

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

July 2021



This month's letter comes a bit later in the month than what I hoped but this past week has presented a few obstacles that have kept me from getting it written and sent over to the printer. The most involved of those obstacles were: **1)** a fierce rain and wind storm that busted up our front yard trees and left us without electricity for 4 days; **2)** a terrible sewer backup that required a lot of cleanup, professional repairs, and then the replacement of all of the ground floor carpet; and **3)** a brief stay in

the emergency room of a Colorado hospital and 4 subsequent doctor visits.

Quite a week, huh? Yet the grace of God has been (as can always be expected) abundant and empowering and comforting. And it has given us renewed appreciation of the text I'm preaching on at Aksarben Village Senior Living this week:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, NKJV)

Okay, I know you're now wondering about the reason for that hospital visit -- even though the photos you see on this page might provide you a clue. Here's the deal. As has been my habit these last few years, I try to mark my birthday by climbing a Colorado 14er, one of my home state's mountains that is above 14,000 feet in elevation.



I started this in 2016 for my 65th birthday and, even though injuries kept me from making ascents in 2018 and 2019, I had been blessed to make three summits in these my advanced years. Now, I'm thrilled to say – I have four! However, this time around, it came at a greater price than the usual soreness and exhaustion. For shortly after reaching the peak of Mt. Bierstadt last Tuesday, I took a face-first fall in the rugged boulder field that surrounds the summit. The damage? A lot of nasty abrasions, a puncture wound in my leg, a cracked rib, some deep bruises, cuts around my right eye that required gluing and 7 stitches, and an orbital fracture around that eye. Ouch.

There were some tense moments following that fall as Mark Fichter and I tried to stop the flow of blood and ascertain the extent of the hurts. But from out of my first aid kit, we finally got some bandages to stick on the eyebrow and (with less success) on the leg and were soon able to join our colleagues (Ron Scheffler, Ryan Garvey, and Aldo de la Cruz) for the long hike back down the mountain. We did fine for a couple of hours but, alas, there was a second fall waiting for me. Whether it was a combination of poor vision (my scratched and bent glasses were worthless), fatigue, maybe a weakness due to blood loss, or merely bearing weight with my hiking pole on an unstable rock, I fell again. This time it was over a steep incline which made for an even more spectacular-looking tumble but scoring considerably less damage than the first one. Whew! And yes, with the kind attention of my friends, I was able to walk that last hour back to the car.

I was really proud of how well Claire responded when I met her outside the hospital in Frisco. I had talked to her by phone from the mountain and assured her I was okay but it was still a challenge for her composure when I eased out of the car. My face and legs were covered in dried blood (plus a few places where it was still freshly bleeding) and my eye was swollen closed and already coloring. Still, we both knew that God was very much in this trial with us and we were relying on His Spirit to keep us calm and willing to learn whatever lessons He had for us. Furthermore, we were deeply grateful that we could already count many evidences of His gracious kindness to us in this test. Those gifts included the fall being “cushioned” from what it could have been, the important help from my friends, the completeness of the first aid kit, the superb and delightful care I received from the ER staff at St. Anthony's Hospital, etc.

Oh yes; not to be discounted was the fact that my fall occurred after we had already reached the summit!

And now, one week from the day of the accident, I'm very pleased to say that the orbital fracture, the rib, and the leg wounds are all healing nicely; the stitches and glue have been removed (leaving only slight scars); the “shiner” is fading; my tetanus shot has been “boosted”; and there is no damage to the eye itself. Indeed, now that we have electric power back, our plumbing disaster solved, and the replacement carpet ordered, we are kinda' back to normal around here. And that means our ongoing spiritual service to God alongside our Vital Signs Ministries friends and partners...including all of you who help us, pray for us, and encourage us in various ways. So until next month's letter, please remember to connect with us at the VSM website, blogs, and Facebook pages.

I hope the photos I've included bring you a smile and a nod to the amazing beauty and splendor of God's creation.

