

MAX'S BREAKAWAY



MAX ERICKSON

MAY 2017

"Build your life on a firm foundation."

Matthew 7:24-27

Last Tuesday, I heard Joni Eareckson Tada say, **"God permits what he hates, to accomplish what he loves."** I'm still ALIVE! I hope this update finds you are well with the Lord. Sorry for the long delay. 2017 has been quite the year. Life has taken an incredible leap in what it means to *trust the Lord*. I was admitted to the hospital Jan 4th with Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) with a blood glucose of 630 (normal range is 70-120). Because of the high glucose, my kidneys were already shutting down along with my vision going blurry. I had lost a total of 22 pounds and in one night had lost 8 pounds. Three days later I walked out with being diagnosed with Type I Diabetes and my pancreas working at 5%. Everything as I knew it was about to change. I have been writing this update since January from the moment I got out of the hospital. The Lord works and moves about in my life and ministry and I don't know where to start and stop in sharing his goodness and faithfulness.

Diabetes is not easy, in fact it's terrible and can be very debilitating for many people that suffer with it. Here is where trusting in the Lord comes into play. I was to the point that I could barely walk on my own. I was exhausted, dehydrated and couldn't eat or swallow food. I wandered around each night, unable to sleep. During this 3-4 week period I worked with 4 MIAC Schools and worked at Home Depot part-time 5 days a week and never missed a chapel or a day of work before I was admitted. I know what you are thinking; what an idiot. I had my reasons, but now that my mind works again (sort of) I can't imagine what they might have been. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6-7 - **"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus"** (NLT). We are not to worry, but I guess when actually falling off the cliff one should at least try to pull the rip cord on the parachute.



9th Annual MIAC Year-End Chapel - Two teams were missing this year. A very encouraging day and another fantastic Chapel season.

A text message I received at the end of the chapel season from one of my chapel attenders from St John's University, super encouraging.

"Hey Max, It's Cole from SJU hockey team. Yesterday to my surprise I got named to the freshman All American team, and I believe that you played a bigger part in it than you may think. Before I came here I was straying away from the Bible and God's word. You turned me back on to it and showed me how little I actually knew. You revived Jesus into my life in a way I didn't think was possible and it had a tremendous impact on my life as well as off the ice. So I would really like to say thank you so much and that your spreading of Jesus word is working and changing lives."

At our wedding Brent Bielenberg spoke on the theme of God's goodness. We have seen this displayed in such an amazing and powerful way. Mariana just recently told me that during this time as she watched me slipping away, she could only pray one prayer, **"Jesus, spare his life."** She stayed by my side continually for 3 days at the hospital praying this prayer. During this time she was reading the book of Job and she saw the same phrase in Job 2:4-6 **"Satan replied to the Lord, Skin for Skin! A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!"** **"All right, do with him as you please," the Lord said to Satan. "But spare his life."** **So Satan left the Lord's presence, and he struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot"** (NLT). I've had shingles, I don't want that again!!!

At our wedding, I shared that God is strategic and specific and that nothing catches God off guard. God knew that Mariana was ABSOLUTELY perfect for me and I for her. This "Ordeal", truly has been an incredible blessing. For us there is no other way to look at it. It sounds crazy but I have told many people I am so grateful for Type I Diabetes because it didn't kill me, or it could have been a 1,000 other things that might have been much worse. God has used this for our good. We are able to share another example of God's goodness, grace and faithfulness in our lives. For me this diagnosis is that simple. Share the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ and thank him for everything regardless of the pain or suffering.

This has brought about a new attitude and fervor for life and sharing Christ with everyone I can. As Psalm 139:16 states, **"You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed"** (NLT). As Luke writes in Acts 20:24, **"But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus - the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God"** (NLT). This truly is how I feel!

Is suffering a bad thing? No matter your answer, it's always difficult. As followers of Christ, Jesus tells us to expect it and not to be surprised by the fiery trials we are going through. 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul is talking about the thorn in the flesh that God gave him to keep him humble. Paul begged the Lord to take away the thorn in the flesh three times, but God used it for Paul's own good so that he would proclaim the goodness and faithfulness of God to the Gentiles. 2 Corinthians 12:9 **"Each time he said, My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong"** (NLT). This is such a powerful section of scripture. For those that know many of the different testimonies in my life from my birth, to the miraculous healing of my cut tendons in my wrist, God has been there. God does not just show up, He is always there. He watched as my body was failing yet sustained me to not miss a chapel and not miss a day of work until after Christmas when the chapels would be on Christmas break, **WOW**.



