

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

Colossians 2:2



From my Heart

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My neurosurgeon walked briskly into the examining room and looked at me quizzically. Since my surgery three months earlier to remove the herniated disc from my neck, my voice had been only a raspy whisper. During the surgery, while on the way through my neck to reach the disc causing me severe pain, he encountered a wall of scar tissue which had a nerve wrapped in it. He tried every way he could to go around the obstacle but in the final analysis he said he *had* to cut through. In doing so, he said he thought he had cut my recurrent laryngeal nerve which activates the voice. When he heard my raspy whisper in the recovery room, he said, “I’m concerned about that.” In all the post-surgical follow-up visits to his office, my voice was the same faint whisper.

From the beginning he said, “We need to give your voice time to see what happens.” Then, after three to six months if it didn’t improve, he would have me go to an Ear Nose and Throat specialist who could surgically put in some sort of implant that could help me speak again. Even though this particular ENT physician had helped many famous singers, the thought of not speaking again was very sobering to me.

Not being able to make yourself understood can be very discouraging. For example:

My mother couldn’t understand me on the telephone. And in fact, when she answered the phone she hung up on me more than once thinking no one was on the other end of the phone. I would call my brother and tell him to tell mother it was me. Then I would call her again. And I would usually have to call my brother again and have him deliver the message to mother because she couldn’t hear me.

There were many other times when people were in the same room with me, and they often couldn’t hear me or understand me.

Six weeks after surgery when I was feeling better I went to our neighborhood Starbucks drive thru and ordered my favorite drink. The person on the other end kept saying, “When you’re ready I’ll take your order.” Realizing I wasn’t being heard, I drove farther up and ordered at the window. She apologized for her microphone, and in a strained whisper I said, “No, it’s not your microphone, it’s me.”

I decided if this was going to be the way I would live the rest of my life, I would need to be innovative. So, I bought a small recorder at Best Buy and had my friend, Mary Graham, record this message for me: “May I please have a Grande De-Caf non-fat Mocha?” I felt like a kid the first time I pulled out the recorder and held it out toward the “Order Box”, punched the “play” button, and “ordered.” You can imagine my delight when I heard her say, “We’ll have your order ready at the window.” She “heard” me! I was having fun!

During my recuperation, when I went to church for the first time, it took the wind out of me to realize I could no longer “sing” the hymns. I stood and mouthed the words. My heart sank and tears streamed down my face at the loss. *Will I ever be able to sing again? Will I ever be able to speak again?* I realized I had always taken speaking and singing for granted. I knew if the Lord would give me back my voice, I would NEVER take those things for granted again. But I had to face the fact I might never be able to speak normally again. When my friend, Jackie Hudson, called from Oregon and heard my faint raspy whisper, we spoke of the fact I might lose my voice forever. Jackie’s words touched my heart when she said, “Ney, you will never lose your voice. Your whole life speaks. Your life is your voice.” I choked up to hear her encouraging words.

Through the weeks and months I thanked the Lord by faith for what I was going through, knowing it was one of the “all things” in Romans 8:28. No matter what happened, He would work it together for my good somehow, some way.

I was trusting Him with all my heart a day at a time . . . and I couldn’t lean on my own understanding . . . because I could never in a million years figure this one out. Only He knew what He was doing. Only He knew why.

In November I sent out my From My Heart letter telling you of my medical situation and requesting your prayers on my behalf. Thanksgiving week, for the first time, I heard a trace of a normal word or two begin to surface. After several weeks passed my voice finally sounded like “me” again! **I KNEW IT WAS YOUR PRAYERS!!!**

In mid-December, I had my next follow-up visit with my neurosurgeon. I couldn’t wait to see the expression on his face when he heard me speak again. After he came briskly into the room that day I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, he looked at me and said, “Well”?

And I said, “How do you do?” When he heard my voice he exclaimed, “How did *that* happen?”

“Well”, I replied, “I don’t know where you are on things like this, but there have been hundreds of people praying for me.” He started walking in the room, turned, looked at me and said, “I believe in prayer, but that’s not what I’m talking about. What you don’t understand is *I cut it*” (meaning the nerve that enables me to speak). He seemed stunned, shocked, baffled . . . but exceedingly grateful.

I left his office exhilarated and thanking God for this marvelous thing He had done.

In this whole process I often thought of Job. His suffering was much more critical and dramatic than my own. However, I was struck by the fact that Job *was not meant* to understand or to know the explanation of his sufferings. God *never* gave Job an explanation. He *never* answered Job’s question, “Why?” God simply spoke of His creation, His majesty, His knowledge, His sovereignty. The implication is that He was and is utterly trustworthy—regardless of the circumstances.

If Job had known “why” he suffered, there would have been no place for faith. Faith, by its very nature, must often be exercised in the dark. When we cannot figure out our trials we are forced to *see* the Lord in spite of and in the midst of the trial. “*But He knows the way I take, when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10).

With Job we can say “though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” . . . not only with the good that comes our way, but also in the midst of our trials.

I am more grateful than it is possible to say . . . to God and to *you*.

In His love,

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