**August 29, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

I thank the Lord for each of you who have been lifting Seth and our family before the Lord. It's good to get my e-mail hooked up and I feel a lot more connected to each of you and have been so blessed each evening to come back to the hotel and receive your encouragements.

Yesterday (day 12) was probably the first day with no major crisis. Just 12 days ago Seth was "hanging by one thread" and now his body is fairly stable, although the doctors won't say it like that. I asked the pulmonary doctor yesterday, "Would you say Seth is very stable, sort of stable, or a little stable?" and he just laughed and said, "He's not unstable." Today he will get a trache tube to breathe through instead of the mouth tube (he's still on life support) and will get his brain probe removed because he's had four stable days with low swelling numbers. Hopefully it will be another fairly calm day. My sister and I are going to be packing up his items for storage which will be hard since he should have been moving them into his on-campus apartment today instead. Then we'll stop by the Home Depot he worked at and thank each of the people giving blood in his name today (probably about 75 today and Cal Baptist is having one next week)

I'll share a quick reflection from my journal I've been keeping…
DAY 5: I started today like I have the last five days, saying, "What will this day hold? I'm glad we know Who holds it.” I used to think that was a trite little saying because it was so overused, but now it has great meaning and significance. As all this was going through my mind, I opened the curtains and looked over the landscape from our window. I'd seen it before… stucco houses intermingled with beautiful palm trees. Riverside is surrounded by treeless hills which I hadn't given much of a glance to before because of the smog. But on this clear morning, now my eyes were drawn to the top of the hill directly outside our window. I was staring in unbelief at something that looked like a white cross. I didn't have my distance glasses on so I thought maybe it was really just a telephone pole. I squinted my eyes and it was unmistakably a white cross on a rugged mountain. I walked away from the window and walked back. Maybe it had just been a mirage. No, there it was, the CROSS, ministering powerfully in my life.

I found out later that the cross had been put on the hill in 1909 when the people of the town held the first Easter Sunrise service in the west. It's still as significant and powerful today as it was 94 years ago, as it was over 2000 years ago.

~Mary

**August 30, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

It's so good to report that there was no major crisis again yesterday. They took some lung fluid to check for a possible infection, but after dealing with over a week of not knowing from minute to minute if his lungs could recover, to several days ago the news that his lungs cells were breaking down on the inside, this seems fairly minor, although nothing is really minor at this point. There is no indication yet of Seth waking up from the coma, and the neurosurgeon will have no idea of what kind of brain function he will have until that point. They all say that it's a long (emphasis on long, waiting game), but God's grace is sufficient. “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed: perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (II Corinthians 4: 7-9). Everyone has been so nice to us and even the smallest acts of kindness touch us greatly. One of the security guards at the front desk, a big burley fellow, happened to walk by the ER when Seth was first brought in and heard several of the doctors saying they wanted to give up on trying to save his life because “it was useless.” He started praying immediately that they would keep trying and prayed all night for “this unknown young man.” Every morning when I get to the hospital, it's so comforting to have him compassionately ask about Seth and let us know he's still praying. Thank you for your e-mails and letters. Each one is precious and a real encouragement.

~Mary

### Sunday, August 31st, 2003

### Reflections from a Mother’s Heart

Continue to pray for Seth's fever which may be caused by an infection (the cultures will take 72 hours to process) or just that his brain isn't processing temperatures correctly. He had a fair amount of movement yesterday (all involuntary, not on command) but the neurosurgeon felt that meant that the coma was starting to lighten. Again, the doctors tell us that there is no possible way to know about his level of brain function until he wakes up. An EEG or anything else is inaccurate until that time. (“Be still and know that I am God”? It's a waiting process.) He's still on the breathing machine and will be for a while since that allows them to get a higher volume and intensity of oxygen into his system.

**Thoughts and reflections:** I'm remembering back to last Sunday morning, a week after the accident. Craig left to go back home, and although we had mostly never left the hospital the first week I knew that I needed the steadying influence of being in God's house with His people that morning. I drove to the church right across from California Baptist University, which was actually started by the school faculty about 50 years ago, and quietly slipped in the back right as the sermon was starting. I really felt like God wanted to encourage me that morning in a special way through His word. The pastor starting by saying that he realized that no one preaches from Matthew 1 except at Christmas time, but he felt lead to share from Matthew 1:23, ”The virgin will be with child, and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel,” which means “God with us.” He started off by saying that you might feel like you're in a battle alone right now, but don't live by feelings but by the truth, which is that God has promised, regardless of how dark your circumstances seem, that He will never leave or forsake us. It's a covenant promise that cannot be broken. During a difficult time, you will realize that you are experiencing the presence of God in a deeper way than ever before. Really? Emmanuel, God with us. He talked about how God gives us courage (not the absence of fear, but the mastery over it) so that we are truly overcomers (John 16:33).

I know that there were 1200 people that heard his message that morning, but somehow I knew that our compassionate God had tailored it just for my needs. Praise be to His name? *Emmanuel.*

~Mary

**September 12, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

We are starting day 27 now, of which pretty soon I will probably not measure in days, but months. There have been two distinct phases of my emotional roller coaster since August 16th. The first week and a half was the “crisis a day” time, when we went from “hanging by one thread” to air leaking out of Seth's lacerated lung and the doctors putting so much pressure on it that there was a chance of a “blow out” in the other lung, to being given 15 units of blood and 14 units of plasma and two units of platelets, then total kidney failure and the scary time with the brain monitor inserted into his skull. And then after the lungs had stabilized slightly, the doctor telling us about the life threatening lung disorder where the cells were deteriorating on the inside shown by white patches on the X-ray. God had many chances to take Seth home during this time, but chose not to. The very first night, we had to each settle the issue in our hearts that Seth belonged to the Lord, and whether he lived or died, we would still serve Him wholeheartedly. The words from Psalm 139 came to mind, which Seth had memorized years before : “I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was knit together in my mother's womb. Your eyes saw my unformed being and all the days of my life were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” But we are still spirits “wrapped in flesh” and probably one of the hardest times was when Craig and I took the earliest flight possible out of Seattle on the 17th and were out of phone contact with the emergency room for three critical hours. When we got to the hospital and asked about Seth, we were grateful to the Lord that we were directed to the ICU, not the morgue.

The last week and a half is the second phase so far. Seth is more medically stable—no big emergencies, although yesterday he was still described as extremely fragile physically. But now it's a “wait and see” time. Will he wake up from the coma? What will his mental capabilities be if he does? I sit by his bed each day for 10-14 hours and read scripture, pray, sing (I finished going through the entire Baptist Hymnal!) and just talk to him. His eyes are half open, but since he's in a coma, he just stares blankly into space, which is unsettling. But through it all, God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1).

