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“Pausing...to remember”

Been doing a good bit of reflecting on the last year of life and ministry.

Let me first give a check-in on life and our family. Melody and I hit the big 4-0 this year. What a milestone! Forty used to sound kind of old (some of you are laughing) but now, not so much. Fabulous at forty...that's our catchphrase. One of the things we have been talking about is that we feel more “at home” in who we are. After many years of searching, posing, and grasping, we are learning to be who God created us to be.

The middle years, 30's and 40's, do seem to be a time of honing in on God's call connected to the brokenness of our story and passion. These years can also be a “rite of passage”...a season of testing and initiation. The temptation is to rest on past accomplishments or sulk in past mistakes; thereby, allowing the past to define us instead of merely shape us. We are looking forward to what God has in store as He fathers us forward.

And the kids...good grief, this is starting to sound like a Christmas letter, isn't it? So many of our allies do not live in the Birmingham area. Let me give you a brief update. Caleb is 12, in seventh grade, enjoying basketball and becoming a teenager. Did I just say “teenager”? Prayers appreciated. Brennan is 9, in fourth grade, enjoying sports and beginning to *notice* girls.

A few weeks ago, I took Caleb and Brennan on a campout where we experienced Warrior Talks around the campfire. It was a night where a plethora of topics were covered from girls to anatomy, dating to sex, hormones, and marriage. Many questions were posed from their young, masculine hearts...the ground rule was “what's shared at the campfire, stays at the campfire.” It was natural, slightly anxious at times for me, but a real experience of initiation for them.

And the younger two...we call them the Littles...Asher and Addilyn. Asher is 5, a thinker and an individual spirit. He is grasping to create his own identity in the world of being the younger brother. But his best friend is young Addilyn. She's 3 and, as some might say, the boss around the house. Or at least she thinks she is. Being the girl with three older brothers, I can't even imagine what the years ahead hold for her and for us. She's a real delight. She comes up to me often and just says, off the cuff, “Daddy, you're the best!” And you know what that does to my heart.

Family...it's a real gift, isn't it? I get so ingrained in doing ministry and accomplishing the stuff of life that I sometimes fail to pause...to remember. I don't know if women are better at this or not...maybe so...but, as a man, I often get so entangled in providing, paying the bills, planning forward, and rushing from project to project. As a man, I need to pause. I need to reflect on the many ways that God is at work in this thing called “family.” Family is my first ministry...way before LIFE Ministries and being a pastor-shepherd, I am called to shepherd their hearts. I am invited to be Melody's best friend and soul-mate. I am to create a culture (I think that's the primary calling of a Dad) where God is fathering each of us in a process of brokenness and restoration. He does that really well...if I will only let Him.

And now, page 2...a bit more about LIFE...

It has been quite a year of ministry. Thankful for the many hearts that God has entrusted to us. It is humbling to see marriages being rescued after seasons of crisis or near-divorce. And it is refreshing to see couples, in need of a minor tune-up, grow closer to God and one another. Many men and women are coming alive through the ministry of LIFE.

We are also seeing all of this impact the local church. Churches are healthy when men and women are healthy. We must not neglect the relationship between the spiritual and the emotional. As one author said, "It is impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature." We want God's church to be healthy so that we can be a beacon of hope in a dark world. And it is happening...restoration is happening in the lives of many.

There are some great things coming in 2015...more to come about that in our December writing. God has recently put some real dreams in us and we can't wait to share more. They are God-sized, feel impossible, and we are excited to see what the next year holds.

For now, we want to say thanks. You are getting this newsletter because you are an ally of LIFE. Your prayers bring protection from the enemy's attacks and strengthen us while on the frontlines. Your financial support fuels this ministry and allows us to battle for many hearts and marriages. I love it when we are able to convey this to a hurting, confused, or broken person...an ally who may never meet you is making this possible.

The kind of ministry we lead tends to be behind-the-scenes. The confidential and sensitive nature of this type of ministry limits what we can share. But we realize that ministry is not always validated through numbers and big programs. It is more often a slow, steady process of recovery and restoration.

Thank you for supporting LIFE Ministries and for believing in the message of freedom through Jesus Christ that is changing the hearts of men and women. It is happening...restoration is happening. And you are vital to this mission. Let's continue the fight...one heart at a time.

Grateful to minister together with you,

Randy

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www.lifeministriesnow.com**