Challenge 28 of 40

Reflection by Eddie Heinrich - Yuba City, CA

“Help! Somebody help me,” I screamed, but the silence careened off the sterile walls of my darkened hospital room. “Help! Somebody help me,” I screamed again, but still no words escaped my lips. Scared and alone, I found myself unable to take a breath even as a gigantic hose blasted life-giving oxygen into my face. It was 2:00 a.m. Something was wrong; I couldn’t breathe. Where was everyone? Finally, the sweet relief of blackness enveloped me.

Sometime later I woke up in a panic. Frantically, I pressed the call button willing someone to answer. Moments later, my nurse appeared in the door wanting to know how he could help. I explained to him that I couldn’t breathe and thought I was dying. He asked if I would like to see the hospital chaplain and I quickly agreed.

Five days earlier I had fallen from a ladder, shattering my lower back. After hours of riding in ambulances and airplanes, I had finally arrived at a level-five trauma hospital. Once there, a nine-hour emergency surgery repaired the damage to my spine and lower back. Unfortunately, two days later a pulmonary embolism formed in my lungs, significantly reducing the amount of oxygen traveling to my heart, lungs, and brain.

While I waited for the hospital chaplain, an ugly question reared its head, “Why does Jesus love me?” Such a basic question, but at that moment, not knowing the answer threatened...
to send me over the edge of the abyss.

Sometime later a chaplain entered. After he introduced himself to me, I explained to him my theological pedigree—Seventh-day Adventist pastor for the past twenty-five years—and asked him if we could have an honest conversation about Jesus and His love for me. Twenty minutes later, after listening to his rehearsed spiel, I asked him to leave—he couldn’t answer the question.

For several days I wrestled with this question. I knew an answer, but was it the right answer? Once and for all, I wanted to settle the question. Several days later, a really good friend came to visit me. She sat with her husband beside my bed and asked me how things were going. I described to her my middle of the night crisis. Instead of laughing or telling me that my question was silly, she asked me a few probing questions and then reminded me of two passages of scripture: 1) Genesis 1:27 “So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them.” 2) John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (NKJV)

She talked about God lovingly forming Adam out of dirt and breathing life into him. While I pondered that, she went on to talk about the sacrifice Jesus made at the cross. The room went quiet as her words drifted around my consciousness. Why was she telling me all this? This wasn’t new information. She sat patiently while I thought about everything that had been said. All of a sudden, it all made sense. Jesus loves me because I am me. The Creator and Savior of the universe can’t live without me. He made me and is looking for reasons to save me, not to condemn me.

I am almost healed now, but the greatest miracle of healing happened to my heart. Being able to walk is just a bonus.

Recalibrate

1) What would you tell someone who asked you, “Why does Jesus love me?”

2) How does your view of Jesus affect how you live, how you treat others, and how you view the church?
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