Continue to pray that Seth will stabilize more in the next three days before he is air-ambulanced to Seattle on Monday. From the time he leaves the hospital in Riverside until the time he is settled in Bellevue at Overlake Hospital, it will be six hours. For the last two days, his breathing rate, blood pressure and temperature have remained high. Also, pray that each doctor would have wisdom in his specialty area to know what needs to be done to help Seth before he is moved. An air ambulance is equipped for any emergency, but it's still a little unsettling. Thank you for upholding us in prayer. Your e-mails and cards have given me strength when all I could do was cry out to God to have mercy on our family and upon Seth.

**From Craig's journal called “Letters to Seth”, Day 6:** Dr. Marvin had been looking at some x-rays of your head and noticed one of the pictures had been taken below the normal range of his interest. On that photo he thought he detected a fracture on a bone that is at the interface of your spinal column and skull. He had consulted with the x-ray technician, who agreed that there was indeed a fracture; it was the first time in his career of 20 years that he had seen a fracture in that particular bone, which is very strong. Ordinarily they don't even bother looking at that bone, and he said that your head had to have been positioned at just the right angle during the x-rays to even have it show up. To them, it was an unusual, but fortunate, fluke, and Dr. Marvin immediately put your head in a stiffer collar so that you would not be further injured when the nurses moved you. Naturally, in my mind this was no fluke but the sovereign hand of God in protecting you. The question that came to my mind is, why would God have revealed this fracture if He were planning to take you home to be with Him at this time?

**September 13, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

(Day 28) Just a quick and exciting update before we head to the hospital this morning? Holly flew in late last night and we made a midnight run to the hospital so she could see her brother. We were both pretty sure that when she started talking to him, not only did his eyes open, but they turned and focused on her and he seemed fairly alert for a few moments. We will both be flying home to Seattle with him on the ambulatory Lear jet on Monday, leaving Riverside at 2:30 pm and touching down at Boeing Field at 5:00. Please be in prayer during this time that Seth will stay medically stable. It will be a little unnerving being away from the security of the trauma hospital and 35,000 feet in the air. The most remarkable event was that when I got to his room yesterday morning the pulmonary doctor had taken him off the breathing machine and he was breathing all on his own!! I was shocked because he had said the day before that, for security, he was going to leave Seth on the machine set at 12 breaths/minute (and Seth was adding his own breaths between that), but he had decided to “try a little experiment” since he still had three days to watch his condition. Seth has been breathing on his own for 24 hours now, although he still has the tube in his throat and another tube hooked into that one blowing 50% pure oxygen past his throat so that, even though his breaths are shallow, he is getting enough of the good stuff. Wow! God's mercies are new and fresh each day! Great is His faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23). In case you didn't know, one of the young men from our church has created a web site for Seth, keeping all the updates there as well as other information, pictures, and a place to post notes. You can check it out at: <http://homepage.mac.com/icor134>

**Later:** Holly and I just got back to the hotel, exhausted, but wanted to share some changes and prayer needs. We went to the hospital this morning quite encouraged about Seth's progress, especially with the plans all in place to air-ambulance him home Monday. We were met by the trauma doctor who said that he had just reviewed the latest CAT scan and Seth had an eight-inch mass of some sort in his abdomen and he wanted to do exploratory surgery immediately. Also, a small portion of his lung had collapsed and he needed to reinsert the lung tube, plus Seth would need to go back on the respirator after having what he called this “major surgery.” With all the different scenarios of possible problems he described to us, surgery was finally done at 5:00 pm. It was a gut-wrenching day. The mass turned out to be over a pint-sized clot of dried blood and puss, which was a result of his broken pelvic bone. It went much smoother than the doctor anticipated and he was smiling afterwards. The flight home Monday was postponed to probably later in the week, as we see how Seth recovers. Pray for his continued strength and healing after this major setback. Also pray for our renewed strength to face day 29.

~Mary

### September 17th, 2003

### Reflections from a Mother’s Heart

We were so excited all day yesterday because it looked like Seth had a small window of opportunity to fly home because all the fevers and infections were gone and he was stable (for him). But late in the afternoon the receiving doctor at Overlake Hospital in Bellevue called and informed us that he had decided he would not take Seth as a patient (after having his records six days and saying the whole time there was no problem). He recommended that we go to Harborview instead, since it is a high-trauma hospital, because of the bone chip at the base of his skull that protrudes slightly into his spinal column. The neurosurgeon here has not seemed concerned about it at all, but we know that all of this is in the Lord's hands, so we are waiting patiently (well, sort of patiently) on this end. There is not a bed open at Harborview at the moment, so we would appreciate your prayers today along that line. We are tentatively hoping to fly out tomorrow. Also, Seth is not really showing any indications of coming out of the coma at this point, and a lot of the therapy (e.g., starting to reduce the size of his trache tube) that should be done needs for him to become more alert. Please ask the Lord to “wake” Seth up.

**The following is an excerpt from Craig's “Letters to Seth”, week 2**: Mom and I visited you before I left for the Ontario airport at 10:20 am from the hospital and flew out at 11:30 am. Tired and emotionally drained from the past week, I found my seat on the airplane next to two military guys who were flying up to the Seattle area to train recruits. One of them asked if I had been down there on business. No, I explained, my son had been in a serious automobile accident in Riverside a week earlier and was still in a coma, and I was returning home for a week while my wife remained at our son's side. He expressed his sympathy and then said, “Can I ask you a question?” Sure. “Well, I don't mean to be forward, but you're a minister, right?” Yes. “And that means you're in the “giving” business of helping others, am I right?” I suppose so. “So, what happens when a guy like *you* needs help?”

I explained the enormous outpouring of love and support we had received from Christian people. We had been provided a wonderful hotel to stay in plus a car and meals (open-ended from your university), a generous offering of money from our church, and other gifts. Not only so, but people all over the country were praying for you, and our former church had instituted a 24-hour prayer vigil for the first few days. I finished by saying, “I don't know how people can cope without a confidence in the Lord and the support of believing friends in times like these.”

You very nearly lost your life on the evening of August 16th, and the Psalm of the day had ministered to your mother and I as we had flown down to California the following morning. God's people have been a tremendous cushion for us in the midst of our pain. We had discovered the relevance of verse 3: “As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.”

