? So much to think about—lots of logistics to sort out!

...and then the summer hit! So much fun for all of us, but life was full, and we were rarely all in the same place at the same time long enough to continue the conversation as a whole family. So, it was more individually that we continued to pray and process through what it might really look like for us.

I was asked at the last minute to jump in on the team headed down to Ameya the end of July to help

lead workshops for local pastors & spouses. It was a fabulous time for me, and only heightened my desire to return as our whole family.

There came a point in August that we did finally have a chance to pray & talk through it all again together. As the days quickly seemed to pass us by, we really did need to make that decision—“We’re all in or out?”.

As we talked it all through, we found ourselves so encouraged, that this wasn’t just a vision of one of us but a vision God was really unfolding to all 7 of us! Since our return from Nicaragua in March, our hearts really have been crying out for more adventure as a whole family to experience God in new ways as we serve together & as we take time to pray each morning “How is it God, that You will have us love this day?” And so it was in that moment around our dinner table that we took that leap of faith together. We were following God’s call to return to Nicaragua!

Mike & I were able to both attend the Global Leadership Summit shortly after that night, & took home some great ideas & language to share with our kids. We are greatly encouraged by one of the speakers (Patrick Lencioni), realizing that although we had never spoken specifically about it until we got home, that God really has given the 7 of us 3 “strategic anchors” to use as a filter for the many details of this trip.

1. An opportunity for us to all serve together, which will also gift us with extended family time.
2. To begin new & deepen existing relationships with those of the Covenant Church of Ameya & the Library Staff in San Juan del Sur .
3. Work on eliminating our language barrier by learning Spanish.

All that said, we plan to leave for Nicaragua in mid-February 2013 & return in time for the kids to begin school in August – for Wes, his senior year of High School! We will begin our time in San Juan del Sur where there is a top notch Spanish School for us to all attend, a place for us to initially live, & a library where we will all be able to serve.

With a few months of Spanish under our belts we hope to relocate to Chinandega where we can live closer to Ameya & engage in local life there with a little more ease. Overall, we have many opportunities to serve: with the libraries, with Food for the Hungry, by assisting Pastor Francisco & the Ameya Church, with the Christian Surfers Bible studies, by helping to plan a women’s retreat that our very own Michelle Lyon will be speaking at & more. It seems like ideas come up every week for us to pray through & seek the Lord on.

Our denomination has been extremely supportive of our family. We are honored to have been invited & accepted into the Covenant World Mission Family as official missionaries—*Covenanters in Mission*.

We are currently working through the many logistics of leaving town for six months—getting our home ready to rent, raising support, figuring out schooling for the kids, and finalizing plans with our employers. We’d love each of you to join us on our extraordinary adventure! We have a family blog (bordenmission.org) that we’re all helping to keep updated regularly with all of the latest and greatest. You can also find information on how to support us further in prayer and financially.

We thank you for being a part of our story & for being such enthusiastic supporters. You are such a gift to our family & we are deeply grateful for each and every one of you.



With Pastor
Francisco & Maritza
of Ameya

We’ve Got A
Family Blog!

bordenmission.org



San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua

LyonSeeLyonGo—Part 2

We have had to change the wording in our lives from “busy” to “full”.

After our three month International Adventure (that was Part 1 from the last Anthology), we came home to CO for Easter to re-group. We had the privilege of renting a 33 foot motor home (named Walter) from Jacey’s school principal. We left early April to head South and East. We spent most of our time visiting family and friends, however, we also stayed in RV parks, camping spots and one WalMart parking lot. We traveled through Williamsburg, Washington DC, New York, and more. We ended up driving through 30 States! We even collected quarters from each State and played the license plate game. It was amazing! Our highlights were: Epcot Center in Florida, seeing family and long time friends, flying kites on the lawn at the Washington Monument,

We LOVED living in Walter the RV, setting the GPS for Trader Joe’s

Michelle’s birthday in downtown Charleston, Jacey’s birthday at the top of the Empire State Building in New York City, Niagara Falls, time at the Lyon Family Cottage in Michigan, spending a week in Wisconsin at the summer home of one of our neighbor’s here in Fort Collins. We LOVED living in Walter the RV, time on the road with just the four of us, setting the GPS for Trader Joe’s, the slower pace of life, and seeing the East Coast.

