

The Best Christmas Gift

ONE OF MY MOST MEMORABLE CHRISTMASSES MARKED THE END OF THE TIME THAT I SPENT IN A WHEELCHAIR.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THAT SUMMER, I HAD TORN THE ANTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT (ACL) IN MY RIGHT KNEE IN A SPORTS ACCIDENT, AND SUBSEQUENTLY DAMAGED THE NERVE THAT RUNS ALONGSIDE IT AS WELL. THIS MADE WALKING, EVEN ON CRUTCHES, VERY PAINFUL. I FINALLY OPTED TO BE EMBARRASSEDLY ROLLED AROUND IN A WHEELCHAIR. I VISITED MANY HOSPITALS AND SAW DIFFERENT DOCTORS AS I SEARCHED FOR A QUICK FIX, BUT FOUND NONE. ONE DOCTOR SAID I SHOULD PROBABLY JUST UNDERGO AN EXPENSIVE SURGERY. ANOTHER SUGGESTED AGGRESSIVE PHYSIOTHERAPY. THE FINAL AFFORDABLE SOLUTION SEEMED TO BE TO WAIT IT OUT OVER SEVERAL MONTHS AND LET IT HEAL ON ITS OWN.

BEING A HYPERACTIVE TEENAGER, THIS WAS MY LEAST FAVORITE OPTION. I WANTED TO GO PLACES AND DO THINGS, NOT BE STUCK AT HOME ALL DAY AND NIGHT! I WAS A YOUTH COUNSELOR AT A LOCAL SOCIAL CLUB, A DANCER/CHOREOGRAPHER OF OUR FIVE-MAN DANCE TROUPE, AND THE YOUTH PERSONNEL MANAGER OF A VOLUNTEER MISSION CENTER—NOT TO MENTION A SPORTS JUNKIE WHO WAS USED TO PLAYING SPORTS AT LEAST EVERY OTHER DAY.

BUT IN THE END, I WAS LEFT SULKING IN MY WHEELCHAIR, LOOKING BACK AT MY VERY LIVELY AND EVENTFUL LIFESTYLE, WONDERING IF I WAS SAYING GOODBYE TO THOSE MANY FORMS OF FUN AND EXERCISE FOREVER.



AS THE MONTHS PASSED, I DEVELOPED ATROPHY IN MY MUSCLES DUE TO LACK OF USE. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, I DEVELOPED OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT WOULD LIKELY REQUIRE SURGERY.

AFTER RECEIVING THIS LATEST NEWS FROM THE DOCTOR, I WENT HOME TO THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING. AT THE TIME I KEPT A SMALL BOOKLET WITH A COMPILATION OF BIBLE VERSES ON MY NIGHT TABLE. EVERY TIME I GOT TOO CARRIED AWAY WITH ALL THE WORST "WHAT-IF" SCENARIOS, I WOULD FLIP TO THE SECTION I HAD COMPILED ON THE TOPIC OF OVERCOMING FEAR. A FEW VERSES IN PARTICULAR HELPED ME IMMENSELY:

YOU WILL KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON YOU, BECAUSE HE TRUSTS IN YOU.¹

YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL; FOR YOU ARE WITH ME; YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF, THEY COMFORT ME.²

WHEN I AM AFRAID, I PUT MY TRUST IN YOU. IN GOD, WHOSE WORD I PRAISE, IN GOD I TRUST; I SHALL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT CAN FLESH DO TO ME?³

DURING THAT TIME MY MOM REMINDED ME OF THE BOOK WE HAD BEEN READING CALLED *PRISON TO PRAISE*,⁴ WHICH WAS AN ACCOUNT OF A CHAPLAIN WHO TAUGHT OTHERS TO USE PRAISE IN THE GRAVEST CIRCUMSTANCES AND WATCH THOSE SITUATIONS TURN AROUND FOR GOOD. HE SAW THE CRIPPLED WALK AGAIN AND CHILDREN RAISED FROM THE DEAD ALL BECAUSE OF PRAISE TO GOD.

FROM THAT DAY ON, I COMMITTED MYSELF TO PRAISE. THIS ENDED UP BEING A LIFELINE THAT PULLED ME OUT OF THE HOLE I HAD DUG FOR MYSELF. WHENEVER I THOUGHT OF MY SITUATION, I WOULD PRAISE THE LORD FOR MY CONDITION AND THANK HIM FOR MY HEALTH PROBLEMS AND FOR THE SEEMINGLY UNAVOIDABLE OPERATION LOOMING AHEAD OF ME. LITTLE DID I KNOW WHAT AWESOME MIRACLES WOULD BE WROUGHT THROUGH THE POWER OF PRAYER AND PRAISE!



A COUPLE OF WEEKS AFTER HAVING HAD MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS PRAY FOR ME, I WENT TO ANOTHER HOSPITAL FOR A SECOND OPINION ON MY HEALTH PROBLEM. I WAS WORRIED THAT THE PROBLEM HAD BECOME MUCH WORSE. I IMMEDIATELY PRAYED AND PRAISED IN EARNEST, CLAIMING THE BIBLE VERSE, "MANY ARE THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT THE LORD DELIVERS HIM OUT OF THEM ALL."⁵

AFTER THE CHECKUP, THE DOCTOR SHOWED ME THE RESULTS FROM THE TEST-THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SIGN OF THE PROBLEM! I WAS HEALED!

THIS STORY OF MY HEALING BECAME A TESTIMONY OF THE LORD'S ANSWER TO PRAYER. I FOUND THAT ALMOST ANYONE WOULD SIT AND LISTEN TO A LIVING, BREATHING MIRACLE TALK ABOUT THIS GOD WHO ANSWERS PRAYER AND TAKES CARE OF HIS OWN.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL! I WAS ABLE TO BEGIN PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENTS, AND MY LEG HEALED ON ITS OWN OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WITHOUT SURGERY, AND JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS! I WAS NOT ONLY COMPLETELY HEALTHY AND ON MY FEET AGAIN, BUT I WAS ABLE TO REJOIN MY DANCE TROUPE AND PERFORM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. NOW THAT I KNEW WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE IN PAIN, LONELY, UNCERTAIN, AND DEPRESSED, I WANTED TO SHOW THOSE IN HOSPITALS AND ORPHANAGES THAT THERE WAS A GOD WHO CARED FOR THEM, JUST AS HE CARED FOR ME.

Footnotes:

¹ Isaiah 26:3 NKJV

² Psalm 23:4 NKJV

³ Psalm 56:3–4 ESV

⁴ *Prison to Praise*, by Merlin R. Carothers, first published 1970

⁵ Psalm 34:19 NKJV

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