

To fear the Lord is to tremble at the awareness of what a
terrible insult it is to a holy God
if we do not have faith in his future grace
after all the signs and wonders he has performed to win our
obedient trust.

John Piper

Pastor Nicholi – Stopped by yesterday and he looks nearly himself again. While not back at 100%, rosy cheeks, quick side smile and a few added pounds have sent away the gaunt pasty white, strained face, dull eyed man I saw 2 weeks ago. Full recovery will take some more time but it was easy for us to count the many ways we saw God's hand in the situation and we are praising God for all that He has done.

Nicholi is the most Christ like person I know. His consistent daily walk, servant leadership example and God given wisdom directly shapes my own life and I am very very thankful to God for His kindness to me and many in returning Nicholi to us again. Nicholi asked that I send you a personal thank you from him. "Thank you for your prayers for myself and my family. God did a miracle in my life. There for awhile I was no longer here but not yet in heaven. Perhaps it was my time to go to heaven but the hand of God was moved by the multitude of prayers lifted on my behalf and I am alive today. God has answered our prayers in His perfect way and I am deeply grateful."

Vacation Bible Schools/Camps: Even though it fell on a Sunday, because it was September 1st, school started up again last week and summer officially came to a close. It will still be a few weeks before I get all the reports back from the pastors regarding camps held this summer, but we can begin thanking God even now! What I know so far – though you, He supplied 31 camps with craft supplies; provided funds to facilitate 26 camps through which over 900 children heard the Gospel and, facilitated 2 evangelistic/faith building outreaches that reached 50 teenagers.

I am grateful to God that we were given still one more summer of religious freedom in Ukraine; that God planted the desire to attend in the hearts of so many kids; that the parents allowed their children to participate; for the health & wisdom of all the pastors, camp leaders and helpers; for many lay folks who sacrificially gave in produce & time; that local officials did not create problems; for the wonderful weather and for how God provided the needed funds for these outreaches through the local churches as well as through you. Thank you Lord! And, thank *you!*

One of the teen outreaches was done by the Sudak Church. 11 adults and 34 youth went on this week long hike into the mountains of their region. I heard it was 'The best yet!' but then they say that every year and every year seem to mean it from the bottom of their hearts :) When Pastor Dima of Sudak returned his report, he included this video clip he had made of their hike. I thought you

would enjoy it.

While online, double click on the blue line below. Allow the clip to load and then click on box to the right that says 'watch online.' For those of you still learning Russian let me give you a few translation tips: ____ = God _____ = Jesus Christ _____ = Path to God (the hike theme)

http://www.ex.ua/view_storage/441860196966

What does lie within my power is paying attention to the
faithfulness of Jesus.

That's what I am asked to do:

pay attention to Jesus throughout my journey, remembering
his kindness.

Brennan Manning

Eucatastrophe!! Thanks to Pastor Nick Nott of the Twin Oaks Christian Church, I finally found the right word to describe my life thus far. It turns out that 'J.R.R Tolkien (author of the Lord of the Rings) made up a word to describe what he calls 'help un-looked for". The sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears. A catastrophe, of course, is a terrible event, a very bad ending, an unforeseeable mess, everything going wrong. Tolkin adds the prefix eu (meaning 'good' in Greek) to catastrophe to create the word eucatastrophe, a catastrophic event which suddenly turns out good.'" He has in mind the moment when all seems lost and then help arrives to save the day. Yep, that is it, the perfect word that describes my life from the very first hour till today; one loooooong series of happy endings!!

It is in those dark hours before the 'eu' shows up, however that the situation looks downright scary.

3 weeks ago: I had gotten from the airport to the main train station and found my train that I needed to take to the CMF Church Planting conference. The window from my reserved seat offered a great view of the country side passing by and I settled in and enjoyed it. As the hours ticked away I flipped to my next ticket... it was the second part of the trip that just wasn't making sense. Weird as it was - it seemed like had I had to move up to the next car and take a new seat at the next city. I got out of my car and moved up to the next car which I assumed would be car 5. It was the not. Confused and scared I froze up and the doors snapped shut.