Michelle Lyon



We pulled back into Fort Collins at the end of May. We came back a few days early to meet Laynie Mae French. What a fun blessing to come home to :)

Now we are back and have had time to reflect on what are our “take-aways” and lessons learned:

(1) We are changed people - by all that we’ve seen with our eyes, by all that we’ve experienced in the world outside our comfort zone, and by our deeper rooted connection as a family. It is not so much something we can put our finger on but rather, our experience now flavors and colors how we walk forward in

life. Our theme as a family is “Rooted & Wings.” You can see www.lyonseelyongo.com for more details on that.

(2) We view hospitality in a whole new light. We stayed in many people’s homes in those five months which put us on the receiving end of hospitality. Those we stayed with were generous beyond measure. We now have a fresh perspective on how we want to be hospitable and generous to people who come into our home.

(3) We were so filled up after our five month adventure with God’s blessing and grace and abundance and truth through the study and memorizing of His Word that we felt the need to find a place for “overflow”. Michelle felt led by God to step back into

women’s ministry leadership and teach an inductive James 1 Bible Study. Kevin felt led by God to lead a men’s inductive Bible Study on James 1 as well. We now stand amazed in the abundance of that overflow here at ECC.

(4) Life here in Fort Collins is much faster and busier than life on the road. How do we handle that? We have had to change the wording in our lives from “busy” to “full”. Busy sounds negative and feels like survival mode. Full sounds life giving and more of a choice of how we spend our days. Life is indeed FULL and we are blessed.

We still can’t believe that we had the opportunity to take time out of life and school to travel for five months and show our kids the world. Above all else, God not only moved the mountains of obstacles in order to get away, but He poured forth His provision and His blessing.

We would like to invite whoever wants to come, Sunday, November 4th from 6-7:30pm to see a slideshow and hear more about our trip. Kids welcome. 2201 Grosvenor Court. RSVP!! 970-443-7107

Kevin, Michelle, Jacey and Jessup Lyon

The Master's Cleanse

Chapter 1: Death

Death. It begins with death. That's what I believe at least. Death has become a craving and a longing. I seek it out and ask for it daily. I expose myself before others with the hope that death will come.

Death.
You're worried about it.
I can tell.
Death is scary.

Death is black right? Death is for all tense and purposes dead. It's nothingness. Death seems to be void of color that we see. It surrounds life and helps to bring even more clarity to color, but it is the void. Living is not death. Black is not life.

I have to admit. This is a pretty awful setup don't you think?

There's a story. Will you bear with me for a few moments? I promise that...okay, well I can't make any promises. But I hope that you might get even but a glimpse into how my life has been turned upside down. May God give you insight into the blessings of this time for me as I have learned to follow Him more nearly over the last few months.

May God give you insight into the blessings of this time for me as I have learned to follow Him more nearly over the last few months.

Chapter 2: History

History. January 2012 was a lot like jumping into a swimming pool off the high dive not knowing how to swim. It wasn't pretty and very scary.

I moved up to the Portland, Oregon-Vancouver, Washington area to live with my Aunt and to help with a church plant while I was attending a class at seminary.

It was perfect. The timing was perfect, the class, Knowing Self, Knowing God was amazing and life changing. The church was just beginning and I was given complete liberty to shape and create worship services. My Aunt Marsha is one of the most artistic people I know and we had a blast creating things together and going to see movies and enjoying getting to know each other better. I even

joined a large semi-professional choir to expand my vocal abilities. Everything was great! Well, everything but my health. Oh and the weather, but we're not going to get into that!

Chapter 3: Health or Lack there of

Health or Lack there of. My health took a plunge pretty quickly after moving in with my Aunt. Within a few days I was having issues with my stomach getting distended along with progressively debilitating allergic reactions. At first it was just reactions to food, but I quickly removed all foods from my diet that caused any reactions. The problem was that I began to react to everything I ate. I even had issues with digesting water.

Then my sensitivities became airborne. Smells of cleaning products or even "cooking" bread would make my body go into itchy fits and disorienting feelings and inflammation all over my body. I was always exhausted and eventually I barely had enough energy to get out of bed and yet I couldn't sleep. I was malnourished and my body was fighting itself. I had been seeing a natural doctor in Oregon who seemed promising, but after 6 weeks of seeing him every week I was worse off than when I started.

I had been "surviving" but after a couple more months I realized that something was desperately wrong. I sought God with all of my heart to know what He would have me do because I could barely get out of bed let alone lead worship.

Chapter 4: Reminders

Reminders. I needed someone I could trust. I needed someone who could help me figure out what was wrong. The Lord so graciously reminded me, and with the encouragement of a friend in Colorado, that I should come and see the doctor in Fort Collins that I trusted. I was desperate, and yet it didn't seem like desperation to get on a plane to see her. It seemed like the smartest thing to do was to see someone I trusted with my life. Because my life was at stake.

