

Chronicles of Diversity



Your leadership weekly

Deep Gratitude

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Have you ever prayed a prayer something like, “You have to do something Lord, this can’t go on much more.”

Of course you have, in our own way each of us thinks something like that on a regular basis. It’s part of the human condition. It happens in every country, under all types of circumstances. It happens from despair and from affluence. It is caused by the ravage disease of sin, and as a consequence it effects not only the human family, but all of creation.

I made a phone call last week to the broker with the listing of the ship who’s picture has been featured on the PDF copy for the last few weeks. I just wanted to get a general idea of where it was located in Europe, in case I might know someone in the area, that could easily go down and take a preliminary look, to get a feel for its potential as a missions ship.

I don’t need a ship. I don’t even really want a ship. My only desire for a ship relates to its use in bringing some hope to those who’s situation is more complex, trying, or desperate than my own. From the best I could gather from the man, the ship probably lies in eastern Europe in the former Communist countries that border on the Mediterranean.

Albania, Rumania, the countries of the former Yugoslavia. I have never been to that area of the world, at least physically. Early last fall I got a call from a man stating, “I understand you might be interested in importing furniture from Rumania.” Since the thought never really had entered into my head, I followed up to some extent to see how and why he was calling me.

At the Northwest Pastor’s Conference, last fall the bunk room I shared with others included a young national pastor from Albania. From our conversations, my feeling for one of his country’s greatest natural needs, was sources of capital to start and to run legal, ethical, small businesses.

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Certain gifts of charity were available related to infrastructure, then there was some investment capital available for western consumer interests, and money from illegal sources, with sinister strings, but virtually no capital to truly help develop a prosperous, sustainable local enterprise community base from which to rebuild the country.

I watched a portion of a news piece concerning the newly unemployed in this country. White collar workers who once made from \$80,000 to \$100,000 per year. While I won't go into detail on the segment, one of the only truly honest statements, that came from those who still had their jobs, came from a head hunter, or an executive recruiter, who stated, "If you do not have the skills, that you can show directly flow to the company bottom line, you will not be hired." I assume that this is a correct statement, but assuming this is true, for the sake of a job, would you really want to cast your future to such a company?

Really no better, at least in my limited, but mounting years, the response to the church as always been, "Cast your cares on Jesus, for He cares for you. He has a wonderful plan for your life."

In times when God probes the depth of your soul, how in God's name does that saying relate to anything tangible you can hold on too, either in Albania, or Oregon, or your situation each day, as you juggle limited funds with mounting expenses. What it does show is that as we discussed last week, the church asks you to participate in their shallow giving proposals, in return you receive the promise of the shallow blessing above. Put another way, in the original Greek, the word for church means, "called out ones." Does that original definition still apply? Or do we really have an institution, that has lost both it's temporal if not its eternal significance.

I will have to admit, that I can finally see some of the fruit of this church response happening in my life, but for the most part, the church was not there in the many years of trial I personally have gone through. Jesus yes, His representative body, no.

As I watched how the story of Kayla Burt played out in the media here, and I guess nationally, this past week, I just wonder how many of the emails, and wishes she got, contained the shallow, "When God closes the door, he always opens a window."

I know that was not in the card I sent her. Her comments have stated what a blessing this whole situation has been. God closed the most important natural door in her young life, but as time develops, the deepening gift of God's graciousness will not be a simple open window to quickly scramble through. What natural doors has he closed in your life, and for how long? This blessing will effect the rest of her life, and many times I am sure she will question the temporal benefits of her giftedness. Or in other words, God really did open a door that we were expecting, it is just that instead of a bright sunny world of eternal bliss, it was a door to a long dark corridor through deep personal sacrifice and despair, before it opens into the understanding of God's greater purpose.

Health insurance is one of the gifts I am now greatly grateful. I do not think I would have understood this blessing unless I had not been without this coverage for a number of years. It is really a shame in this the most powerful nation of all time, a huge minority of her population do not have access to affordable health care. Just as tragic, is that one brief happening, that is not insured, could financially wipe out everything an individual or a family has worked for a lifetime.

When I made my appointment with the Sports Medicine Clinic at the University of Washington, I was not aware of Kayla's life stopping situation.. All I knew was as of the first of the year I could now have some old sports injuries looked at, and if something could be done to help alleviate those problems, at least a portion would be covered by my recent blessing.

Almost four years ago, I injured my right heel running in a 10 mile race in Wenatchee. It was really a result of my own stupidity and over competitive nature. Over the intervening time, while it has not been something that most people (including me) would consider a problem to living a normal life, it has gotten better, then something has happen, and it got sore again. While running has never been one of my prime desires for exercise, I do believe that our bodies are the temple of God and we need to maintain them as stewards of God's blessing. Exercise is part of that program, and limited running for me was a way to relieve some of the boredom of other forms of keeping fit.

As I told the doctor, I believed that this was potentially my most serious ailment I wanted him to look at. Since this really is his area of expertise, the doctor ask me all kinds of questions, looked at my legs and how I stood, poked here and there and gave me some of the coolest German made silicon rubber heel cups I have ever seen and said, "Try these and see if they work. If they don't we can try some other things."

