

Rock Solid Leadership...and It's Scars

BLOG

The good news: he was a surgeon.

The bad news: I would need one before the day was through.

Years back, while in grad school, I worked for a contractor. On one particular day I was installing ceiling molding in a fixer-upper home tucked away in the suburbs of north Dallas. At the end of the day, while trimming a small piece of the molding, my utility knife slipped and filleted my thumb. Realizing that the cut was deep, I quickly taped it up with a handkerchief and duct tape, packed up my tools, and headed out to find the nearest urgent care center.

As I was leaving, I told the homeowner that I had to get some medical attention and that I would be back tomorrow to finish the job. Sensing that I was in some pain (and noticing my oddly wrapped thumb!), he asked me about my injury. He proceeded to tell me that he was a surgeon. So the good doctor took me to Parkland Hospital where he administered a few shots of novocaine, laced me up with a handful of stitches, and sent me on my way.

For the next few days, my thumb hurt a lot, but the pain finally subsided, giving way to a numbness that lasted for several months.

And all I have now is a scar.

Do you have any scars? Of course, you do. You can't do life without getting a few. Maybe quite a few.

But how about those scars that you can't point out on your knees or elbows? The invisible ones? The ones that really matter to the heart, to the soul? The ones that seem to heal so ever so slowly?

Odds are that you've got some of those too. And probably more than you thought you had signed up for.

Truth be told, scars are part of the deal. They are part of life.

And they are part of leadership.

When all is said and done, scars are reminders—visual storylines.

Scars are reminders that we've been in a battle. That life is risky. That life offers few guarantees. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.

Scars are reminders that we all belong to the fraternal order of the WIP—works in progress. We fail. We make mistakes. We are not yet what we want to be. But by God’s grace, we are closer than we used to be.

Scars are also reminders that healing happens. They serve as witnesses that our present pain can and will ultimately give way to God’s restorative work in our lives. And as we are cooperative with His activity in our lives, our hearts are shaped to be more like His.

I’m pretty sure that this is what Joseph had in mind in the closing chapters of Genesis when, recounting his life to his brothers years after they had heartlessly sold him as a slave, said “...you meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good.” Those are audacious words—words that confidently signal a healed heart. A scarred heart, but nonetheless, a healed one.

And perhaps most of all, in those quiet and reflective moments with family and friends, scars become our talking points of how faithful God has been to us during the painful chapters of our lives and leadership. They remind us that God does not exempt us from pain, but rather uses it to accomplish something worthy within us, so that He may accomplish something worthy through us.

Is it time to take another look at that scar and claim it as part of God’s work of art, or better said, His work of heart in your life and leadership?