**Further reflections from Mary:** When Holly and I got to the hospital this morning, the doctors greeted us with the encouraging news that Seth had no infections at this time and that the air pocket in the lining of his lungs and gone away overnight. They had all agreed that we had a small window of opportunity to fly him home tomorrow if today goes well (Wednesday! . . . before I even had a chance to send the e-mail, plans were changed). Excitement can barely describe how I feel! But the other overwhelming emotion is gratitude for all the people who faithfully stood beside us during this difficult first 31 days. As Craig wrote from Psalm 16:3, “As for the saints in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight,” and that has become a true reality for us. Thank you to the gracious friends/relatives that we called in the middle of the night to pray, the wonderful nurse that brought us steaming coffee when we arrived and just stood looking at Seth trying to put our emotions together, the security guards at the front hospital desk who have become like family to us and even come all the way up to ICU to “meet” Seth, the great web site put together by one of the young men in our church, the unbelievable young people and ladies at Mt. View Baptist Church that “became me” and took my August “to do” list off the refrigerator and did it all (!), the delicious meals that were brought to my family while I was gone, the Maple Valley and Mt. View youth groups that washed hundreds of cars to raise money for Seth's flight home, the beautiful flowers in my hotel room, the friend who has spent untold number of hours on the phone researching and helping us line up the ambulatory flight, Seth's cousin who cut out 400 quilt blocks for people to sign for him in anticipation of making a quilt for him, the staff at the hotel restaurant that have asked for daily updates and assured us they were each praying for him, the sweet cook who, in broken English, asked if she could drive me to the hospital or wash my clothes, the faculty at Cal Baptist that have not only paid for the hotel and supplied a car but have been our extended family here, the hundreds of precious e-mails and cards that have each helped renew my strength and give me courage, the literally thousands of people all across every continent who get Seth's updates and pray for him, the friends who have given sacrificially to help with expenses, Seth's roommates and friends that sat in our place praying that first desperate night in the hospital when we couldn't be here, the beautiful poem and song written for him, the family at church that nurtured our girls like they were their own, my sisters who have kept vigil with me, and the countless others… THANK YOU.

~Mary

**September 18, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

(Day 33) Pray today that we will be able to coordinate a receiving hospital for Seth in the Seattle area. Overlake decided not to take him because of the bone fracture in the back of his neck, and Harborview cannot take him because they have such an overload of cases. Our family doctor, who is our “point man”, said this morning that sometimes it takes a huge amount of time to line up a pulmonary doctor because they are in such shortage in the Puget Sound area. Ephesians 3:20 comes to mind today: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ through all generations, forever and ever! Amen.” Some of you have asked about how I am holding out physically because of my rheumatoid arthritis. I hadn't even thought about it until I was asked because I have not had even a hint of a flare-up since I've been here. Also, usually at home, if I'm out for any amount of time one day, the next day I have to stay home. But it's been 33 days now of being out at least 12 hours a day in a high stress situation. I think it is a direct fulfillment of Isaiah 40:29-31: “He (the Lord) gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagle; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Thank you for your continued calling out to the Lord on our behalf.

~Mary

**September 21, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

(Day 36) Several weeks ago, we brought a little CD player into Seth's room so that we could start playing soft soothing music when we weren't talking to him. BUT . . . today we temporarily exchanged the soft music for John Denver's “Leaving on a Jet Plane”, which Holly had brought with her for the appropriate time. It looks like we'll be home tomorrow! The air ambulance will start getting Seth ready for the transfer at 10:00 am tomorrow and then Holly, Seth, an ICU nurse, a paramedic and I will be flying out of Riverside Municipal Airport at 11:30 and touching down at Boeing Field at 2:00 pm for his transfer to Swedish Hospital. I can hear you all cheering with us as you read this! I cannot adequately express my gratitude to the multitudes of people that also made this possible financially by donating the $12,800 cost for the flight. We are totally humbled by your generosity.

I recently noticed that the strip of road that Riverside Community Hospital is located on has been named Miracle Mile, and for us, it has been just that. Last night a pulmonary tech came into the room to talk to us; she had been in ER when Seth arrived on the evening of August 16th. She said there were at least six pulmonary techs putting their heads together all through that first night to try and decide how they could possibly save Seth's life. Of course, they were working with the other trauma doctors, nurses, etc. that filled the room to overflowing. She left for a week's vacation the next morning and assumed that Seth would die shortly. She thought the doctor's evaluation that Seth was “hanging by a thread” was an exaggeration, because she didn't feel he had even that much of a chance. When she returned from vacation, the main trauma doctor called her over and said, “Come here. I want to show you something!” He called Seth a “miracle”.

Seth continues to be stable, although the coma level is about the same. . . the scale goes from 3 to 15, and he's at a 6. Continue to pray that he would start to “wake up” and that his flight tomorrow would be without incident. My next update will be from my home computer in Washington State!!!!

~Mary

**September 23, 2003**

**A note from Holly:** We know everyone has been anxiously waiting to hear how Seth's transfer went, and we are so excited to let you know that Seth is now back home in Washington, at Swedish hospital in Seattle! The move went smoothly, and it was a stressful but exciting day for Mom and me. So many emotions! There was exhilaration that Seth was finally coming home, anxiety about how he would handle the complicated transfer, heartache at seeing him strapped to a stretcher and being wheeled down the hall and loaded in an ambulance, fascination with the amazing and efficient ambulatory flight, and probably more than anything else a deep sadness at having to leave all the wonderful people we have come to love in California, particularly the dear, dear staff at Riverside Community Hospital, who have become like family to us.

We are so grateful for all of your prayers for Seth yesterday, and for the care and concern that has been so much more than we could have imagined. Please continue to pray for Seth's complete neurological recovery, and that God would receive great glory through Seth's and our lives.

~Holly

**A Note from Craig:** Kirsten and I arrived at Boeing Field yesterday afternoon and shortly thereafter the small Learjet containing Seth, Mary, Holly and the ambulatory crew flew in at about 2:00 pm. After five hard weeks the family was finally reunited at home in the Seattle area. The view of my once-so-vibrant but now unresponsive son being lifted out of a jet on a small stretcher and wheeled to an ambulance across the tarmac is an image I never in my wildest imagination expected to witness, nor will I ever forget. Seth was immediately transported via ambulance to Swedish hospital. The ICU unit at Swedish is impressive, and his room is bright and modern. We are impressed with both the facilities and the staff and believe he will be in good hands, medically speaking. The rest is up to God.

Our plans are to let him get adjusted to the new surroundings and people before we let any other visitors see him. Mary, too, needs some R&R after 38 taxing days in California. The plan then is, starting on the 29th, to have anyone who desires to visit Seth call Mary in the morning between 8 and 9:00 am (her schedule will be slightly different each day, as will Seth's), and make an appointment with her to stop by for a 15 to 20 minute visit in the afternoon or evening with one of our family present. Since any commotion seems to drive his “numbers” up, there can be no chit-chat conversation in his room, only quiet speaking to him or another close by. Thank you for your cooperation and concern.

Gratefully, Craig

**September 24, 2003**

The ICU nurse called this morning at 7:00 am and said that Seth had had a rough night; his temperature had fluctuated to between 103 and 105.1 degrees during the night and that our son was “unstable.” This is quite disappointing since we thought his fevers had been on the slow decline. He has been on the cooling blanket since then and has been given Tylenol, but as of 10:00 am his fever was still at 104 degrees. The nurse said that since the temperatures fluctuate so quickly, he thought there might be a neurological cause. Even so, Seth was to have a CAT scan this morning to look for anything suspicious. Please pray that the fevers will subside and that whatever needs healing will be healed or at least able to be treated and kept under control.