I flew out to Colorado to see the doctor and

I sought God with all of my heart to know what He would have me do because I could barely get out of bed let alone lead worship.

Anne Marks



The Master's Cleanse continued

connect with some friends and after a week in the sun and a heavy dose of natural supplements and a diet regiment (mainly apple sauce) I was already feeling a bit better. I felt like there was a glimmer of hope.

but He also taught me that I may never know why I was doing what I was doing, but that wasn't the point.

After much deliberating, I felt like the Lord was leading me to come back to Fort Collins to take care of my health and to be near the doctor I trusted. I finished my class at the seminary and packed my car up and miraculously made the drive by myself despite my health.

Chapter 5: Dr. Tammy

Dr. Tammy. Dr. Tammy is a God-send. I trusted her with my life, literally. My body was a wreck, I could tell by the look on her face when I visited almost every week. We continued to find layer after layer of issues and it seemed to be unending. My immune system was attacking my body, I had excessive bacteria in my organs, especially my intestines, I had a parasite in my skin, my heart, liver and kidneys were hardly functioning and the list goes on and on. I'm not gonna lie. It was pretty scary. I had narrowed my diet down to about 6 things that my body could somewhat tolerate and digest and yet even with all of these things and months of research into what could be going on and eliminating so many factors and possibilities it came back to this. "I feel better when I don't eat."

Chapter 6: Hindsight is 20/20

Hindsight is 20/20. Before I left Oregon one of the doctors that attended the church tried to help me figure out what was wrong. I remembered telling him that I feel better when I don't eat anything. He said, "Well you have to eat! You're fine you just need to find out what foods you're allergic to and then you'll get better."

Chapter 7: June 26, 2012

June 26, 2012. This is the day when everything changed. I went to see Dr. Tammy the morning of June 26th and after explaining to her some more weird symptoms (and by this point I was very in tune with my body and how I reacted to things) I mentioned that the inflammation in my stomach and around my

intestines seems to subside when I didn't eat.

I kind of picture a light bulb going on above her head as she smiled and said, "Maybe you should consider doing the Master Cleanse."

I didn't know what it was for sure, but I knew this was it. I knew the Lord had something for me. I went to Whole Foods and the Natural Grocers as Dr. Tammy instructed and bought some lemons, Grade B Organic Maple Syrup, Sea Salt, a "special" Senna tea, unchlorinated water and Cayenne Pepper. I then quickly rushed home to read up on the Master Cleanse.

Chapter 8: The Master's Cleanse

The Master's Cleanse. Because of the nature of the struggles I was having with food, the thought of not eating was beautiful, especially after reading up on the cleanse. Typically people who do the Master Cleanse go for 10 days. It's mandatory to go for 10 days, but you can go for longer. After researching and praying I felt like I would be doing the cleanse for quite a bit more than 10 days. I wasn't sure how many, but I knew it would be more than 10.

slowly I began to understand that obedience does not always mean doing things that we would "normally" do.

Okay, so this part is going to get a little bit graphic. But I think it's important to understand what the cleanse looks like.

So, it truly is a whole body cleanse and the way it works is by not eating you allow your organs to stop digesting and begin focusing on healing. Basically, they shut down their normal operations and begin to seek out the things in your body that are not healthy and it uses your body fat to fuel the work. I can't explain the whole scientific side of it, so you'll have to trust me that this is how it works.

You start off the morning by drinking 32 ounces of water with some sea salt. (I'm not going to give proportions because it's very specific and I don't want you to do the cleanse and do it wrong!) This basically flushes out your intestines pretty quickly. Here's where we get a bit graphic. Every morning is elimination time. The work that your body did cleansing the day before is flushed out. I think they call it the Rinse Cycle.

Okay, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me

continued

explain what a typical day looks like and then we'll dig in deeper.

First thing: 32 ounces water with sea salt. Wait 1 to 1 ½ hours for body to flush out. Make some yummy lemonade: I would drink typically 10 batches of 8 ounces of water with lemon, maple syrup and cayenne pepper during the day. Last thing: Drink "special" Senna tea right before bed.

So that's what I did for 32 days. Every day I was allowing my body to heal and flush out the old layers of build up in my intestines. Here's the crazy part. After 32 days on the cleanse I was still eliminating layers of old build up from my intestines. Pretty crazy huh?