Since I am one to push the envelop, I decided that afternoon to put them to the test. I jogged four miles. Now, I walk between twenty and thirty miles a week, so I did not think that there would be any real physical danger, just a real test of whether I might be able to run at least on a limited basis again. Not only did my heel not hurt, the lift of the heel cups in conjunction with my other orthotics, changed the position where the back of my heel contacts the back of my shoe. A much more comfortable position, for the unusual shape of the heels I was born with. What a deep grateful blessing this is.

After my potentially most serious problem, I showed him my most frustrating. That is the little finger on my left hand. I dislocated my pinkie while playing basketball when I was in college. As I told the doctor, I still can remember exactly where it took place, but the rest of the memories of the circumstance have long since vanished, except how it really got to be a problem.

Because it was a serious dislocation, the nerves that cause pain in that area, were severed, so it has never hurt, except if it is out of joint enough for the muscles to spasm. But there has never been any pain in the area. When I was in the service I was playing in a flag football game, and because it doesn't hurt, I forgot to wrap my finger. In that game the hit I took on the finger, pushed it down into the flesh part of my hand. Ever since that time it pops in and out of joint relatively easy, becoming more and more regular. So now it is many times a day.

Just like Kayla, I loved to play basketball, but even wrapping it in the way I used to wrap it I couldn't keep it in joint, and if I wrapped it firm enough to keep it in place I didn't have enough ability to control the ball with my left hand. Especially to shoot and dribble. I had taught myself in high school to use my right hand relatively well, and because it was a skill I learned after I knew something about what I was doing, my right handed form was probably better than my left handed jumper, it just was never as effective. Therefore, I could play somewhat, and it looked like I knew what I was doing, it was just that I sucked, and it was extremely frustrating. Therefore, I figured my basketball days were forever ended.

Last spring during the NBA playoffs during a post game interview, I noticed that Kobe Bryant looked like he had a mini cast over the joint on his little finger of his left hand. "I wonder if I could tape my hand somewhat like that and at least be able to shoot some baskets?"

I bought a roll of tape and borrowed a basketball and went to the park. Sure enough, with the right taping just at the joint, I could keep my finger in joint and shoot well enough to enjoy the shooting again. It was just at that time my heel was hurting badly, and I didn't want to stress it too much.

When I showed my finger to both the doctor and the nurse, they asked if I was serious or it was just a parlor trick. Once they played around with it and took an x-ray, which showed I couldn't keep it in joint in a straight way even when holding it with my other hand, they referred me to the people who will be able to at least give me all my options. But in any event, with a good heel and proper taping I will be able to go to the park and shoots some hoops against imaginary past and present basketball stars. What a grateful blessing that will be.

This week I get to go and have my shoulder looked at. This I know where it hurts and why. It is something I can live with if necessary, but I sure would be grateful if there would be something that could fix that also.

I have tried to keep these illustrations to, in the whole scheme of things, things quite trivial. To show that over the years, I have seen the promises of God remain true not only in the important, but also the trivial.

I really had no coach who taught me how to play basketball, God was my coach. In the same way I learned enough theology to be dangerous. The same holds true with my writing. It is just that it has taken many years to gain some perspective on how important our participation today (in these cases daily episodes from my past), has on our future.

This is your homework for the week. Look at your life, your family, your job, all your assets and your liabilities, and count them all as eternal blessings. As blessings, tell God you are grateful for these opportunities and adventures. Then take that prayer you perhaps uttered this morning, “You have to do something Lord, this can’t go on much more,” and apply that prayer to each of these blessings.

The important rise to the top for they are changing our life, even though sometimes we loose the perspectives of positive change. Deep gratitude comes from the personal understanding whatever the circumstance. The Bible says even the hairs on your head are numbered, and God will make everything turn out for good. With gifts like that why are we so many times so fearful, timid, and ungrateful?

From Wonder Springs

All this is heading to a port of call. We look at investments as something which we use to increase our physical wealth while limiting are risk. This of course assumes this barn building enterprise is not only desirable truth, but is actually based upon some guarantee of return without faith, or more appropriately, riches without God. Not only is this just a figment of our shallow perception, laissez faire capitalism works only in an economic model in which capital formation and growth are continual regardless of extant natural and spiritual factors do not exist.

Our only hope to buy, run, and maintain a ship and also to be able to provide investment capital in Albania and elsewhere, perhaps also including your IRA and other retirement investments, relies completely on those Extant Factors bringing so called free markets under Their authority. In this economic model, risk and projected return are undefined, while faith, diversity, and flexibility are paramount.

The City of Man says, “Investments made based on the presumption of faith are doomed to failure.” The Bible, as the rule of law from the City of God says, “Faith is the ultimate source of all truth for man in this world, the children of the Triune Creator, must base all of their life and livelihood on the truth of this reality

Early this year, I believe God asked me, “How big and complex a program would you have to begin, to truly believe you could not do it in your own abilities and strengths, but still demand your complete commitment.” Stayed tuned to these pages for further information and your opportunities.