~Craig, Mary, & the girls

**September 26, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

I was filled with excitement, as well as apprehension, as we said goodbye to our wonderful California team of nurses, doctors, pulmonary technicians and security guards. They had encouraged me when I thought I couldn't go on, hugged me when I thought I'd cry, and rejoiced with me when Seth got the OK to be flown home. It was a little unnerving seeing the flight crew nurses moving Seth from his bed in ICU and knowing that we were leaving the security of the hospital behind, which included the outstanding team that had saved his life and then gave him a chance at recovery. Now we were again entering the unknown. . . unknown nurses, unknown doctors, an unknown facility and an unknown outcome. Holly and I followed the ambulance to the airport and then got a look at the small Lear jet that would take us back to Seattle (you can see a picture of it on Seth's web page). The crew moved quickly and I took a seat in the back corner of the 10 foot long cabin. Then Seth was brought in and I was sitting at his feet. The ICU nurse took the middle spot and Holly sat by his head. Although the space was really tight, they assured us it was equipped for any medical emergency. Before we knew it we were in the air, off for our 2-1/4 hour flight. Seth was sweating profusely and Holly kept talking soothingly to him and dabbing his head with a cold cloth. I was glad to be in the back of the cabin where I could just sit and watch everything going on and reflect on the last 38 days. As the miles slipped away behind us, I wondered what was ahead. Before I knew it, I could see Mt. Rainier and tears welled up in my eyes. Our whole family was home again!

Today's prayer requests: The doctor scanned Seth's lungs yesterday and found out that his right lung had partially collapsed. He immediately inserted a tube to re-pressurize it. Also, the lung had a significant amount of air bubbles in the space between it and the lining around it. This is probably why Seth was struggling so much with fevers. He couldn't say what caused the problem, but it possibly could be related to the flight home. They gave Seth two liters of fluid, as well as a large dose of steroids, so by this morning he was really swollen. Also, tonight he is getting two more units of blood. It's discouraging when Seth takes three steps forward only to have to take two steps backward, but we should have expected it, and it will probably happen again. Pray for him to become more stable physically and, as always, pray that he will wake up.

~Mary

**September 28, 2003**

**A quick note from Craig:** It is now 9:45 pm, Sunday evening. Seth's ICU nurse called to inform us that an ultrasound revealed a large blood clot in Seth's right leg. This is potentially dangerous, in fact, some of it may have already broken off and caused a drop in his oxygenation earlier this evening. A large break-off could cause quick and serious deterioration in his lungs. The doctor is requesting that a surgeon operate as soon as possible to place a filter in the vein in Seth's abdomen where the two veins from his legs join so as to intercept any blood clot that might break off from his leg. If there are any late owls that receive this update this evening, please pray that the surgery would take place quickly and that no clot would break off in the meantime. Thanks for your support and prayers.

~Craig

**September 29, 2003**

**A note from Holly:** Last night and this morning have been another small crisis time for my brother. Seth had ultrasounds performed on his arms and legs yesterday to check for blood clots, and along with the one in his left arm that we knew about he has now developed large clots in his right arm and both legs. Yesterday evening, his oxygenation dropped dramatically, which his doctor speculated was a result of smaller pieces of “clot” breaking loose and going to his lungs. He felt the newly-discovered clots were enough of a concern that he woke the operating doctor in the middle of the night to come and perform a procedure on Seth to put a “filter” in a vein in his abdomen that will intercept any clots that break loose from his legs. It was a long first half of the night as I sat alone with Seth waiting for the doctor to arrive, and prayed that God would draw near to him in a special way. It was very hard to watch him being unhooked from the reassuring life-support system and wheeled out of the room once again for another emergency procedure. We all breathed a sigh of relief when he returned in a surprisingly short amount of time and his numbers immediately stabilized. We are grateful that God brought him through once again. He always sends us the right person at the right time, and provided a perfect nurse for Seth's shift last night: a man who specializes in brain trauma, and has really taken an interest in Seth's case and tried to find ways to help him.

The very large clot in his right arm is a critical concern for the doctor right now. The newly-installed filter only stops clots from his legs, and a large break-off from his arm (for which they cannot install a filter) could cause quick and serious deterioration in his lungs, blocking oxygen to any one of his major organs. Blood clots tend to stabilize in about five days and then slowly dissolve, but those first five days are not so stable (we don't really know when the clot began). Please continue to pray for Seth; his life is still so fragile.

God bless,

Holly

**October 1, 2003**

**A Father’s Perspective**

Yesterday morning Seth was finally able to have an MRI done on him to show in more detail what has happened to his brain (until now we've only had X-ray and CAT scans, which are more limited in scope). He was also wired for an EEG that measures brain wave activity, but neither reveals HOW his actual thinking ability has been affected. Nevertheless, the results were not encouraging. The MRI revealed that Seth has sustained some damage to the front part of his brain, the temple areas, and part of the rear portion. These have left some hematomas, or pools of blood that, in the temple areas, are causing pressure. A likely procedure will be to install small tubes through both sides of his skull to remove the fluid. This pressure may be the reason his brain wave activity is slow, as shown by the EEG. The most discomforting information was the prognosis of the neurologist, who said that such damage typically can leave the patient on a scale from the "low end" (a vegetative state) to a "high end" with an unknown degree of retardation, since the damaged areas include those which affect thinking, communicating and personality. As he indicated, "Neither of the options are satisfying."

To be honest, this was devastating news, and it has cast a pall of gloom around our family. It would be misleading to say that we are not struggling with this. Of course, such a forecast leaves out the "God factor" and only offers us what medical science would ordinarily predict. Seth belongs to a God who still performs miracles. Will He? I thought of the story of Gideon in Judges, chapter 7, where God pared down the Israelite army to a ridiculous number of 300 men to overcome the vast Midianite army, in order that man could not receive the glory, but only God. The medical odds of our son being restored to us as "our Seth" have greatly diminished; his physical condition and our hope has been pared down awfully low, and only God's intervention is left. So often in Scripture, that is where He wants things to be.

Mary echoed my own condition when she said that, in her spirit, she holds to the hope that God will still do something special for Seth and for us, but in her soul (mind, will and emotions) she grieves and battles with discouragement. It is an odd, conflicting state of being, one which neither of us is familiar. It reminded me of the Psalmist whose spirit is in effect talking to his soul, something to which we can relate:

*"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."*

Please continue to hold Seth (and us) up in your prayers.

