A Bump in the Road

Saul, as a young man had his life all figured out. He was dedicated to finding and putting to death those who belonged to “the Way”, the ones who would later be called “Christians”. He took on this task with zeal; however, God had other plans for him. After an encounter with a bright light coming from heaven while he traveled on the road to Damascus, he was then addressed by a voice that no one could see where it came from. Saul knew by what was said that it was Jesus, whose followers he was persecuting. After hearing the loud voice and being blinded by the light his friends escorted him to Damascus. For 3 days he could not see and he did not eat, pondering what had happened. In Damascus a disciple of Jesus was led by the Lord to go to where Saul was staying. This disciple reluctantly went, but when he did and shared with Saul that Jesus had chosen Saul to follow Him, Saul responded. He was baptized, his sight was restored, and he ate food and was strengthened. A miraculous recovery! He began to proclaim what had happened to him. It is interesting that he did not consult with any of the local believers what he should say (v. 16) and he did not go up to Jerusalem to consult with church leaders. Instead it says in this passage that he went away into Arabia. He went out to the desert to spend time alone; reading the scriptures and in prayer getting to know Jesus and God’s plan for his life. After a bump in the road, when Saul meets Jesus, he takes time to understand this new calling, this new direction in his life.

Moses as a young man in Egypt became a leader amongst the Egyptians, but also sought to understand his own heritage as an Israelite. One day when trying to defend a fellow Israelite he killed a man and alienated his own people. God sent him off for a period of time in the desert near Midian. That bump in the road was a time that God used to mold and equip Moses for the role He planned for him.

Moses led the nation of Israel out of Egypt but they did not follow the straight highway to the promised land. The nation had some lessons to learn before they could experience the blessings that God had in store for them. There were several bumps in the road for God’s chosen people. They wandered in the desert 40 years before they were able to enter the land of Israel.

Last year at this time I had the privilege of sharing with you a bump in the road that our family was experiencing. My wife and I have 4 children. Our only son, at 27 years of age, was diagnosed with brain cancer on July 15th, 2016. A bump in the road for our journey.

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This past 17 months has taken us on a journey that we did not plan on taking. Ninety percent of the tumor that was growing from the brain stem was surgically removed. Our Josh was in a coma for 7 weeks, and then spent 4 months in a rehabilitation facility that cares only for brain injury patients. At that time he returned home with us the middle of January and he began 7 weeks of radiation therapy to destroy the remaining 10% of the tumor. The most recent MRI shows no evidence of tumor, only some scarring, so we are trusting that he is and remains cancer free.

Throughout this journey God’s hand has been obvious. He has faithfully watched over and protected Josh through many difficult times. He has raised up caring friends that have walked along side us; helping us along the road to Damascus when we could not see. He brought friends with words (and cards and emails and text messages) of encouragement even when they did not think they knew what to say. He has provided skilled caregivers and therapists who know how to motivate and guide us through the various stages of this journey. For these many blessings, we lift our hands in Thanksgiving during this season.

Is the journey over? Far from it. Josh has never lost any cognitive ability. His sense of humor continues to be strong. He still has his opinions, on many topics but his speech is slower than what he would like. That does allow him to sometimes think before he speaks, which was not always the case before the cancer. The area of the surgery has resulted in lost control of his core abdominal muscles, which are essential for maintaining our balance. Josh walks with the assistance of two people to help maintain his balance, but only for short distances. A traditional walker is not able to support him. He would tip it over. He can sit on a zero turn riding lawn mower and was back volunteering (not working) at church for about 10-15 hours a week this summer on the mower. Now that it is cold, he is on the riding vacuum cleaner at church a few hours a week. The tremors that affect his hands, arms and shoulders make it difficult to feed himself (at least in public), write and do any work that involves fine motor skills. We are trusting that in due course that the neurological pathways that control these activities will all regenerate, but that will take time. We are hoping that it will not be 40 years like the people of Israel, but we are willing to wait on God’s perfect timing.

A bump in the road, yes, but just as Paul acknowledged in the passage above “but when he who set me apart ... was pleased to reveal his son ... in order that I might preach him...” we come to understand that journeys all has to do with God’s timing.

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Upcoming Events:

- CPFI 2018 Annual Conference & National Student Retreat
  Bonclarken Conference Center
  Flat Rock, North Carolina
  Student Retreat: May 30 to June 3, 2018
  Annual Conference: May 31 to June 3, 2018

Leadership, Service, Support! Thank you!

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CPFI welcomes articles with a Christian focus. If you are interested in contributing an article for possible publication in our journal, Christianity & Pharmacy, please submit your manuscript directly to the CPFI office or to the editor. The deadlines for the journal: Spring Journal, December 1; Fall Journal, July 1.

Short Term Foreign Mission Opportunities

CPFI partners with the Christian Medical and Dental Association, the Fellowship of Christian Nurses and the Fellowship of Christian Physician Assistants to send out short term medical teams through Global Health Outreach. The primary care teams are usually one or two weeks, and our goal is to have two pharmacists on each team. Below is a list of upcoming trips. For a complete list of the projects and dates, visit the GHO website which can be accessed from the CPFI website www.cpfi.org or the CMDA website www.cmda.org.

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The GHO website provides a link for each trip, the name of each team leader, and the estimated cost of each trip. You may apply on-line to participate in the trip of your choice or e-mail Keith Allhands, kwallhands@gmail.com, the Mission Committee Chair for additional information.