Chapter 9: The Part I Love

The Part I Love. This is the part I love. As I was cleansing my body of the old buildup and fasting from food the Lord began to grab my attention. I had read the first couple chapters of Practicing the Presence of God and I couldn't go any farther because I wanted to truly figure out what it was to Practice His Presence. So, I put it into Practice. Every day as I prepared my Lemonade drink mix I asked the Lord to help, to be with me. It was not easy. He slowly taught me what it was to listen to His voice in the small intricacies of making the lemonade mix. I don't want to sound all super spiritual, because I promise you that I fought Him. I didn't understand why He would have me do certain things and then slowly I began to understand that obedience does not always mean doing things that we would "normally" do. He began to show me that obedience often leads to the answers of why I was doing the things I was doing, but He also taught me that I may never know why I was doing what I was doing, but that wasn't the point. It was about being with Him and responding to Him. He also taught me that as I became more familiar with His voice, the Spirit's promptings, that I wouldn't need the answers. I would just trust that as I did as He asked, He would do the rest.

As I began to understand how to listen better and better He began to dig deeper and deeper into my life and cleanse me spiritually. There are two friends that were walking very closely with me through this time and it was amazing how literally every day the Lord was renewing not only my physical body, but my

spiritual body.

I began to see how my physical illness was often linked closely with hurts and pains from my past. The Lord so gently washed layer after layer out of my body, just the same as I was using the "Rinse Cycle" in the morning to cleanse the old layers in my intestines. He worked on my fears and anxieties. He worked on my shaky foundation. He slowly began to restore my understanding of the beautiful daughter of God that I am. In 32 days, He did restoring work through several years of my life and yet He continues to work backwards.

I love that the cleanse is called the Master Cleanse. I truly felt like the Master, God the Father was cleansing me. Taking me to new places and restoring what had been stolen from me.

Chapter 10: Now

Now. Today is a new day and I have been eating almost everything. The Lord has been showing me what it is to Practice His Presence in even more complicated situations. I now can eat anything and yet I can still get sick. I have to trust Him to lead me to what He would have me eat or not eat. I want to be completely reliant on Him and how He would have me proceed moment by moment. OH and I HAVE totally missed it many times. But that's the fun thing. He is loving me and walking me through it. It's not about doing it all right, it's just about walking with Him and listening.

Chapter 11: Death

Death. So, death. I see now that death to the things of my past and the old ugly layers in my intestines is good. I welcome death because it brings life. Death to the things that are not of God and are holding me back from seeing myself clearly, others and also holding me back from what God has for me.

So I say it again. Death. It begins with death. That's what I believe at least. Death has become a craving and a longing. I seek it out and ask for it daily. I expose myself before others with the hope that death will come.

Death to death.
Life from death.
Kingdom Life sealing.

*I would just trust
that as I did as He
asked, He would do
the rest.*

Sabbatical

What was it? This past summer I had one of the richest, life altering experiences of my life. Our church won a grant from the Lilly Endowment affording my family a summer in Europe with the simple assignment to come back refreshed. It also paid for a variety of experiences that our church could jump in on while I was away. Here is the framework of what it was:

For the church: Five major opportunities were presented, 1. *Guest Preachers:* twelve *Sundays* without Bert amounted to six outside guest, three preachers from the body, and three sermons from our beloved Tom Glossi. 2. *Small Group:* the summer started with small groups that met one time to discuss the book that was given out entitled *Practicing the Presence of God*. 3. *Contemplative Retreat:* a one day time to experience God together up the Poudre Canyon. 4. *The Summit & Klyne Snodgrass weekend:* a training super vortex! Two days of the Willow Creek simulcast and then an evening and morning with North Park Seminary professor Klyne Snodgrass giving us an introduction on the book of Acts. 5. *Evenings to send & receive:* book ending and marking the time.

For the Sabbatical: The question was posed, if you had the time and money, what would you do that would make your heart

sing? Here's how I answered: 1. I took a few solo nights backpacking up the Poudre Canyon to decompress and begin this experience. 2. Our family walked for six days on the Camino de Santiago in Spain. 3. We spent the next week in Dublin where I snooped around all the places the world's best rock-n-roll band is from. 3. We went to our 'Home Base' in Chianti just south of Florence, Italy for a seven week stay where we were visited by family and day tripped around northern Italy. 4. Heather & I visited Greece for a week to soak in the ancient cities that made up much of geography of the book of Acts. 5. We finished our time in Europe with a week in Rome. 6. I then spent a few solo nights at a monastery in New Mexico to pull it all together.

