

Archived September

September 15, 2008

Before and After. These photos indicate conditions seen before and after Hurricane Ike. The yellow arrow is your reference point, designating the same building structure in each shot. My wife and I have seen many disaster events, but none like these. They simply leave you speechless. What you are looking at is Bolivar Peninsula and Crystal Beach, about 2 hours southeast of Houston. There are only two points of entry: Hwy 87 and a ferry. I use to visit these places as kid for vacationing and hanging with friends. One scary thing to note which you may not hear in the national news: police enforcement and gov. officials were asking local residents to write on their arms their social security numbers, to later be identified should they perish.

Our prayers are with these communities as they cannot return to their homes for at least 1 month. About half of these people did not evacuate. Why? These beloved people of Texas worked too hard for what they own, which is all that they have. Yes, the spiritual/ Biblical side says store your treasures in Heaven, but the human side is much more difficult to deny. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I know for us, we would have fled, but for others...well, we're simply not in their shoes. Please pray for these people and communities for ice, food, gas and rebuilding supplies. Donate to the Red Cross. Call 1-800-REDCROSSThe pictures below speak for themselves.

September 14, 2008

The Aftermath. Hurricane Ike brought us a party and bailed before clean-up. It's always the love-em-and-leave-em- type. You know? We have incurred roof damage and will need to hang here for the week to deal with the insurance stuff - 3-6 weeks depending on repair time.

We are unsure of work tomorrow and this week. All of Houston is completely shut down. There is still major flooding and power outages. Severe thunderstorms are pounding homes, as it is not relieving our roof damage. Throughout the past 2 nights (with power and without), I've had to create a bucket system in the attic. About 6 painter's buckets secured over rafters are doing the job. They are emptied about every 3-4 hours. In the process, I have been running on little sleep and have developed some sort of an allergy infection. Not fun!

A friend of mine in Maryland gave me some encouraging words and had asked what are the positives out of this process. 1. We are alive and well. 2.How to find rest, peace and trust in the storm.

During the rough nights of locomotive like engines and surges of ocean sounds beating against our windows and walls you can also hear the wailing and moaning of the wind.

I've been in Houston during Hurricane Alicia and definitely, Ike was worse. Heather and I made our inner bathroom as the safe house incase of tornados. Through the long night, I watched and listened to the storm. I was ready to grab Heather and our dogs to head for the safe house at a moment's notice.

In my heart I knew that God was speaking. We were already in his safe house. Not a house made of brick, mortar and wood, but one made of faith and trust. It was evident that I had no control over our situation, but we could rest in the Almighty. I heard His words upon my heart that said, "come unto Me and I will give you rest." I did rest and I found his comfort. Not found in my new patented roof-bucket system nor our safe house, but in Christ alone. At this point, my only care was for Heather, our dogs and myself to be provided and protected by God. Our whole home could have been swept away. Yes, this would be devastating too, but this is small in scale compared to the reality of how God's compassion and power.

The song "Give Me Jesus," was my lullaby through the night. As the words say: "you can have all this world, but give me Jesus." The only thing that matters is your life with God and the life he gave you with your family. Nothing else matters. I've always have known this, but these affirmations become more prominent when you are faced with struggle. My dad has always encouraged me to remember that struggle is where you test to find who God really made you to be. I really did not want to be tested in this way, but is there really ever a better time than the present? So what did I walk (or swim) away with? This fact: there is nothing like the present power and peace of God.

On a funny note. Heath and I are in agreement that this will (God willing) be our last hurricane. We want to move to TN! On a hill with a basement. And a white picket fence. Know a trusted agent?

Kidding aside, pray for the rain to stop. Pray that relief efforts and supplies can be delivered to the great people of Houston and other affected areas and families.

Many of you have emailed/called to wish us well and post your prayers - thank you! Some of you have inquired about learning how to help.

The biggest needs in Houston are water and ice. The American Red Cross honors donor intent. If you wish to designate your donation to a specific disaster please do so at the time of your donation. Call 1-800-REDCROSS or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish). Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund may be sent to your local American Red Cross chapter or to the American Red Cross, P. O. Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013. Internet users can make a secure online contribution by visiting www.redcross.org.

We'll keep you guys posted as more comes our way. Thank you again for all your support!

September 13, 2008

All about Hurricane Ike. Thank you for your prayers everyone. We had 90-110 mph winds. It's finally over. 96% of Houston/Galveston is without power. 2 million people are still out of their homes. We still have until 7-10pm to be completely clear of rain and wind. This storm is more than 250mi wide of outer rain bands with winds over 100 mph. It literally sounds like the thunder of oceans and the roar of relentless freight trains. No wonder why the disciples were freaking out at sea in Mark 4.