My good friend Nick Goers getting baptized. It was an honor to be a part of his declaration to stand for Jesus!

I am continually reminded of the work the Lord has called me to do as well as proclaiming the Gospel and that is to share his wonderful mercy and grace in my own life with everyone. Paul writes in Philippians 1:6, ***“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns”*** (NLT). God is not through with us as long as we have breath. We are to continue to move forward where he has us. I pray you feel the same is true for you as you look to the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ and not lose hope or faith but to continue on in Christ Jesus. When I was sick, it felt like an imprisonment, only I didn't fully grasp the severity of what was going on in my body. Philippians 1:20 says, ***“For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me”*** (NLT). This sums up my attitude since being released from the hospital January 6th. Never in my life have I been at such peace about going home to be with the Lord and my purpose is even clearer with sharing Christ in the MIAC as I shared it throughout the hospital (I got a reputation). My room was the one filled with laughter, my chart said Critical Condition, but the peace that surpasses all understanding caused us to laugh and celebrate life. Even the nurses a few rooms down came into my room wondering what all the laughter was about and were overjoyed to see how I was recovering and asked to join the party.

As a hockey chaplain, one of the favorite verses I use is Philippians 3:12-14, ***“I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead. I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God through Christ Jesus, is calling us”*** (NLT).

My dad's Christmas letter (which he never sent) talked about the “S Curve” road that they live on. It's a very dangerous road and many people have gone off the road and into their woods, some at very high speeds not paying attention to the speed limit to slow down. The same is true with what happened to me and why I ended up in the hospital. The same thing can happen in our walk with Christ, or marriages that end in divorce. We are so good at trying to go things alone from Christ and this can often be a fatal mistake as was almost my case. There were many warning signs that we saw but didn't act on, until almost too late.

How does all this tie into the chapel season? Spiritual food and nutritional food and the habits we create in our lives make a difference and they go hand in hand. In the Diabetes manual I was given at the hospital, the opening sentence said, ***“You can live well with Diabetes.”*** I really struggled with that sentence, I disagreed. Immediately it brought me to think about how Satan gave a subtle whisper in Eve's ear about eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. ***“You won't die!” the serpent replied to the woman. God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil”*** (Genesis 3:4). I started reading through Romans after reading that quote about Diabetes and living well with it. When I reached Romans Ch 6 it all made sense. Satan says, you can live

well with Sin, just like a diabetic can live well with Diabetes; both are a disease and end in death. I know far too many people with Diabetes Type 1 and 2. Mariana's bother-in-law is a severe diabetic; he has had one leg amputated and just started having amputations done on his other foot. Diabetes is a painfully slow and ugly, debilitating death. He does not want to change at all, in essence he is comfortable in his ***“sin”***, if you see the parallel. I did a chapel based on this topic and analogy. I brought some wonderfully delicious sweets for each of the teams one week and told them not to touch, kind of how God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The guys were enticed because of that. As I laid out the scenario from the diabetes manual and tying in Romans Ch 6 about how we are a slave to whatever we choose, one guy spoke up and said, ***“You can live well with Jesus.”*** They got it. This is the whole point of chapels, apart from Christ we are dead. I am grateful for all of you in your prayers, financial giving and friendship. You are making a difference in these players' lives. I am more excited than ever to share Christ with hockey players and pray you will continue with me in this fight to bring Christ to the arenas God opens for me. Have a blessed Summer and stay grounded in Jesus and if anyone has questions about my health, feel free to give me call, I'll be glad to share what I have learned. God bless you all!

Ephesians 3:14-20, ***“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you (and me) with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think”*** (NLT).

“In these uncertain times, His Character-His faithfulness-is our certainty. We press on.” (Alan Sears - Alliance Defending freedom)

***In His Grip and Thank you,
Max and Mariana Erickson***



Second day in the hospital still in Critical Condition



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