Now, as great as all that looks (& it was great!), the bigger question is, **What did it do?** In short, it changed me. Here is a little bit of

what I mean.

-**Writing the grant itself** was instructive. We all know we need to dream & put strategy in place, this has settled in on a deeper level as a full year out I had to know precisely what I and the church would be doing all summer.

-We all know it's valuable to **look back** yet I've rarely make time for deeper reflection. Resting and reflecting can feel like an optional luxurious activity, when in reality they are inseparable from forward movement. Some new patterns along these lines in my life have proved extremely valuable.

-Not being the best with maps/directions I was a bit nervous to bring my family on such a long walk where I've never been for the Camino pilgrimage in Spain. You actually find your way on the Camino as you walk

The question was posed, if you had the time and money, what would you do that would make your heart sing?

Resting and reflecting can feel like an optional luxurious activity, when in reality they are inseparable from forward movement.

Bert Wright



Reading guidebook on Camino



Bert with the kids on the Camino

(continued)

it.



At our place in Chianti

The maps I brought were wrong as I found you need to trust the markers others have set; this taught me **you get what you need when you need it**. In fear we think we need everything ahead of time, in faith we get what we need at the right time, God really does provide.

-Interestingly the Camino provides arguably some of the world's best vistas, all while you walk through fresh cow dung! The best views, the worst smell, what gets the attention? **Life is always a mix of the best and worst, it's never all ok**. The issue is how one holds life as it actually is.

-I was also reminded on the Camino that if you take your eyes off the markers **it is easy to loose your way**, all we need do is simply look the wrong direction and we are lost.

-Trusting God to pull away from everything for three months to rest and refresh brought a deeper connection through **prayer**. It struck me deeply in Acts⁰ that the Apostles were getting so caught up in the busy work of ministry they were neglecting prayer and The Word and worked to bring it back as central to their lives. This happened with me. Of course God will take care of His church and of course God wants prayer to

be central and pervasive in my life. Time away made this all so obvious.

The real *fruit* or *product* in this unique time came in two forms. 1. **A deeper family harmony** where the five of us simply melted together as a new unit. Sharing adventure, laughter, and the wonder of Europe together is so far beyond anything I'd ever imagined we get to do that is has given us a stronger frame as a family. 2. Just before this experience I'd been wondering about my own call as a pastor (after all I'm now in my 40's and have not conquered the world & it looks unlikely I will!). The sabbatical experience spoke deeply to this giving me a refreshed stable sense of calling to pastoral ministry; it gave a new sense of **being more comfortable in my own skin**. I know pastoral leadership is what God enjoys for me. I know on deeper levels that He likes who

In fear we think we need everything ahead of time, in faith we get what we need at the right time, God really does provide.

he has crafted me to be and who am I to argue with the Craftsman! I know that I got to experience something that not to long ago was only available to royalty, and it goes without saying (but oh I'm saying it!) I'm grateful and more motivated

than ever to serve the King.

For more: wrightonit.blogspot.com and on our website the sermon "Comfortable Skin" on 9/2/12.



Inside the coliseum in Rome

Life is always a mix of the best and worst, it's never all ok. The issue is how one holds life as it actually is.

Fire Story

I saw trees ignite like matches. It looked like they were writhing in pain. The whole mountain was alive.

June 9th was a beautiful, pristine morning. I was heading up to Sky Corral Ranch to hang lights for the knighting ceremony that was to take place during Christ in the Rockies, a Father-Son camp I direct. I stopped at the Bellevue Bean for a cup of coffee and then headed up to Rist Canyon. When I got to the top of Rist Canyon, I spotted a plume of smoke off to the southwest, but I didn't really pay much attention.

When I turned onto Old Flowers Road, back toward Sky Corral Ranch, I stopped to talk to the sheriff's deputy. He said that the fire had started three hours earlier – about six o'clock in the morning – but that they had plenty of support on it. He thought things were going to be okay, but just in case there was an evacuation alert going on.

I continued on my way and arrived at Sky Corral Ranch around 9:15am. When I arrived they were setting up for an outdoor wedding, and they asked me not to come down into camp because it would disturb the wedding party. They also mentioned that they were on evacuation alert, and the sounding of the extended dinner bell meant that we had to leave immediately.

I worked up there all morning hanging lights, and I was having a great time. I'd come out and look at the plume every once in a while. Sometimes it was high and sometimes it was out. At one point, I even thought they must have put the fire out. It really was a beautiful day.