~Craig

**October 5, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

(Day 50) Many have asked why we aren't sending out daily updates on Seth. How blessed we are when you tell us that you check your e-mail multiple times a day so that you can be praying about the current details and doctor reports. Actually, if you don't hear from us, it's a good thing because it means the crisis times are getting a little further apart, so, be assured, if you hear nothing, we have all survived the day. We so appreciate all your letters and emails of encouragement. Each one is saved and reread over and over, lifting and renewing our spirits.

Sometime during the first part of this week Seth will have another CAT scan done on his brain to see if the areas of collected blood are getting smaller or larger. If they are increasing, Seth will have small tubes put in to drain them, but at this point there is no measure of comparison. His chest tubes were taken out of his lungs today which means that the doctors are not concerned about any more collapsing at this time, even though he has pneumonia (which is being treated with antibiotics). His arms are not being moved at all because of the blood clots, but the physical therapist will start working his legs tomorrow since they have the filter in his abdomen to catch any clot that might break off. His level of coma has not seemed to change much in the last month (he does move his head and mouth and hands more). Pray that he will continue to stabilize physically, and that God would do a miraculous healing in his head. It is likely that, at this time, Seth can probably not comprehend anything we say, but we know that God's spirit can commune deeply within Seth's spirit, so we continually read scripture and sing spiritual songs to him. Several people have even brought in guitars and played softly for him (we keep one in the room if this is your specialty!).

I was reflecting today on the meaning of Seth's name, which is "appointed". We asked God, when he was born, and have continued to do so through the years, to use him in a mighty way for His Kingdom. The life verse we chose for him is Isaiah 59:12, *"(You) will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."* Our prayer has always been that Seth would be used (appointed) to make a difference in our world where many lives have so little hope or stability; where families are broken and need restoring; where the age-old foundations of truth have been cast aside. Please continue to pray, along with us, that this would still be God's purpose for our son, and that He would raise him up for "such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

~Mary

**October 10, 2003**

After 55 days of spending about 10 hours a day at the hospital, they seem to blur together a little, even though it seems like there are significant things happening as well as difficult decisions to make along the way. In the last few days, Seth has come off the breathing machine and is now breathing steadily on his own with a 40% oxygen mix still being blown in front of his trache tube to give him an extra boost. He had an ultra sound repeated yesterday to see how his blood clots in his arms and shoulders were looking, and the pulmonary doctor is very concerned because they are still significant, with the potential of breaking off and doing some severe damage to his lungs, heart, or brain. One clot has even formed around the tube that goes up through his arm and neck which his medications are given through. The doctor is not able to administer any blood thinner at this time because Seth's head still has several areas of small blood clotting that need to dissolve first, which is a very slow process. The different specialists feel like they are in a delicate balancing act together, trying to make the best possible decisions for Seth. Please pray that the clots would not break off and that his body would start dissolving them by itself.

Yesterday morning we met with two of Seth's doctors (a neurologist and a critical care pulmonary specialist) and then with the hospital social worker. The discussion revolved around what would be the plan of action for Seth's future care. He will probably be in the ICU for another week, and then we have several options to look at while he stabilizes a little more physically and then a decision will need to be made about a permanent nursing care facility for him. In the next few weeks, we will need to visit different facilities to see what we feel comfortable with for long-term care. It will also depend on which one is willing to take a patient that is comatose and might continue to be so. Our hearts are heavy with grief over these future possibilities, and a deep sadness hangs over our souls as we are continually faced with the disparity of our son then and now, and the specter of unmet dreams and potential. A conflict still rages between our souls and spirits, between the grim medical facts we see in the natural realm and the statements of hope and personal intervention of God in the spiritual realm.

As we continue to wait on the Lord for how all of this will play out, pray with us that we will just take each day at a time and deal with the decisions that need to be made for that hour. We realize that God gives grace for the day, not the future. Also, continue to pray with us that God would have mercy on our family and astound the medical world as well, and release a miracle of healing in Seth's body and mind.

Several weeks after the accident, this scripture seemed to grab our attention regarding Seth: *"Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!… I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death"* (Psalm 118:15, 17).

~Craig and Mary

**October 14, 2003**

As a respiratory technician told us weeks ago in Riverside Community Hospital, "You'll continue to have two steps forward and one step back." More often, it seems like "one step forward and one step back," as his pulmonary doctor commented today. We are thankful for some small but positive signs in Seth's condition: He is moving more, with his head turning from side to side and occasionally appearing to do so in response to a person's voice. His eyes, hands and arms are also more active, and his right hand's grip was surprisingly strong yesterday. There are still no obvious indications of regular, *purposeful* response, however. Yet he is significantly better than his original level 3 (brain dead) coma rating from the first week of his accident.

Steps backward are disappointing but not entirely unexpected. Yesterday we were informed that Seth had developed an infection which is resistant to his antibiotics, so for now, while different treatments are given, all visitors must don gowns and gloves before entering his room. This is not unusual for patients who have been in ICU and on antibiotics this long. It does, however, remove the comforting aspect of personal skin contact, as when we hold his hands, stroke his head, and so forth.

On Wednesday, October 15 at 10:00 am Seth will be moved from Swedish Medical Center to another facility, Kindred Hospital, in north Seattle. Kindred specializes in providing therapy and rehabilitation for patients who need less therapeutic care than an ICU facility but more than a traditional hospital room. Typically it serves as an intermediary place, keeping patients for two to four weeks of rehabilitation before moving them on to a long-term care facility. We are eager for Seth to begin therapy so that his limbs do not stiffen, although care will have to be taken because of the large blood clots in his arms. We are not looking forward to the hour commute.

Sometimes we are baffled by the ways of our gracious Lord but trust in His will. As the hymn writer penned, *"Help me Lord, when toil and trouble meeting, e'er to take as from a father's hand."* From before his birth and up to the present we have continually prayed that the Lord would be glorified in Seth. Please join us in this; we greatly appreciate your continued prayers for our son (and us) as well as the other kindnesses so many have shown. You are all like Aaron and Hur (Exodus 17:12), holding up the hands of a weary Moses.

~Craig and Mary

**October 20, 2003**

Seth was moved by ambulance to Kindred Hospital in North Seattle last Wednesday morning, October 15th, the third facility he has now occupied. Kindred is an "acute" facility, not so intensive in care as an ICU but greater than a typical hospital room. Now, instead of one nurse per one or two patients, Seth is one of six persons a nurse's assistant and various technicians care for. This means that we don't spend as much time interacting with hospital staff, who may only drop in every hour or so. At first we were understandably nervous about this arrangement, with Seth's history of unstable numbers. Fortunately, the unwelcome spikes in temperature, blood pressure, and pulse rate that Seth was experiencing in both Riverside and Swedish hospitals have not occurred so far this week, although his pulse rate remains relatively high at 120-130 beats per minute and blood clots remain a big concern. Although he is still in isolation, the infection he had earlier is on the wane, with his white cell count in the normal range. He continues to open his eyes, appearing to look around, moves his head, his hands, and occasionally his arms and legs, but is still in a coma with some degree of brain damage. We wonder if he can appreciate the large window next to him that displays our mixed October weather and evergreen trees.

