

Wilderness Experience?? NOT!!

In a TRUE wilderness experience, especially in Bible stories, God chooses a man or woman, he takes them into the “wilderness,” usually without food, water, and essentials of life for a time of hardship and temptation, trusting the Lord to meet his/her needs! The time of this wilderness varied. In Jesus experience, he was in the wilderness an incredible 40 days and 40 nights without FOOD. My recent experience was VERY real, but it was hardly a “wilderness.” It seems that any time away from Martha is a “wilderness experience” for me! Here is OUR story beginning in January of 2022!

A health issue suddenly arose in my life! In our over 50 years of marriage for MY Martha and me, I have been blessed with excellent health, while Martha has suffered several health issues. In our marriage, we LOVE being together, hardly EVER being apart even for a night. My health issue was discovered when a doctor, investigating a sore on the back of my leg, said something didn't look right. He ordered some bloodwork and learned that my red blood platelet count, supposed to be 165,000 or more, was only 5,000, the WORST he had ever seen in 40 years of practice! This extremely low number generated a follow-up appointment with this doctor, as well as personal telephone calls from both my podiatrist and my primary care physician, who all seemed to agree, “This is serious! Get into the hospital immediately for further study!!” The doctors explained that if I cut myself shaving, had a small internal hemorrhage, or bleeding of ANY kind, I could bleed to death without enough platelets to stop the bleeding.

And how did I react to this new crisis in my life, to my possible admission to the hospital? “NO WAY! I can't, no I WON'T, leave MY Martha!” I went to see my primary care doctor, and he graciously gave me a couple of days to try some prednisone and repeat the bloodwork. However, the very next day, the new bloodwork was in, and my doctor called to tell me that my numbers were DOWN to 4000, “GET IN HERE!” Again, I said, “I can't!”, the doctors said, “You MUST!”, and the Lord said, “You WILL!”

Martha, with her self-sacrificial problem-solving skills, said, “WE will go!” However, a better solution might be to have someone stay with her in our house! Suddenly, it happened! Our precious family came running to help us! Cassie was available to stay ALL week until Sunday evening when I would likely be home! Caylyne and her boyfriend Tyler would also be able to help! Rob and Philip were knocking on the door before we even knew they were coming to help us get ready to go! Christina had sick kids, but she would have been there too! Philip drove me to the hospital, helped me get settled in, and brought the car home. The next two days, Rob took off from work to spend time listening to the steroids talking from my veins. Then he brought me home on Sunday! Janet, Nancy, and Ozzie even visited me on Saturday and brought me a cherry pie!

It was Wednesday night after getting checked into the hospital, we met the doctor from Hematology. After describing my symptoms, including vasculitis in 2017, sores on my legs,

bruising under the skin, the hematologist didn't even wait for the results of the blood tests! He proclaimed these symptoms to be a case of ITP, which is an auto-immune disease. Our amazing bodies are equipped with blood platelets that enable us stop bleeding by scabbing and clotting the blood when an injury occurs. As a second layer of protection, when germs in the form of bacteria, virus, or other invaders do enter our bloodstream, we have white blood cells that destroy such invaders. However, in my current state when my white blood cells encounter red blood platelets, they mistake the red platelets for enemy invaders, and set about to kill them off! A warfare seems to be going on in my bloodstream—my platelets are being attacked by “friendly fire.” The blood numbers were not good on Thursday morning, probably because the new numbers for the day had not been posted yet. The GOOD NEWS came later in the morning, when, after a drop from 5,000 down to 4,000 and from there down to 2,000 (the numbers don't register any lower than this!), in one day I was up to 27,000. The numbers were SO good, the lab had to re-calculate them to make sure they were correct. When I told our Cousin Cheryl from New Jersey about this report, she replied it was just “Our Awesome God showing off!” In two more days, I was up to 97,000 and ready to go HOME! You see, in my math classes, a 97 is an A! Sadly, I learned that Hematology does not use a 100-point scale. In Hematology, a 97 is only a C+ or a B-.

Back on the home front, some needs were really being met! Nana REALLY needed her granddaughters, and Cassie and Caylyne REALLY needed time with their Nana! Everyone's needs were being met! However, NONE of this would have happened if I had been there! We were closer than we had EVER been! So now the question arose about my coming home. Should I go home on Saturday or Sunday? I thought I heard the Lord say, “The girls need another night with their Nana!” This might have been true, but soon I heard the Lord say, “I need another night with YOU!!” During this last night in the hospital, I came to realize that, instead of having a MATH website with Bible verses and Dahlia pictures, from now on, the focus should be on the BIBLE verses with Math and Dahlia pictures on either side. It is entirely appropriate that these BIBLE verses be the CENTER of the website, because the “Apologetics,” the “Defense of the Faith” pages are indeed the most important pages of the entire website!

To cap off this entire experience in prayer, we were blessed to be in contact with our own cousins Irma and Eddie Williams, who served so effectively for their entire lives as missionaries around the world (over 40 different addresses in 60 years of service!) in the Church of God. We were SO BLESSED to have Irma and Eddie and so many others, praying for our family and for us during this time of medical challenge. God is SO GOOD, and He does NOT call us to challenges for which He does not equip us! We also believe in the medical technology of our day, sent from Heaven above and carried out by Godly people, often under extremely difficult circumstances!

Getting home from the hospital was NOT the end of the adventure! It was almost like the beginning of another story. On Monday after I came home, I came down with what I thought was a head cold. On the following Monday February 7, we were advised that the head cold I

had experienced might be symptomatic of the CORONA virus. To our absolute HORROR, Martha and I BOTH tested positive for it! So, who came to our rescue this time? We called Christina, and before Martha could finish her phone call to Christina, Philip was at our door with ALL the recommended vitamins and other over-the-counter products to help us through the next few days. Since earlier that day we had visited Martha's primary care doctor, I called him to apologize for contaminating his office, and I called Martha's allergist and left a message asking for his advice on this latest twist. The primary care doctor recommended over-the-counter products like those in Christina's delivery, and he assured us that with plenty of rest and fluids, Martha would be fine. Martha's allergist returned my call the next morning with another idea! He sent us down to Kissimmee where he authorized us to pick up a special prescription for COVID patients at risk with asthma/COPD complications. Meanwhile, the staffs of my primary care doctor and the hematologist arranged to get me the medications I needed until the end of our quarantine. Martha and I are resting, hoping we are finally nearing the end of this chapter!

Now, finally on Sunday, February 13, Martha and I tested NEGATIVE for COVID! We hope and believe this siege is OVER! Praise the Lord!! Spring is coming!!

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