Crazy. We are ok, the Cane is heading towards Arkansas (watch out neighbors!). All is good. A few shingles, a fence line and solar screen are down. Extremely minimal in comparison of what it could have been. Winds got up to 100-110 mph all last night. Nothing in comparison to what the people and cities of Galveston and Surfside endured. Fires have stormed buildings. Water has covered all of the islands and inland areas around Houston. Here are a few photos around Galveston's damage. Keep this community and others in your prayers!

People have been emailing to know how to help. If you would like to help, please go through the Red Cross (<http://hurricaneike.wordpress.com/help-now/>) for help as they are the major facilitator. Thank you all for your support and prayers for the good people of Texas and Ike infested surrounding areas.
September 12, 2008

Here is a video of Hurricane Ike in our area (Cypress/Houston, TX). The storm is about 250 mi. wide, this video is of the outer rings that have reached NW Houston all the way from 85mi. south of Galveston. The worst will hit between 12-2am.

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September 11, 2008

Honesty is hard to find in the Church. Honesty is hard to find in people. Honesty is even harder to find within ourselves. Over the past 3 days I have encountered numerous discussions on this topic among worship leaders. It seems that there is a fear within and outside the Church of being honest. We are not only afraid to admit truth, but even more so, how to confront what is false and speak the truth. Being free is not without its price. Where truth is found lies in the arms of freedom, in which this cost Christ everything. If we can muster up any honesty it is found in the freedom of Christ as he gives us strength to be true. So what keeps us from being honest? Hurt. Pain from rejection, brokenness, loss, grief and the like covered over years and decades can mar and impair our deep emotions. Damage prevents us from trusting others, ourselves and

God. There is more pain in the Church than what surfaces on Sunday morning or in a Bible study. How do we cope? How are we to be honest with ourselves before we can help others? It begins with Christ healing us from the inside out.

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Dennis Jernigan addresses this concern in this clip. May his words stir your heart to crave Christ's healing and freedom right where you sit.

September 9, 2008

To continue in this topic of "Slaves of Christ," Mike Card explained in great detail regarding our identity on our name collars. The more I listened the more I saw how the words "catch me for I am fleeing," describe my life. We as a people are constantly running from God. Hebrews 4:12 says that the word of God is a double edged sword that pierces the heart; it judges our thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Because we are prone to sin, God knows when we are running when no one else does. The question is do we allow ourselves to be captured by God? I use to think when becoming a Christian, that my life was meant to be chained and bounded by strict laws handed down from the "Big Man." Through my journey as a follower of Jesus and worshiper of God, I realize that the chains of Christ are the loving harnesses of God. When I was once enslaved to sin, God released me and purchased me from my chains through the Messiah. In that ransom, I become purchased and now owned by God. In this new identity I become a slave to God in which I am free in Christ. In this love I am also in debt to serve, honor and love Him eternally. This understanding broadens the concept of what it means to be a Christ's slave. True freedom is made possible through the sacrifice of others. In this case, Christ was the perfect sacrifice rendering perfect freedom of grace and mercy. So may the words of my collar read, "I am Branon, Almighty God is my Master and I belong to Christ, if you see me running, catch me for I am fleeing."

September 6, 2008

(Blog Continued) The Slave Collar: Ok, so intrigued as I was from meeting Michael Card in hearing about his story/study about the slavery era, last night we picked up a copy of Fredrick Douglass' autobiography. I will tell you, his book "My Bondage, My Freedom," is pretty riveting and is not for the faint of heart. What you are looking at to the left is an actual image of a slave collar used from the Civil War era. If a slave were to escape, the capture could identify who the slave belongs to by the inscription which read something like: "I belong to master _____, capture me for I am fleeing." The Bible tells us that we were once dead to sin, but alive in Christ. Before we were free in Christ, we were

identified by an Evil owner. Paul reminds us in Romans 6:14 that sin shall no longer be our master. The question we face is not what we are enslaved to, but rather, who do we serve as our Master? If each of us were to be identified by a collar, what would it read, what would yours say? To be continued on Monday.

Michael Card in a solo concert from the Labor Day Weekend

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September 5, 2008

Over the Labor Day weekend my wife and I took a trip to Kerrville TX and hung out with my favorite mentor Mark D. Roberts, in addition we also spent some time with Michael Card. As mentioned on the Content page, I will add more videos as well as special interviews with worship leader/theologian guests from the recent summer travels. Anyway. This was my second time to visit Laity Lodge. On my last trip, there were so many things that God showed me. However, like you, when your spirit is aroused with great inspirations sometimes it's hard to keep up. On this trip, I asked God to help me remember the one thing I was to walk away with. In a session with Michael Card, he introduced the topic and study on slavery. Huh? In fact, when I first met him we exchanged book titles to share what we were reading. He mentioned the autobiography of Fredrick Douglass. If you may remember from history, Fredrick Douglass was a slave born in Maryland on 1818. Michael went on to describe the hardships that countless African Americans as well as other nationalities all over the world who have encountered Jesus Christ in their life as a slave. When we come to Christ, He removes are chains as we now become his and have a New Owner. This is an interesting truth as we read in Romans 6:22 which says: But now that you have been freed from sin and have become God's slaves, the benefit you reap is sanctification, and the result is eternal life. More on this tomorrow.

