**“Update on Seth (and his dad)**

A Father’s Perspective

*August 16, 2018*

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*“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”* (Isaiah 43:19)

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Today marks the 15th anniversary of Seth’s accident, a day that was to impact my life (and that of my family) more than any other. He turned 38 last month. I recall, in the early days following that disastrous event, a person in the medical field stating that an individual who remained in Seth’s condition “probably wouldn’t last beyond 15 years.” At the time I dismissed the gloomy prognostication and held onto the hope that the son I had known would be restored to his former self either by medical science or God’s divine intervention. Fifteen years of caring for my minimally-conscious son has, if not entirely extinguished such a hope, at least tempered it with the realization that God’s ways are not always like ours and He more often than not desires to gain glory by our persevering in the challenges of life rather than extracting us from them. It has not been an easy road for me as I have endured struggles of faith—not regarding the existence of God per se but rather as to the nature of God—that I never would have imagined. I’ve found that “going deeper with the Lord” isn’t always accompanied by increased euphoria.

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So, although Seth’s condition has remained largely unchanged, mine hasn’t. Life has moved on with my family, a grandson, good friends around me and a ministry I enjoy. In the process of my grieving I used to think of my life as having become “a canvas of gray with occasional splashes of color.” In 2012 the gray, like typical Seattle skies, took on an even darker hue with the passing of my beloved wife, Mary, who had shared the burden. This year I rejoice to report that the Lord has sent a sunbeam from heaven to splash with a warm, golden glow across that canvas—a shaft of light named Marian! (See photos)

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Before the close of last year I had somewhat reluctantly, at the urging of some friends, signed up with eHarmony (well, it was a “free trial offer”, after all). On my profile, right up front, I shared my responsibility of caring for my 37-year old, minimally-conscious son, not wanting to mislead anyone and figuring that would eliminate the majority of ladies that might otherwise be inclined to respond. I also purposed that I would not presumptuously contact any supposed “match” myself but would wait to see if any woman would actually be willing to jump over that hurdle and contact me despite the caveat. Marian responded that very same day and with only a couple of days left on her year’s subscription—the briefest of possible overlaps. She had been single for 22 years and had largely decided that she would remain so, had grown comfortable with that notion, but was open to the Lord bringing the right person into her life if He chose to do so. Interestingly, what first attracted her to me was the very thing I assumed would turn most away, that I had taken on the obligation of caring for my son. I would later compose for her a “parable” of my own, expressing what I saw as the hand of God in bringing us together:

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*“Two people decide to go fishing. One spends an entire, fruitless day at the river and hooks nothing, starts packing up but decides to throw out one last cast before turning around to leave. The other shows up on the opposite side of the river late in the day, not really expecting to catch anything, believing the bait isn’t the kind that the fish will bite on but throws out the first cast, anyway. Who would believe that they both could hook the same fish? Unexpected success—and a shared blessing!”*

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Like me, Marian has three grown children—two daughters and a son, along with a couple of grandsons. She is currently a 5th grade school teacher, having taught at a private Christian school and now at an alternative school in the Vancouver, WA, area. At this point in our lives we have both been surprised by love and plan to be married at the end of the year. I asked Seth, “Do you approve of this arrangement?” (\*Rapid, definitive blinking of his eyes\*)

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{Some pictures of Craig and Marian have been added to the bottom of the photo gallery.  ~the editor}

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**Update on Seth (and his dad)**

A Father’s Perspective

*July 11, 2017*

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*For who knows a person’s thought except the spirit of that person, which is in him?*

(1 Corinthians 2:11)

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Seth turned 37 today, much of the time on this birthday riding along with me in his wheel chair van as we headed home on a four-hour trip from Kennewick. For the past several days he and I spent time visiting my mother (91), an annual trip during his birthday week that has become a tradition for the past eight years or so, our having only missed the summer of 2012 when his mother was so ill. I know Seth looks forward to seeing not only G’ma but his uncle and some cousins as well; he was particularly “smiley” the first couple of mornings there. My mother rents a hospital bed that we set up by the large floor-to-ceiling picture windows in her living room that look out over the golf course I myself spent much time on during my own youth, and Seth has a beautiful view of it all, so much more expansive than looking out his own bedroom window at our garden. I can wheel him out onto the folks’ patio where he used to enjoy visiting with his grandfather, now deceased for 13 years. It probably brings back memories of other visits from years gone by and Christmases with the larger clan. For me, it is a nice break from the routine, although preparations for traveling with a minimally-conscious 37-year old man can be a bit daunting (for those of you with children, think traveling with a newborn and all the necessary accessories times three or four).

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A few months ago we were privileged to be visited by one of Seth’s former roommates who had shared a room with him while he attended California Baptist University during the year prior to his accident. He wondered why I hadn’t written an update for so long, and I informed him that I had nothing significantly new to write about. This friend of Seth’s—Dan—pointed out that folks might be wondering, after so long a time if everything was okay with us (I know, it’s been a year). So, yes, everything is okay, with no particular changes to our situation. The special blessing from Dan’s visit was hearing how Seth had had such a positive impact on his life during their time together (not the first person from that segment of Seth’s life—otherwise largely unknown to his mother and I—who has shared a similar testimony). It is always gratifying to hear about the good things one’s child has accomplished in his or her life, even now, so many years later. Like any other dad, I welcome fodder for bragging about my kid.

