

“...THAT THEIR HEARTS MAY BE ENCOURAGED,
HAVING BEEN KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE...”

Colossians 2:2



From my Heart

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Often life takes an unexpected turn. Recently that happened to me and I now find myself on a road where I hadn't planned to be. Let me explain.

For months I've had a weakness in my left arm and hand, with occasional pain, that I attributed to "age and arthritis." On September 3, I experienced severe pain in my back and left arm. Trips to two Emergency rooms, heart tests, an MRI, Myelogram, and a CT scan revealed a large herniated disc pressing on the nerve leading to my left arm. The doctor said the nerve was "trying to die," and I was fast losing the use of my arm and hand. The herniated disc was located where my neck ends and my back starts—between C-7 and T-1. A highly recommended neurosurgeon knew my situation was serious and that I would lose the use of my arm if we didn't act quickly. When he put my x-rays up on the lighted screen he said, "Looks like you've carried a lot of luggage in your lifetime." When he saw the area causing my trouble, he said, "Most people who come in here with what you have would be screaming from the pain." I felt so grateful he had found the cause, tears filled my eyes.

On September 16 the neurosurgeon went through the front part of my neck, below the clavicle bone and across to my spine to remove the herniated disc. He noted the herniated portion was not only pressing against the nerve, but pressing on my spine. He said the surgery was difficult but not more difficult than he expected.

When I was out of the recovery room, he came into my room and asked me to say "E", then a louder "E". When he heard my "faint, raspy voice" response, he said, "I'm concerned about that."

He continued, "During surgery on the way through to your spine, I came to a place where a nerve was wrapped in scar tissue. The only way to get to your herniated disc was to go through the scar tissue."

He suspects he may have cut the "recurrent laryngeal nerve" which helps activate the vocal cords. The bottom line is for the past month while recovering from the surgery, I have had only a "faint, raspy voice" and will not know for some months if my voice can be regained. Over the next months while recovering from the surgery, I will be seeing a voice specialist and an Ear Nose and Throat doctor who specializes in voice recovery.

These unexpected twists reminded me of one of my favorite stories I read in Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter's book, *Does God Still Guide?* (p. 60, 61)

"In the early days of America, an itinerant minister on horseback came to a sparsely populated area of Texas where two roads forked off in different directions. There was no road sign, so he could only guess which

road to take. One road seemed a bit more used and seemed to stretch in the desired direction, so he took it. After traveling most of the day the road ended at the river, miles from anywhere. It seemed all the more dismaying because he had specifically prayed that God would guide him, and now it appeared guidance had failed.

Glancing around he saw an elderly man chopping wood. Approaching him he asked how to get to “such and such a town.” The man said, “Mister, there ain’t no road to there from here. You’ll have to go all the way back to that fork in the road.” When he learned that the wanderer was a Baptist minister, he said, “Before you go, please go knock at our house over there. My missus has prayed for years that a Baptist preacher would come out here.” The earnest-faced woman was elated and said, “You are not going on to that town; you couldn’t possibly get there tonight. Come in and make yourself at home.” Tears came into her eyes, as she added, “You’re the answer to my prayers of 20 years that God would send a preacher to this place. We’ll have a meeting for you tonight.”

She was as good as her word. She scoured the locality and gathered people. The meeting lasted for several days and apparently every unconverted person around there was won to the Savior.

And **now** the preacher **knew** why he had been allowed to take that **wrong** road. Guidance had not failed at all. It had been a higher kind of guidance than he himself had expected. He could only keep saying, “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23). The rejoicing young preacher found himself asking: **When is the wrong road the right road?** The answer: **When God sends you on it.**

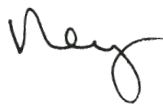
The young preacher had prayed for guidance, and God had truly given it; not exactly as he had expected, but according to Isaiah 55:9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

If, right now, you, like me, find yourself on a **road** where you hadn’t planned to be, remember God loves you and He is sovereign. As we trust Him with the circumstances of our lives, He promises to work everything together for our good. He will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5,6) and redeem our **wrong** turns.

As Hannah Smith said, “The Lord made it a point to tell us He was a **Good** Shepherd because He knew how often appearances would be against Him.”

What may seem like the **wrong** road is really the **right** road when God leads us there.

In His love for you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ney'.