Two nights of little sleep, waking up at 3 am and already 12 hours of traveling had taken their toll. We were well on our way by the time my slow motion thoughts grasped what a mess I was in. I had changed cars instead of changing trains. The next stop for this 'rocket ship' was an hour away. My cell phone would not work, my ipad won't connect to the local server and foolishly I did not have the address or even the phone of the conference center. I had no way to tell anyone where I was or what had happened. I had no idea what to do next and I

started caving in.

My mind swirled back to a fall evening in '98...wrong bus; alone & lost in Feodosia. No language, no phone, no address and not knowing how to find my way home. How the Creator of the stars, planets, mountains and me bent low that night and with gentle hands guided me home. Oh Lord- you were faithful then. I know You will be faithful again.

“AGAIN!” I repeated this word over and over in my heart for the next 6 hours. A one word prayer of sorts – the only thing my exhausted brain could muster – a way to focus. God was faithful then. He will be faithful again.

I can't totally explain what was going on inside – extreme fatigue, fright and so totally clueless as to how to undo this mess. We had left the station a whole long time ago when finally adrenaline shook me and I realized I was clinging to the hand rail of the Bistro car.

God bless the Bistro lady. I can only imagine what a sight I was but she went out of her way to explain what to do at the next station. Even after all that, she popped out into the hallway to repeat the steps until I understood. The blessed Bistro lady was the first in a series of angels that God sent my way that night. The next two angels wore orange vests. They worked at the station and helped me buy my tickets and find my trains. Five and half hours later I arrived in the town where the conference was held. Of course I had hoped that someone would be there but totally understood when the station was empty of familiar faces. It was 10:15 at night and I knew I was going to have to do something that truly frightens me – get into a unknown taxi by myself. My mind whipped back 4 years, when I was about to do something that I consider unsafe in Ukraine....hail an unknown taxi and travel alone. AGAIN! 2009 a May morning in Israel – “As my suitcase and I bumped along the cobblestones to Jaffa Gate, I heard an inner voice say – ‘He will come to you.’ Three seconds later a kind looking taxi driver drove up and...My heart was singing! The part of the trip that I had been most concerned about couldn't have gone more smoothly – thank you Lord!” Oh Lord – you were with me then. I know You are with me again.

One family grabbed a taxi, and then the next family drove away. As I approached the third one, a lady pushed in front of me and took it. Now I was there alone but before long a forth taxi drove by and I hailed it. Not having an address or phone to show, I simply stated where I needed to get to. “I've never heard of it.” He urged me to get in but I waited outside while he radioed into the office and asked. Turns out I wasn't even saying the name of the place correctly but his boss knew what I meant and off I went into the night with one of the kindest taxi drivers I've ever met.

They were tears of gratefulness that spilled over when I finally reached my room. Opening the door to the tiny balcony, a bright moon outlined the mountains and gave light to the lovely valley we were nestled in. The Almighty Creator of the stars, planets, mountains and me had bent low that night and with gentle hands had guided me home...AGAIN.

The conference ended up being very interesting and as always, I had fun being

with the rest of the Ukraine team. I did end up getting lost again but we won't go into that. It was a minor 'lost' compared to the first and you can betcha that I stuck close to the group the remainder of the time. My trip home was smooth and five days later I was packed up and leaving once more.

1 week ago: Back in late July I received a text message on my phone inviting me to be a part of the leadership planning team for the 4th Christian camp for those with disabilities. I was thrilled! Thrilled that it was going to be (2 years have gone by since the last one); thrilled for who I would get to work with and thrilled to be a part of putting it on (rather than just participating). Is it OK to have ministry favorites? As a teammate noted, I truly do have a passion for reaching out with the message and love of Christ to those with mental and physical challenges.

I left on August 31 for Yalta. My role had been gathering the medical personal who would help and now the 8 of us would work for the next 6 days serving those with disabilities (ages 4 to 25) and their caregivers. By Monday at 10 am, balloons were up, signs in place, registration ready to go and our campers started arriving. By noon, we understood that only half who had said 'yes we are coming' actually were. Bummer. But, camp was on and we were rolling with 18 kids dealing with challenges like deafness, cerebral palsy, Down's Syndrome, autism and spina bifida; 16 parents and 5 'little ones' (healthy pre-school siblings).