Medical science is remarkable; without it and the corresponding skill of doctors, nurses, and technicians, Seth would not have survived his accident, and for all this we are grateful. But medicine has its limits, and we continue to look to the One who supercedes it. This morning we read in Mark, chapter 8 how Jesus healed a blind man in an unusual "two-step" procedure of touch. Jesus touched the man's eyes, and the man began to see people, but said "they looked like trees walking around" — an incomplete healing. So, the Lord touched his eyes again and then he saw "everything clearly."

Seth's surviving the accident was called a "miracle" by his emergency room doctor — that his heart kept on beating the night of the accident despite being so low on oxygen mystified the emergency staff who toiled over him for hours. Should it have stopped, they had purposed not even to apply the electric shock plates, assuming he was too far gone. Beyond that, they didn't believe he would be alive in the morning. But the Lord took over when medical science reached its limit. A "first touch," and our son' life was spared. Over two months later he lives and has made improvements, but his life remains "incomplete." We want Seth to bring much glory to the Kingdom of God. Please continue to pray with us for a "second touch."

We are navigating through deep waters we have never before encountered, and God is faithful: *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you"* (Isa. 43:2). We wonder how folks without so many friends and without belief in a sovereign, loving God handle such crises. The assurances of the prayers, e-mails, and cards that many of you send are a lifeline.

~ Craig, Mary and the girls

**November 3, 2003**

Seth was moved by ambulance last week to a skilled nursing facility named Rainier Vista, in the town of Puyallup, about 30 minutes south of our home. This will be his home so long as he remains in a coma or is severely impaired. He is in a two-person room, and his roommate is also comatose. Fortunately, Seth has the bed by the window and we can all look out and see the fall colors changing on the vine maple. On the positive side, Rainier Vista is well-staffed and has a "homey" decor unlike the sterile-looking hospitals he has been used to. On the down side, it has been difficult adjusting to having our previously robust and life-loving son ending up in a long-term facility that caters to people who are unable to care for themselves, i.e., the very elderly and those severely physically and mentally impaired. In a hospital the other patients remain in their rooms, whereas here they are often wheeled into the hallways and serve as a constant reminder of just how difficult a turn Seth's life (and ours) has taken since the evening of August 16th. One cannot help but note the sad contrast between the photographs of Seth taken earlier this past summer, artfully arranged on the wall above his bed, and seeing him now, lying there in his bed.

We who see our son and brother daily seem to notice little change in his condition, but those who haven't seen him for several weeks between visits notice more improvements, e.g., more movements of his head, hands and legs and responsiveness by turning his eyes and head toward sounds and motion. These are baby steps, at best. We continually look and hope for voluntary responses to commands, to let us know that something more is going on inside of his head. Please join with us in prayer for this, or that he will awaken from the coma!

When I spoke at our church on Sunday I likened our current status to that of a ship which suddenly encountered a dense fog. Day after day we awaken in a place where there is no light, no sense of progress, an almost suffocating thickness, and no idea of how long it will be this way. We have a compass, God's word, which alone provides hope and direction. It tells us to trust that someday the fog will clear and the sun will shine again, although we may find ourselves in different surroundings. Will the sunshine reveal a restored Seth? Although God's purpose in all this remains a mystery, our prayers and hopes are certainly so. As the Psalmist says, *"the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love . . . We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield . . . May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you"* (Psalm 33:18f).We will continue to *"look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy"* (Psalm 123:2).

Your cards and e-mails are a significant encouragement to us, and we look forward daily to getting the mail or "logging on" to hear from our friends and others who are praying for Seth. God bless you all.

–Craig, Mary and the girls

**November 12, 2003**

Seth has continued to make some small improvements, although they are still considered involuntary. This apparently includes a reaction he demonstrated lately when being turned on his side, where he reached out with his arm somewhat as if to break a fall in that direction (the therapists' response was, "Whoa, did you see THAT?"). His grip, which was nonexistent a couple of months ago, is surprisingly strong (enough so that he is given a muscle relaxant so that he does not cut himself with his fingernails), and he is beginning to move his arms more. At Rainier Vista Care Center there is a greater emphasis on therapy than during his hospital stays; therapists come in during the week to move his limbs and have remarked that he still has a good range of motion. Should he continue to make improvements and awaken from his coma, he is only a few blocks from Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup, which is nationally recognized for its rehabilitation programs. He also received his first real bath last week, supported by a hydraulically operated stretcher which lowered him into a Jacuzzi tub, with Dad assisting the nurses aide. This machine also keeps track of his weight, and we estimate he has lost 20-25 lbs. since his accident (and he was lean to begin with!).

At this point it is easier to look back than forward. August 16th, the day of Seth's accident, has become a defining date for our family in a bittersweet sort of way. We find ourselves asking, "When was the last time I was driving along this stretch of road? . . or, "When was the last time I spoke with this person? . . or, "When was the last time I was doing this activity? . . . *was it before or after the accident? . . How much easier life seemed then!*" You wish you could turn back the clock to that moment and experience your former, easier state of affairs and perhaps even alter the future, but you can't. So, we are once again receiving lessons on learning to walk by faith and not by sight. Oswald Chambers wrote, "God has frequently to knock the bottom board out of your experience if you are a saint in order to get you into contact with Himself. God wants you to understand that it is a life of *faith*, not a life of sentimental enjoyment of His blessings." On August 16th, it wasn't just a board, but the whole bottom seemed to dropped out! Yet, God has promised, *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* (Isaiah 41:10)

We are continually amazed and blessed when we hear of "new people"–people we don't even know– who have heard about Seth, visited his web site, and are praying for him and us. The fact that so many individuals from so many places have picked up a prayer burden for our son and brother can be nothing less than a work of the Holy Spirit, and it gives us the reassurance that the Lord is actively involved in this whole affair and has not written the final word on it. So, for those who have been with us from the beginning, and to those who have recently "signed on," thanks!–and please continue to undergird us with your prayers and notes of encouragement. They mean a lot!

Craig, Mary, and the girls

**November 17, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother’s Heart**

(Day 93) I am sitting in Seth's room right now and looking at all of his pictures on the wall, some of the same ones you see on his web site. They bring back so many happy memories of our son: bright, vivacious, a thinker, diligent, and well-liked by all. The Seth I see lying in the bed next to me is still in a coma, and I wonder if he'll ever again be the Seth of the web site. We all too well understand what medical science has told us, but we continue to hope for a miraculous, personal intervention from the Lord.

