



## **The Beauty of Being Miserable**

### **Thursday, March 8, 2007**

This is a dip in the rock formation about 100 yards from my site I use to hide from the wind as I surveyed the valley. It's here that I spend most of Days 3-5; the further I go into the experience, the less energy and desire I have to venture out and explore. This rock represents the WALL, the invisible barrier I slam into that's breaking me physically, mentally and spiritually.

In our orientation, our incredible guide Darryl said we'd either have rich encounters with God or fierce reminders of all we desire that isn't God, our Unholy Substitutes as it were. Day 3- I'm miserable. But it's a good thing. As a result, I start to realize I'm focused on all the wrong things. I beg God to take my natural cravings and transform them into supernatural hungers. The conversation goes something like this:

God, I'm cold.

Your love warms me.

I'm hungry.

Your word sustains me.

I'm lonely.

Your peace comforts me.

I'm afraid.

Your faithfulness encourages me.

I'm thirsty.

Your hope quenches me.

I'm hungry...

make me hungry for you.

I'm lonely...

help me to engage you.

I'm bored...

let me find life in your beauty.

I'm weak...

may your grace be sufficient for me.

Henri Nouwen says "In solitude I get rid of my scaffolding: no friends to talk with, no telephone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract, just me—naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken—nothing. It is this nothingness that I have to face in my solitude, a nothingness so dreadful that everything in me wants to run to my friends, my work, and my distractions so that I can forget my nothingness and make myself believe that I am worth something." (27)

It's true. In deep solitude all of my scaffolding, all of my coping mechanisms, all of my escapes are out of my reach. My Day 4 journal entr:

"All my default compulsions are gone. *Sportscenter*. Checking email. Reading the news. Planning for ministry. Ice cream. Lay's Original Potato Chips. All of it, gone. And it's a good thing. It's forcing me into You."

"Jesus says: 'Follow me.' If I can't follow him into the desert, how can I expect to follow him anywhere?"

The intentional stripping of our creature comforts, creating a context where we are miserable without our iPods, vehicles, laptops, kitchens, debit cards and friends, is a gift to our souls. It reminds me of What matters, Who matters, and The Person I long to become. If you can barrel through the WALL, you start to understand that your soul craves much more than what our culture says we need to be happy. Finally, and maybe for the first time, we move past our longing to be entertained into our deep seated hunger to engage the Living God.

Let me reiterate: the goal is not necessary to get to the Sonoran desert for a week in January (although I highly recommend it for anyone who can make it happen.) The true goal is how to create a desert that's within reach. Again, allow me to quote Nouwen:

We have, indeed, to fashion our own desert where we can withdraw every day, shake off our compulsions, and dwell in the gentle healing presence of our Lord. Without such a desert we will lose our own soul while preaching the gospel to others. But with such a spiritual abode, we will become increasingly conformed to him in whose Name we minister. (31)

So here's to those who are ready to experience the beauty of being miserable. Find that corner in your basement, the study room in your dorm, a carrel in your local library, a local park or secluded beach where you can truly be without. in order that you might be with the

...and I decided each time you can only be honest, in order that you might be with the only One who truly matters.

1 Comment 

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**JIMMY h**

holy cow - does this ever sound tough!

i wonder if that's any indication of how badly i need to do it?...

**Friday, March 9, 2007 - 11:47 AM**

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