But by 11:30am, things were changing. The wind started to pick up. By noon I felt uneasy. It was still sunny where I was, but it was dark to the southwest. Then, all of

the sudden, within the span of 10 minutes, the temperature dropped 10 or 15 degrees, and I heard a roar. This wasn't like the constant ebb and flow of sound in the woods. It was like a roar and running water at the same time in the distance. When I looked below again, I noticed the Sky Corral Ranch horses had been set free.

That was my cue. I packed everything up and headed down to the camp, and I found that I had missed the warning bell. The camp had been evacuated; it was like a ghost town. There was one rancher left with his truck and trailer trying to load up some of the horses. As I pulled up, he was just closing the trailer on the last one. The party was certainly over.

So I left. I crested the first hill. It was still sunny there but empty; no one was around. When I crested the second hill into the Steadman Ranch area, I will never forget what I saw. To the west, across a meadow, the entire mountainside was ablaze. I saw trees ignite like matches. It looked like they were writhing in pain. The whole mountain was alive.

By this time, I was in the fire. The smoke was around me, and I had to roll up my windows. I really had to focus on the road to get to high ground. The smoke was thick, like an extreme fog. When I crested the last hill, there was a guy running towards me. It was Justin Smith, the sheriff, and he asked if I was the last guy out. I told him the rancher was coming after me, and he said that I needed to hurry.

When I got to Stove Prairie School, the intersection was just buzzing with activity – emergency vehicles and fire trucks. I was

We had people in route from around the country scheduled to arrive that night excited to camp, and we had nowhere to take them. So we prayed, and we dreamed.

Mike Haddorff



able to get out, and they directed me down to Buckhorn because Rist and Poudre Canyons were closed. The only people on the road were evacuees heading down and emergency vehicles heading up, their lights and sirens blazing.

When I got into cell range, I pulled over and called my wife. The second call I made was to one of our board members because we had fathers and sons on their way, and our camp, for the second year in a row, homeless. Last year there was a fire at Saint Malo near Estes Park.

That afternoon we called an emergency Christ in the Rockies Board meeting, and it was like nothing else. Not one person was freaking out. We spent thirty minutes just seeking the Lord in prayer, asking what to do. We had people in route from around the country scheduled to arrive that night excited to camp, and we had nowhere to take them. So we prayed, and we dreamed.

It was really so much fun; we talked, and bantered ideas back and forth and laughed. Nothing was holding us back. In the end, we came up with three or four good options, and so we started making calls. One of the options was YMCA of the Rockies, and they were willing to lower the price to help us out even though it was one of the busiest times of the year. By 4:30pm we had a home. I was just praising God at how amazing it was that in a few short hours we had a new place.

The next morning I was up early packing, and I got a call from one of our board members, Darrel, that he was being evacuated. Despite his circumstances, he was still planning on coming up for the week, although

he said he'd be a bit late.

We all met up at YMCA of the Rockies, and they were just so helpful. We originally had all of our activities planned out, but they all had to be adjusted. With their help, each day we planned out the next day's schedule. The camp went beautifully, but of course we were all worried about Darrel's house. Finally, on Wednesday, we heard that the fire had come within ten feet of his house, but the firefighters were able to put it out with no damage to his house. It was just an amazing work of God. He brought us through that week - what a ride!

We took a week off, and on June 23rd I was driving with my wife down 1-25 to Col-

That was Saturday night, and another camp was scheduled to start at the beginning of the week. It almost seemed like a joke. We got together and were praying, and by midnight they had it under control.

orado Springs when I looked out the window and said, "Is that a plume of smoke?" The Waldo Canyon fire had just broken out. Later, on our way back to Fort Collins, my son Mikey called and said they were looking for me because that evening the Estes Park fire had broken out, and the road to Estes was closed. That was Saturday night, and our 2nd

Christ in the Rockies camp was scheduled to start at the beginning of the week. It almost seemed like a joke. We got together and were praying, and by midnight they had it under control. The firefighters were able to reallocate resources from the High Park fire to do some big dumps and put out the Estes Park fire quickly. The next morning, Sunday, we were able to drive up to Estes through the fire area, and God pulled off our camp. Again.

I know that it was God working all along. Our circumstances were so ridiculously out of control that without several miracles occurring, Christ in the Rockies wouldn't have happened. But it did. Praise God.

I know that it was God working all along. Our circumstances were so ridiculously out of control.....



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Have a reflection or story you'd like to share?
Let's start by contacting the office.