

Promises made, promises kept

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I'm a giver. I enjoy doing things for people and giving things to people. Being a giver is great, but it can develop into something unhealthy if a person gets their whole identity from their giving and doing for others. While in seminary, I was banned from doing things for people in my support group for six weeks. I could only receive. Word spread throughout the whole seminary, and before I knew it, everyone joined in. I couldn't even open a door for anyone, and had to let everyone do things for me. It was a hard six weeks, but it helped me get my love of giving in perspective. I realized that healthy giving involves a balance of sharing. Like The Servant Song shares: "Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too."

I share this with you because earlier this month I had back surgery. For a week, I was banned from driving or doing anything that required more effort than walking. I was dependant on others for everything. I can drive now, but I still have approximately six more weeks of recovery and limited activities. The minister is now being ministered to, and I pray that I might have the grace to let others be my servant, too!

Before undergoing the surgery, I was faced with the possibility that I might not survive the operation or that I might come out of it paralyzed. I'm not afraid of death and I firmly believe that God will help me through any handicap I might have, but I also realized that I had some apprehensions. Facing those prospects, I made some fox-hole type promises. Think of yourself in a fox-hole with things exploding all around you. You find yourself making a promise, "Lord, if You help me through this I promise to...". That's a foxhole promise.

Facing the surgery, I made four fox-hole promises to God if He helped me survive the operation. First, I would make sure I connected intimately with God on a daily basis. Second, every day I would not only tell my wife I loved her, I would show her. Third, I would look for opportunities to share with friends and strangers appreciation and the love of our Lord. And fourth, I would start working on cleaning out my desk and other areas of my life which need straightening up.

By God's grace I survived the operation. I have come to realize, however, that like so many New Year's resolutions, I haven't been as faithful as I might have been in keeping my promises. Oh, I have some good excuses, but mostly I have been so involved with my own situation that my promises were "out of sight-out of mind". Life tends to do that to us. With all that's going on around us, it's hard to start a new routine or return to a routine we have strayed away from – even if we know it would be for our best.

They say that it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks, but I'm going to work at it. To help this old dog do what he's promised, I'm going to place my fox-hole promises where I can see them at the start of each day and reflect on them at each day's closing. Our God is faithful and is the great Promise Keeper. By God's grace and for His glory, I will be also.