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So often I find myself wondering what he is thinking about. I remember asking him some time ago if he had a lot he wished he could talk about and without hesitation he lifted his eyebrows. A couple of weeks ago, on an errand with him along, I pushed him through the local Home Depot, wondering if—after 14 years—the typical sights, smells and sounds were for him a pleasant bout of nostalgia, rekindled by memories from his part-time job at the Home Depot in Riverside during his year at college there. Who knows? I’m not alone. During the last few weeks of Mary’s life, someone asked her if she was looking forward to hearing what Seth had to say when they were reunited in heaven some day. Her response was, “I can’t wait!” Amen.

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                                                    Craig

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**Update on Seth (and his dad)**

*A Father’s Perspective*

July 11, 2016

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*Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*  ~ Isaiah 50:10

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When my late wife, Mary, and I were awaiting the birth of our first child so many years ago, we made the decision to write a birthday letter to each of our (future) children on their special day that would describe for them our current situation at the time of writing, for example, their level of growth, unique personal traits and accomplishments at the time of that birthday and, more importantly, our own thoughts regarding them. This would include our hopes and the challenges we faced in our raising of them, the emotions we were feeling, prayers we were praying for them, and hopeful aspirations for their future. We would hold on to these yearly letters until they reached adulthood and give them to the child as a whole set—an autobiographical history of our love, concern, and otherwise parenting of them. Perhaps these accounts would provide them insights into their parents’ motives and reasoning when they eventually found themselves in a similar role (even empathy, perhaps?). The letters began on the day they were born.

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Seth turns 36 this month on the 11th, and recently I came across a copy of the birthday letter I wrote to him when he reached the age of 20 which I would like to share:

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*July 11, 2000*

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*Two decades have come and gone astonishingly fast since I first laid eyes on you—a small, helpless, squirming thing still attached to your mother by the cord that had been your lifeline for the first nine months of your existence. You have progressed all too rapidly through the stages of infant, toddler, little boy, and teenager, and now the once squirming newborn stands before me transformed as a man and I realize the days of your remaining within our fold are, comparatively speaking, precious few. I wonder how many other fathers look back on twenty such years with the odd mixture of pride, regret, satisfaction, sadness and joy that I now experience. I know my own father wrestled with such emotions concerning me. I imagine that you, too, will one day be standing in similar shoes.*

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*It was good that your grandparents could share your twentieth birthday with us at Seaside (Oregon). I want them to know you and feel as proud of you as I am, and yet each time I see my father I realize that my days left with him are also precious and few. It is not particularly comforting to know that in a few short years I will be bereft, to a greater and lesser extent, of the two most important men in my life.\* The nagging question in either case is the same: has my testimony for Jesus Christ been sufficient to make any difference? The manner in which you, my son, demonstrate a response to that question may affect the depth and quality of our relationship in the years ahead.*

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*I am proud that, at your age, you have acquired such a remarkable skill in building and have managed to do well in school besides. Your potential to succeed in life (in a typical manner of speaking) and in areas of leadership is enormous. Whether you stay the course that we’ve tried to steer you in, spiritually and morally, is now up to you. It’s much like your usual method in construction, isn’t it? The foundation has now been laid by others (your mother and me)—not perfectly, perhaps, but with the greatest of care and following as closely to the master blueprint as we could. Now we can only stand back and watch as you frame and finish the house yourself, hoping you stay true to the Master’s plans, but not knowing fully what those plans might entail.*

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*Love, Dad*

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\*Of course, I didn’t realize at the time how sadly prophetic that statement would become, since we “lost” the Seth we had always known in the automobile accident only three years later and my father passed away nine months after that.

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Life has its unexpected twists and turns. The hopes and aspirations I had for my son (and certainly his own dreams as well) were ultimately dashed alongside a California freeway nearly 13 years ago, and the grief over the loss remains. We had given him the name “Seth” because we wanted our son to live up to the meaning of that name (“appointed”) and so view his life as particularly purposeful. From an earthly perspective, the apparent incongruity of his name’s meaning and his resultant state from the accident is sadly paradoxical. We had publicly dedicated him to the Lord during a church service soon after his birth, releasing our “ownership” of him to God—he was now ours only on loan and God’s to do with as He saw fit.

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That notion has surely been tested! Was God’s purpose for Seth thwarted by an “accident”? I don’t believe so, and whether I personally approve of the Lord’s handling of the situation is beside the point. In my own life (at least for the past 13 years), faith has not so much involved believing God for something I want but trusting Him through some deep disappointments, confusion, and images of a daunting future. Still, I am driven to conclude that Seth’s life is still accomplishing unseen things by the sovereign hand of God and that whatever he was divinely “appointed” for will become clear when we meet the Lord face to face some day and I won’t be disappointed then!

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Seth’s condition remains relatively unchanged. The Botox shots in his salivary glands every few months along with motion-sickness patches behind his ears continue to lessen his coughing somewhat. He still responds (but inconsistently) to certain statements, questions, and humor with a lifting of his eyebrows, blinking, or smiles. Otherwise, he is in good physical condition, aided by my hands-on therapy, daily workouts in his Quadriciser machine, and bi-weekly sessions on a tilt board.

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*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*  ~ Isaiah 55:8-9

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                                                            Craig

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