

Rock Solid

The Scars of a Leader

BLOG

July 2010 – 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 Dallas. Towards 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, grabbed my tools, and headed out to find the nearest urgent care center.

The emphasis in the Bible is not looking backward to find out who caused suffering but the emphasis is on looking ahead to what God can make of a seeming tragedy.

–Phillip Yancey

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 inquired about my situation. 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. (And the best part was that I never received a bill!).

For the next few days, my thumb hurt a lot, but the pain finally subsided. For several months it was numb. And then after a few years, I regained most of the feeling.

All I have now is a scar.

Do you have any scars? Of course, you do. You can't do life without picking up some. Or 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 (and the ones that seem to heal much slower)?

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 part of leadership.

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

Scars are reminders that we've been in a battle. That life is no cakewalk. It is full of risk. 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. It is a memento that present pain will ultimately give way to God's restorative work in our lives. And as we are cooperative with the work of God in our lives, our hearts are shaped to be more like His.

I'm pretty sure that is what Old Testament Joseph had in mind when, recounting his life to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, said "...you meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good." Those are potent 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. Something deep.

And something sacred.

Lord, I do thank You for the scars. They remind me that while I try hard to avoid pain, You use it to shape and form me into someone that I would never be without them.