On some days Seth seems more alert than others and, yes, a person can have their eyes open and still be comatose. Sometimes as of late he seems to focus his eyes intently on our faces as we talk to him, as if desperately trying to make sense of what is happening. Even his doctor made a comment about this today (something he didn't see a week ago). A person, we've been told, seldom comes out of a coma instantly as is so often portrayed on TV. "Wakening" is usually a very gradual process, taking up to months of becoming more and more aware of what is happening around them to finally being able to respond to a command. Although we're three months into this, we realize that we have a much longer road to navigate than what we've already traveled. Pray for our strength and ability to endure.

Besides the coma to deal with, Seth has other issues we ask you to pray about. He still has the floating piece of broken-off bone in the back of his neck that is protruding slightly into his spinal column, requiring him to wear a stiff neck brace much of the time. There is only a slight chance it will reattach by itself; the surgery otherwise needed to do so is long and complicated, and the doctors will only do so if he awakens from the coma and needs rehabilitation. He has an area of ossification (muscle turning bone hard) above his left knee, probably caused by it hitting the dash board of his car during the accident. The knee only bends about 60 degrees and while massaging it can help, the window of opportunity for gaining more flexibility is not long.

Every day seems to present its own challenges. Today his stomach feeding tube ruptured and Seth was taken by ambulance to nearby Good Samaritan Hospital for a replacement, where he waited alone on a gurney in a small room for three and a half hours before Craig and I decided to investigate (we had been told he would be gone for an hour) and expedited what was only a five minute procedure. His eyes were wide open when we arrived. What was he thinking?

Each day as I drive to the care center I park the car, pause, and then sigh a prayer, asking the Lord to give me the grace for whatever that specific day might hold.

*"We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure . . . But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but God, who raises the dead . . . On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."* (2 Cor. 1:8-11)

~Mary

**November 26, 2003**

**A Father’s Perspective**

(Day 102) *"See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains"* (James 5:7). Waiting for plants to grow is not particularly difficult; Holly and I plant several hundred dollars worth of flower starts each year in May, and by mid July we are rewarded with a yard that is in full bloom. Waiting for a loved one to show signs of progress in coming out of a coma, however, IS difficult. Gains are painfully slow. On the one hand, you want to grab onto any meager display of improvement and run with it; on the other, you want to force yourself to the side of cautiousness so as not to be let down. We (and undoubtedly, many of you) are praying for a miracle, for Seth to come into a "full bloom" one day. But watching a flower grow from seed day by day does challenge one's endurance!

Comas are often rated on what is called the Glasgow Scale, which measures levels of functioning in the areas of eye opening, motor and verbal responses. The scale is as follows: Severe = 3-8 (what most people think of a coma is actually at the lower end of "severe"); Moderate = 9-12, and Mild = 13-15. At level 3 one is essentially considered brain dead, and this was the rating Seth was given during the first few weeks after his accident. At level 15 a person opens eyes spontaneously, obeys with motor responses, and has oriented verbal responses. Seth is currently at about level 8, and is showing signs of continuing upward. Progress from this point on is a huge step because it indicates brain activity that shows itself in what is called "purposeful response," specifically, responding to commands. At that point a person can no longer be referred to as "vegetative."

On several occasions this past week Seth has shown small indications that he MAY be entering such a critical juncture. On two different visits, when Seth seemed more alert, I "got in his face" and asked him repeatedly to blink two or three times in a row. To our surprise, he seemed to respond correctly more often than not, but still, imperfectly. At other times he has not responded at all. During one other procedure a therapist repeatedly asked Seth to move his toes, and she was encouraged that he seemed to respond seven out of ten times. Yet she admitted that she would not get her hopes up until he responds like that several days in a row. She was also able to get him to open his mouth so that she could swab his tongue with sherbet (he hasn't tasted anything since his accident!). He thereupon moved his jaw as if tasting it. The first day she tried this he immediately tried to clamp down on the swab, not surprising, since he has been unwilling to open his mouth at all, except to yawn. However, the next day she tried this he allowed her to swab his tongue with the sherbet and then pull out the swab before he closed his mouth to taste it. Other therapists have said they think Seth is trying to "work with them" as they move his limbs. More baby steps forward, more small tidbits of encouragement!

We will continue to look for signs of God's healing and Seth's progression upward, of purposeful responses. Otherwise, it remains a waiting game: *"Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart, and wait for the Lord"* (Psalm 27:14). Please continue your prayers for Seth, that he would move beyond this crucial point in his recovery.

~Craig

**December 2, 2003**

**Reflections from a mother's heart**

(Day 108) I can't believe I've already filled an entire journal with events and thoughts and am starting on my second one. It's a strange feeling to flip through blank pages, wondering what circumstances will be surrounding us by the time the ink dries on the last page of the new journal. What progress will Seth have made? Where will we all be emotionally and spiritually? Will we come out intact? Will our lives ever be "normal" again, or will this shadow continue to hang over us? I never dreamed the events connected with the accident would fill more than one journal, but in reality, there will probably be many, many more to come.

One thing we know for sure is that God has planted our family in the middle of a new ministry field. For me, instead of teaching ladies' Bible studies, speaking and counseling, my life is now filled with listening to stories of hurts and dreams of elderly folks as well as other people that come through our door during the long days. I remember the words of Jim Elliot, a martyred missionary in Equador in 1956 . . . "WHEREVER YOU ARE, BE ALL THERE," and that is what we've tried to do. So the girls play the guitar and sing in the sitting area of the hallway to a captive and appreciative audience, Holly plays dinner music on the piano in the main dining room, and we spend time during the day when Seth is asleep having coffee with the lonely residents. Yesterday, as we were singing to Seth in his room, a resident who usually stays totally to herself (even taking all her meals alone in her room) heard the music and came and stood outside his door to listen as we harmonized to Amazing Grace. She said she didn't know why, but it brought tears to her eyes, and would we come and get her next time we sing? Pray that God's spirit would work through each of us to bring hope in a place of much sorrow.

Although I am usually very cautious about Seth's improvements, I can honestly say that I think his coma has lightened a bit this week. He has had more facial expressions and more movements. He has been up in a wheelchair several times, and as I have pushed him around the nursing care facility all the elderly ladies have pronounced him "an exceptionally handsome young man that they pray for every day!"

We have found that no matter how dark the storm clouds, how high the waves, or how much the boat is shaken, God continues to bring peace and encouragement to our weary hearts. *"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him and I am helped"* (Psalm 28:6-7). Thank you for your continued prayers for our strength and Seth's healing.

~Mary

**December 11, 2003**

**A Father’s Perspective**

From the very first week that Seth was in ICU at Riverside, California, we heard at least one medical staff worker say to us that "we were in this for the long haul," a statement that has become oft-repeated throughout our ordeal. During those first critical weeks we were primarily concerned with Seth's survival, and when the likelihood of that became more apparent our thoughts, hopes and prayers turned to him waking up from the coma. It would be a long enough haul, we figured, if he had to miss out on the first semester of his senior year of college; hopefully, he would at least be able to join the family get-together at Grandpa and Grandma's on Christmas Eve, even if confined a wheelchair. But, sadly, this won't happen.

