

December 2011 Rhodes Report

No, I'm not quoting some apostate, I'm talking about myself. But, please, before you call my Pastor and demand I be removed from ministry leadership, bear with me and read this entire letter. Before I get to this awful subject, however, let me talk about family. (After all, it's Christmas time!)

We just had Tracy and husband Loren with us for Thanksgiving--plus their two children and three foster kids! When we were on the way to the Ranch from the Albuquerque airport, five year old Fred, born and raised in the black inner city, wanted to turn around and go home. After all, we were travelling the winding mountain roads of the remote “Black Range” in the middle of the night while poor Aaron threw up repeatedly in the back seat. (Have you noticed how often small kids get sick?) But we all had a great time and “Grandpa” misses chasing little Fred and Aaron around the house (although the return of serenity was appreciated).

As God lays it on your heart, pray for Tracy and Loren, who have a big job looking after 5 small children. Additionally, Loren graduates from Seminary in May and they are looking for God's will for ministry. Meanwhile, Ana and I are going to the San Diego area right after Christmas where Jodi's husband Jason is now pastor of a Baptist church and--by the way--Jodi is due with her first child on Christmas day! I have learned children are a wonderful thing, indeed, a “heritage from the Lord”! Ana and I look forward to welcoming our 5th grandchild. Ana will stay with Jodi and Jason to help for three weeks while I return to New Mexico.

OK, back to the original subject. I'm not the kind of “hearer” most preachers want. After all, I can't remember much about any sermon. My mind is like Choco, one of our new horses: It runs all over the place. Oh, I can't wait to tell you about our new horses! (Oops. There I go. Now, back to...er...ah...what was it?) Some time ago Pastor Fowler was preaching a series in Genesis. One thing stuck in my mind. It was the scene of Jacob wrestling with the angel at the Brook Jabbok. The whole story is rather weird. I used to think Jacob was downright selfish for literally demanding God bless him. But Pastor Fowler's message sowed a seed. I studied the story later and came to a new perspective I subsequently used in a message I prepared for pulpit supply at a nearby church. Friends, Jacob saw that his life was in danger. An enemy army was bearing down on him and his loved ones. Jacob faced enormous trials--far beyond his ability to address them. He had no personal ability to survive--absolutely none. So Jacob determined that either God would bless him...or he would perish. Before I weary you, let me get to the point. Dear praying friends, when I write prayer letters my initial thought is to tell you of this need and that need--to relate a prioritized prayer list. Even then, I don't reveal every need. I'm afraid that if you knew the unceasing barrage of trials we face you would lose faith. Even the most mature reader would be tempted to wonder if a man and ministry with so many problems was in the will of God. Thus, I have come to the conclusion I should keep the prayer request of this letter simple: GOD. Yes, I just want God. Do you understand? I just need the presence of the Almighty God of Jacob. The God who blessed Jacob at the Brook Jabbok. Is there any reason you should not pray for this request?

Now, about the title line. I see many people, even Christians, who appear to survive without God. I guess they have no needs. I guess they are stronger than me. I can't argue with that. If I could survive without God it would indicate I am a far stronger man than I actually am. The sorry fact is, I am poor and needy, even desperately poor and needy. Yes, I am honest-to-God convinced I can not live, I can not survive, without His constant presence. It's just that simple. And here's a scary thought: the Bible teaches that if Satan can bind the strong man, he can access the family. And to think of my poor wife's vulnerability for having married a weak--rather than strong--man! As we prepare to close 2011, will you pray that I have God? Others seem to survive without him. Not this poor soul, not the Rhodes family, not Gila Christian Ranch. Pray God help us!

A small man with a big God,
Randy

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