September 3, 2008

The summer of 08' is officially over. Here we wait again for another summer filled with road trips, vacations, swimming pools and the like. But there is relief...cooler weather! I am excited to share with you about the journeys from the recent summer travels. It will be great to hear from you as well in where you have visited. The sharing of God's teachings, impressions and reflections through our journeys are great to stir one another up in the Lord. Check back soon as we will add more blogs, news, articles and content this week. - Blessings on your day - bd.

August 25, 2008

Our pastor yesterday discussed the important role of asking God questions. Why is this important? Because asking questions compels us to dig deeper in our understanding of God. Whether if we are distraught, in need, in confusion or in need of direction. This morning I applied this truth to prayer - mainly, asking God to teach me about prayer. Communication with God is where we interact with Him between the Word and life. I was struck by the words from the disciple in Luke 11:1 "Lord, teach us to pray..." What a powerful question/statement to Jesus. If you think about it, the disciple, seeing Jesus praying to God. Knowing that the Messiah not only has direct access to the Father, but literally can ask Almighty God anything he desires. The disciple, standing there in anticipation, could have asked Jesus for anything. He had the opportunity to bring some specific need to Jesus or to really corner Him into a self-ambitious dialogue or self pity. Instead, he presented to Jesus a statement that inferred a basic question: Lord, teach us to pray. My guess is that the disciple would find the answers of his deepest needs. Like Mary, choosing the one thing that is most important, coming to Jesus alone. When was the last time you came to Jesus alone? Without need, without worry, without issues. Our concerns are necessary and right to bring, but in the beginning there is God. When we come to Him alone, we find all we need in the purest form of who He is: Emmanuel, God with us.

August 21, 2008

We have all endured some-kind of misfortunes and undesirable scars whether experienced in ministry or in the Christian life. Our stance to any issue involving the Christian/Worship and secular music profession is to esteem and edify others from an objective yet positionless standpoint that honors Christ.

We are servants - not God's judges as we minister in sacred and/or secular circles. There is only One Holy Spirit who is worthy. Each of us bear our own responsibility (Gal. 6:1-5).

August 11, 2008

Well we are nearly back from the summer. Like you, the preparation for the fall is in its final stages and we are ready to kick off the fall, plus ready for the cooler weather to return! I remember like it was yesterday, in my velcro tennis shoes and ck jeans listening to the words of Ferris Buller reminding us: life goes by pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you might just miss it. How true this statement is as this was only 22 years ago! My wife and I were on vacation this past week and were watching all the children play. So carefree, so unaware, so in wonder. When did we lose this? I find myself even today, missing my own sandbox and wondering how I can regain the time to play again. we have moments everyday along with their choices. It's more about the state of mind rather than the physical surroundings.

July 25, 2008

This year's National Worship Leader Conference 2008 blew-it-out-the-box by an explosion as big as the state of Texas! Everyday at this grand event there was something new, something fresh and pleasing to God. Monday, NWLC kicked off theology and worship leading topics by Ross Parsley, Mike Harland, Laura Story, Mark Roberts and Leonard Sweet. In the afternoon, there was a panel discussion with Paul

Baloche, Matt Redman and Scotty Smith involving the service of worship. View the workshops and blog.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday was filled with a plethora of workshops all the way from Lincoln Brewster's "Transforming Your Worship," to "Creating A Worship Flow" with Paul Baloche (very funny, as Paul continues to express his talents in both music and comedy). Our own John Chisum led a moving study entitled "Broken and Beautiful," the healing power of worship. The mornings were a journey-treat as you took a devotional walk through the Tabernacle, meditate on devotions led by Chuck Fromm and John Schreiner and sing praises to God via ancient church song/chant known as "Odes," ushering your way into great morning worship with Fernando Ortega, Calvin Nowell and Jonathan Butler. Wow! During the day you can float from class to class in the categories of worship leading, worship choir, songwriting, technology, leadership, worship planning and Small Church Specialization. In the evening, we had worship services led by Matt Redman, Paul Baloche, Leeland, Matt Maher, Philips Craig and Dean, Kathryn Scott, Lincoln Brewster and Gateway...is there more? Why yes: Chris Tomlin, Tommy Walker, CeCe Winans and Israel Houghton!

We also caught up with our friends at some fabulous companies to name a few: Worship Kitchen, Same Page, Christian Copyright Solutions, Roland Music, Consuming Worship and Integrity Music. Soon you will find more of what you love in worship ministry from the many participating worship leaders, artists and companies right here on Worship Team Training, PraiseCharts and PraiseCharts Live! View all the new Featured Articles of the week as they contain some of the latest songs led at this year's conference.

Worship Team Training
::inspire ::create ::transform

Workshops and Resources to Inspire, Create and Transform the Leading of Worship.