

My Wonderfully Terrible Experience

"Since you will be on the front line, the attacks will be more directly aimed, more precisely aimed at you." This was one of the opening comments from a word entitled Moving Out that was given to my wife, Margaret, and myself on February 28, 1988 by our good friend Rhonda Hendrickson. I should have known we were in for some experiences that would ultimately bring us to a place of healing and cleansing from all our unrighteousness.

What could only be described as a Wonderfully Terrible experience actually was a chain of events that followed this word we had received.. It has allowed us to experience both our brokenness and God's faithfulness to forgive our trespasses. In April, 1988 while on a game farm with the Hendricksons, I contracted Lyme disease although as you'll see it was not diagnosed for two years. In August, 1988, my family was in a car accident that inflicted a severe blow to my son, Matt's forehead and left Margaret partially paralyzed from the waist up. On October 23, 1988 elders in our church laid hands on Margaret and prayed for her recovery and she was. Later in November the transmission and differential literally fell out of the VW vanagon that had been repaired from the accident and our VW convertible stopped running. Needless to say, we felt under enemy attack. But God is faithful and He used two families to provide three vehicles for our use until one of our vehicles could be repaired. Praise God!!!

But things seemed to go from bad to worse. Matt was diagnosed with perceptual epilepsy from the car accident. In addition, we had to rush him to Childrens Hospital with pneumonia. My business began to remind me of the roller coaster ride at Valley Fair because of all the ups and downs. Our home had been on the market since 1987, but each year a crisis would occur that would force me to take the home off the market. In 1987 it was a flood that filled my basement with water. In 1988 it was the car accident and in 1989 it was my failing health and financial pressures. I was at my proverbial wits end. I finally had to say Lord help me.

That same morning a man by the name of Paul Camerote prayed that the Lord would use his hands and feet and voice to serve Him today. I'm sure as Paul prayed that prayer, he had no idea how God would use him to meet not only our financial need, but more importantly our need for Jesus. Paul was God's Messenger of Love that special April day in 1989. From this we can testify that God may not be early, but He is never late according to His divine will and sovereign plan.

From this encounter with the living God, who cared about our earthly needs, things started to turn around. First, the house we had been trying to sell for three years finally sold just in the nick of time for us to avoid going into foreclosure. Next, in September I had the biggest month I've ever had in business by double which allowed us to become debt free with \$ 24,000 remaining after our tigh. As it turned out, this is what our family lived on when my income dried up while I went on a leave of absence for treatment of Lyme disease.

This part of the adventure started while we where skiing in Indianhead, Michigan. I became very chilled and lacked energy to do what I enjoyed the most- skiing. Upon our return, I began to seek some answers to my falling health condition. After two months and a very frustrating process of diagnosis, the doctor finally determined that I had contracted Lyme disease. After 30 days of the standard treatment, with no improvement I changed doctors to Dr. Al Kind. For what lie ahead I felt he was very well named. I was put on an experimental drug for another 30 days and admitted to Methodist Hospital to monitor my reaction. But this time my body reacted so severely that after 18 days the treatment was discontinued and they were more concerned with just stablizing my bodily functions. What I'm about to share happened during my hospital stay and I will be forever changed because of encountering the Living God in my time of great need.

On this particular morning, I had been up all night, very restless, just couldn't sleep. I had been scheduled to go through testing to try and determine the extent of the damage from the disease. The first test was an EEG followed by an MRI - Magnetic Resonance Imaging. For me it was like being in a metal straw. I was asked to lay down on a platform then my head was put in a cage with sponges acting as pads so that my head would not move. I've never considered myself claustrophobic, but I sure was this morning. When my wife, Margaret, arrived, I asked her to hold my toe which was sticking out of the end of the MRI, just in case I hyperventilated. I was scheduled to be in this machine for 30 minutes. After 20 minutes I opened my eyes but couldn't focus. As it turns out I am farsighted, but didn't know it at the time. And so I began to hyperventilate.

Rather than signal to Margaret as we had agreed upon if I was experiencing any difficulty, I chose to call out to the Lord with these words spoken to myself, "Lord help me." The next thing I knew I saw myself in a field of wild daisies, the Lord was there and I was walking with Him.. I said "Lord, why am I going through this?" And the Lord replied "You need to trust in me and me alone. I can not use you to do my work if you do not trust in me because then you get in the way of Me Loving Others Through you." He kept saying the same thing over and over. Then the Lord said "You are in a cocoon but soon will be a butterfly." I asked Him to show me how to worship His Father. The Lord gave me a hug and then stood at my right side and put His left arm around my waist and said "My Spirit is within you and I will always be at your side." Then the Lord lifted His right hand and I lifted my left and there was such an awesome sense of Worship. I then thanked the Lord for helping me during my time of anxiousness and He said "Do not focus on debt or anything else that will cause you to fear. Just focus on Me just Me." When I became aware of my position in the MRI machine, I heard the technician say that I only had one minute to completion of the test. Upon removal from the machine, I asked Margaret for a piece of paper so that I might record what I have just shared,

The next day I was discharged from the hospital so that I might recover in my own home out in the country. Margaret had been a tremendous advocate for me and our family during this whole ordeal. As part of her preparation for my recovery, Margaret purchased two music videos produced by Maranatha Music entitled "Perfect Peace" and "This is the Day." I enjoyed the music and the breathe taking scenery. In "Perfect Peace" the narrator began to quote II Corinthians V where the apostle Paul is saying that even though our earthly tent may be destroyed, we will always have a home in heaven with the Lord. What a tremendous assurance to anyone in need. The camera then focused on a forest, a tree in that forest and finally a branch on the tree. And attached to the branch was a cocoon. Remembering back to my MRI experience, I called to Margaret to join me and the two of us watched the transformation of the caterpillar from the cocoon to a butterfly which when ready joined hundreds of other butterflies in flight. It was a magnificent sight. The Lord inspired me to record this transformation and the significance to me in a poem entitled "Because of a Morning like this."

Through all of these events, God has demonstrated over and over His love for me, one of His children. And this love has become very real and personal. My hope for each of you who read my testimony and Psalms of Joy to God's Best is that you will realize God is your Father and you are his son or daughter. And it is only through Jesus Christ and His victory over sin and death by His death on the cross that has set you free to be who God created you to be. To live your life, abiding in God, apart of His family, using your gifts and talents to serve brothers and sisters. If you are not yet apart of the Body of Christ which is the Church then please don't miss this opportunity to be reconciled to your Heavenly Father. It is only through an encounter with the Living God and His word that all of us are healed and cleansed from all unrighteousness and truly set free. You are free indeed!!!

At the end of Psalms of Joy to God's Best, I have included a page entitled God's Plan For You. Please read it and if it expresses the desire of your heart then pray the prayer of salvation and become that new creature in Christ. If I can be of any assistance to help you - Please don't hesitate to call.

Since this encounter with the Lord, I have become an ambassador for Promise Keepers, a ministry calling men to be promise keepers not just promise makers - Men of Integrity. While attending my first PK conference at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado, I listened to Pastor Jack Hayford share how that Saturday morning he had seen a butterfly and he believed it was symbolic of the transformation that was happening in many men's lives. This brought tears to my eyes because I realized it wasn't just me but many men were turning their hearts back toward their wives and their children. We are seeing the fulfillment of Malachi 4:6. God is filling His Church with His Glory. Praise God!!!!!!

May God Bless Your Life Abundantly!

Robert W. Roddy, Jr.