I wish we could report that Seth has made some strides during the past couple of weeks, but such is not the case. We cannot say yet that he responds to commands, that there is any certainty of real thinking going on. But, we continue to hope.

Obviously the haul IS long, and only God knows its duration and the extent of our endurance. Does it get any easier? Yes and no; we are learning to adapt to our (and his) present condition, and the emotions are not quite so raw nor the feelings in the pit of the stomach quite so severe as was initially the case. When you can't awaken from a bad dream, you try to adapt. But there is also a greater temptation to "walk by sight" when so little change occurs in Seth over a period of weeks, and at times we cave in to discouragement as different, potential scenarios play through our minds. We note that it is easier for others "on the outside," who do not struggle with this day in and day out, week in and week out, to have an unswerving faith that God will raise our son up.

We are inclined to feel disconnected with others who cannot really understand our plight (how could they?). That is why it was such a blessing a few weeks ago when we received an unexpected phone call from the singer Pat Boone's wife, Shirley, whose grandson suffered severe injuries a couple of years ago and experienced many similarities to those of Seth's medical journey. Shirley had heard about us from a friend of mutual friends and called to encourage us not to give up; her grandson had also been given a dire prognosis, was in a coma for seven months, but has gradually been recovering ever since (he and Pat were featured on "Larry King Live" this past year). This dear woman, whom we've never even met, was so burdened for our family that she stayed up one night until the wee hours of the morning, praying for us. Such is the burden the Lord's Spirit scatters far and wide, such is the priceless gift of being part of the family of God! Not only so, but we still hear of "new" people and prayer groups who are lifting Seth up before the throne of God regularly, a sign to us that God is yet up to something.

Make no mistake: we thank God for ALL of you of faith who intercede for Seth and us. We pray for a day when, *"Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"* (Psalm 118:15) The load often seems too heavy for us to carry alone, and the encouragement that we receive via contacts from the saints of God is immeasurable.

~Craig

**December 16, 2003**

**Reflections from a Mother's heart**

(Day 123) I'm sitting in the back of a room filled with wheelchairs, walkers and eager faces as my family is up front putting on a Christmas program for a nursing home. Holly is playing the dulcimer and piano, Kirsten is on the keyboard and Craig is leading singing and getting ready to share a Christmas message through a black light chalk presentation. We've done this many times before over the years, as a family, but it's different this time. First, this isn't just any nursing facility, but it is where we've spent 12 hours a day for the past couple of months. For now, this is Seth's "home," and our second home. All the faces of the nurses and residents are familiar and they have names that we know and stories behind those names. Normally, Seth would be joining the music team, playing the guitar and probably singing a duet with his sister. But tonight, our friend Bob Burns is filling in for Seth, who rests quietly in his bed down the hall unaware of what is going on elsewhere in the building, and Kirsten will sing "O Holy Night" alone.

Having a son in a coma with brain trauma is such an uncertain situation. I wonder, as I watch the program progressing if Seth will be able to join us next year with his guitar, and I am acutely aware of the deep wound in my heart that sometimes seems healed over but tonight feels very raw. When a person is in a coma, there is absolutely no way of knowing when they will come out of it. Will it be next week? Or maybe next month? Or maybe next summer? Or not at all? When I awake each morning, I lay in bed asking the Lord how I can get up and spend one more day at the nursing center, and He assures me that His grace is sufficient for the day. So, I get up, determined to minister that day to Seth and anyone else God brings into our room and life.

Any progress coming out of a coma is usually very slow, so although I get discouraged because I don't see many tangible results, the chief therapist that worked with Seth yesterday commented that each week when she comes in, she sees improvements: maybe a little more movement in a hand, or a little more response of turning his head or wiggling his toes when asked, or perhaps more facial expressions.

As I think about the meaning of the Christmas season, when God gave up His only son so that we might be forgiven and have a relationship with Him, I continue to ask God humbly to heal our only son. God's love is so much bigger than ours! Would I have willingly put Seth through all of this if it meant reaching these people for Christ, had I been given the choice? Most likely not. But that is what Christmas is all about, is it not?

~Mary

**December 30, 2003**

**A Father’s Perspective**

Our family appreciated the prayers that we knew many of you lifted up for us during Christmas. We longed for a holiday like last year, when Seth rejoined our family for a few weeks' break from college and shared his excitement about "living his dream" in sunny California, the classes he was taking at Cal Baptist U in Riverside, the friends he was meeting at work and school, and other new experiences. This year we anticipated it would be rough going emotionally (and it was), but your prayers, along with the added kindness of friends who offered to sit with Seth during our absence with family in eastern Washington, certainly lightened our load. Kirsten and Holly drove back across the state to be with Seth the latter part of Christmas Day while Mary and I spent an additional day in Spokane with her relatives.

The RT's (respiratory technicians) are beginning to experiment with Seth's breathing by occasionally placing a special valve over his trache which allows him to continue inhaling through the trache but closes during his exhales, forcing air back out through his mouth or nose (like a normal person). This will allow him to not only taste but make noises, if he is so inclined. Initially, the sensation of air moving back up his windpipe after four and a half months induced a fit of coughing, which was to be expected. I was struck by the sound of his coughing after not hearing a peep out of him for so long. The RT was also struck, in the forehead; Seth's cough was so strong that it literally blew the valve off the trache and she had the misfortune of being in line with the projectile. It will take a while to get used to.

Any signs of progress continue to be painfully slow. After a few weeks of massaging his left knee (damaged in the accident), it has gone from bending only 60 degrees to 73. In another month and a half, whatever he has will probably be permanent. He appears to respond to some commands with limited movements ("move your head," "open your mouth," "move your hand or foot"), but only occasionally. Although his eyes move around and sometimes seem to focus on us for a few moments, he still does not blink when we make a hand motion toward them. Encouragements are few; discouragement and worse continually dog our footsteps.

Psalm 90, written by Moses, offers this lament: *"Relent, O LORD, how long will it be? Have compassion on your servants."* (v. 13) We can relate to that! We ask ourselves: How long will we be in this "limbo?" Will our son ever get better? Will our faith come through this ordeal intact and undamaged? We, at least, can still cling to hope in a miraculous work of the Lord, but we nonetheless miss the son and brother who used to bring a lot of joy and laughter to our home; we are confronted face to face daily with our loss, and there is no closure. The psalmist goes on to pray, *"Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days."* (v. 14) We hope and pray as well that we will one day be "satisfied" and "glad" with God's expression of His unfailing love, that we will again be able to sing for joy, but we also realize that He does not always promise his children an easy path. Sufficient only for the day is His grace.

~Craig