Through the week I heard clips of their stories and they busted my heart....

Armen – understands perfectly what is going on around him but he cannot express himself in words. When he is afraid he pulls his mother's hair out. When he is mad or scared he pinches and bits. His father beats him. So as to give his mother some rest, Vassia, an older, strong, quiet, gentle man was with Armen all week. In an attempt to hug Armen he had been hurt but he didn't give up. By Thursday Armen was smiling; he knew Vassia was safe and wanted to be with him.

Dina – A critical point came in the pregnancy where the doctor asked the dad – "Do I save the mother or the baby?" Dad said save the mother and a rush C-section was preformed. During the procedure the doctor cut through Dina's 6 month old spine. Dina is a beautiful and fun 14 year young lady who shuffles with twisted legs.

Sasha – "Every time I asked about him they told me not to worry. I couldn't figure out why they wouldn't bring him to me. Finally 3 days after giving birth to Sasha I went to find him. I finally found him alone on a table in a room. He had a huge bruise on his head (they had pulled him out by suction), a broken vertebra in his neck and another huge bruise on his stomach. He had had no care and no food, nothing. They were waiting for him to die but he was still alive. I called my mother and husband and said, 'Come get us, no matter what I am escaping this hospital with Sasha.'"

Too often I focus on what I can't do. I wasn't Pastor Igor, Sasha's papa, leading and counseling with a gentle heart and deep experience. I wasn't Alla, the director, guiding the rudder of this priceless ship. I wasn't the local pastor,

praying with the moms. I wasn't leading songs, crafts or small groups. My knowledge or language limits keep me from much. But oh how much better it is when I focus on what is on hand that I can.

My nursing skills were not much needed at this camp but it seemed I had something else to offer that few had time to do. Play...just play. Little 4 year old David wanted to swing. I pushed him on that swing for 2 solid hours. I kept 11 year old Alexi in giggles as I made up a story about his swing being a rocket and we had to stop often to fill up the tank with Coke Cola. Rya, Natasha, Vova and Dina spent hours with the homemade bubble mix and the huge wand I brought. Sava, and the gang that gathered around us, turned the homemade play dough into everything from fine pastry to battle ships. I remember clearly times when grownups played with me and how special that was. This week that was a gift I could give to the least of these.

Tuesday afternoon at 4 pm it hit. Within 8 hours 22 kids and 5 adults dropped - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and a fever. I was among the first that fell. As the hours slowly ticked by that night, the thought skittered through my mind – on a mattress that should have been replaced years ago, with the waste basket close by should things come up faster than I expect and fever soaked sheets...the thought passed by...' All those people who think my life is one amazing adventure after another....all those people should see me now.' It wasn't pretty or fun but how much harder was it for the kids!

Within the next 3 days a total of 40 at camp had gotten this gut bug. But oh how God provided. On our medical team was a family doctor who works at the Zaparoshja Church Clinic who is a gastrointestinal specialist. Dr. Ludmilla didn't sleep for 2 days as she did rounds through the night. But because of her excellent care folks were back on their feet in 24 hours.

Alla, the camp director called a meeting for all the parents the next morning. When she had gone to the pharmacy, she heard the bug was going around Yalta. When I called my Dr Ludmilla in Feodosia, I heard it was going through there. When Dr. Ludmilla called for prayer support to Zaparoshja, she found out it was going through there. Thus, it was a virulent gut virus that was sweeping the country. Yet, Alla felt she needed to hear the thoughts of the parents and to ask out loud – did anyone want to go home? No one did.

What had all the looks of a catastrophic event, God used for good. Even though 90% of the campers did not yet have a personal relationship with God, rather than the awfulness of it all tearing the camp apart it glued us together. Tears flowed Friday when it came to say good bye. We had become very close.

Despite the weather not being as good as we had hoped for and despite the camp wide sickness a special spirit had infiltrated camp, settled and stayed. Somewhere along the way a there had been a 'sudden happy turn in the story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears.' God had created eucatastrophe, another happy ending, and we had all felt it.

June