

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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January 2018

Dear Friends,

I have a beautiful story to share with you. One that I hope will encourage your hearts and your faith, which would be lovely as we all begin a new year.

In order to tell this story well, I need to take you back to the founding of Ransomed Heart. Now, I'm not going to burden you with the ministry equivalent of watching home movies of our children. But I do want to share the wild goodness of God.

Back in 2001, I was working a couple of jobs. I had a full-time "day job," and during evenings I was building my private practice as a therapist. My books had not yet become well-known; no one really knew who the Eldredges were and what you now know as Ransomed Heart did not exist. I remember one evening Jesus telling me very clearly to quit *both* jobs, and start out on this venture with him. We had no donors; we had no real plan. We did have several long weekends of prayer and fasting with key advisors, and we knew beyond a shadow of a doubt God was speaking. So like Abraham and Sarai, we set out for an unknown future. I quit my jobs. I wrote a book called *Wild at Heart*. We started doing retreats for men. But it was all very small and full of the unknown.

In fact, for the next two years, Stasi and I had no idea where our weekly paycheck would come from. We had no health insurance. And mind you – we had three young boys at the time!

Now, I am NOT suggesting this is what you ought to go do. You must be very, *very* sure God is speaking before you launch out on something so wild as that! Too many signs and confirmations came to us to recount here, but I do recall that at our very first retreat we had booked a camp for 350 men on our own checkbook, hoping we would have men show up. We had no mailing list; Facebook didn't even exist back then. We simply put the word out, and told folks if they wanted to come to mail us a check for their registration (there was no online registration in those days; we didn't even have a website).

Exactly 350 checks came in.

Those early days were filled with stories like that; we were living completely by faith. There were weeks when we did not know where the groceries would come from. Then, a bag of food or a tray of lasagna would just show up on our doorstep. God came through.

And he has kept coming through. In larger and larger ways.

Once you have a ministry with some global impact and reputation, the temptation is to shift from a faith-based approach to grab for security in more worldly ways. Organizations pad their bank accounts; they hire marketing gurus to conduct aggressive fundraising campaigns. But when they do, they lose something of the trueness of walking with God.

We never wanted to become that.

So each year, our leadership team sets a budget based on what we believe God is asking us to do. We look for about 40% of our income to come in through our events and resources, leaving the other 60% to come in through the gifts and support of our friends and allies.

These days, many people wait until the last weeks of December to make their decisions about their charitable giving. And so each year we find ourselves waiting in hope and faith for the groceries to “show up on the step,” waiting for the mail and our online giving to see what will happen. Last month, we needed \$937,000 to come in through donations.

In the final week of December, we needed \$509,000 of that amount to come in.

And it did. With a few dollars to spare. (I have a huge smile on my face as I write this. It is such a wild and HOLY story!)

This has been happening for 17 years now. Even though our budget grows each year, as we reach out to more and more people in more and more countries, we still see God provide exactly what we need—through your generosity and your walk with him.

What is so beautiful about this story is that we don't raise 150% of our budget; we don't even raise 120%. Each year, God provides exactly what we need with a touch of margin to allow us to carry on. And we wouldn't have it any other way. You notice we don't do aggressive fundraising. We don't have capital campaigns, or trusts, or solicit grants. I wrote you in November asking if you would help us, and then we waited to see what you and God would do.

Everything we needed came in. It is a beautiful, wild story.

I just couldn't let January go by without sharing it with you. I don't want to be like the people Jesus healed who never came back to say “thank you.” From the bottom of our hearts, **thank you!!!** Your support matters—right down to the nickel!

Now we start again. We will live by faith this year, and walk with God. We will follow him into the missions he has for us; we will do our best to avoid the seductive lures of the world. And we will trust him to guide, and provide, as he has been doing for the last 17 years.

I love sharing this with you. I hope it encourages your own faith journey.

Here's to a powerful and meaningful 2018!

Love,

  
John