

Hospital Lessons

by John Coulombe

In August of 2006, while lying in a hospital bed at St. Jude, I was given the privilege of time to re-evaluate my life. I discovered that when one's body is broken, many values change: that which was so important no longer is; and that, which meant so little, strangely means so much.

Here are some of my musings from that time:

- 1. Trust Him.** God is in control. I'm not. (*Psalms 115:3*)
- 2. Slow Down.** You may be in a hurry, but remember, God is not bound by time. (*Matthew 6:25-34*)
- 3. Focus on Him.** Center your heart on the Lord, rather than your brokenness. (*Colossians 3:1 and Philippians 4:6-7*)
- 4. Pray for others.** In the hospital there are always people worse than you. If you can, reach out with an encouraging word to those who are too weak to get out of bed. (*Romans 12:9-21*)
- 5. Celebrate both life and death.** The continuum of life is always present in a hospital. Rejoice at the sound of Brahms *Lullaby* each time a baby is born. Pray for family and friends as they sing a farewell to their loved ones. (*Philippians 1:21*)
- 6. In everything give thanks, with joy.** Be grateful for small things, like walking to the bathroom unassisted, or free cable TV! (*1Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Philippians 4:11-14*)
- 7. Never take friendship for granted.** Consider how good it is to have love ones and friends who care. Cherish those who sit quietly by your side, kiss you when you're unlovely, bring treats, and walk alongside you in the hallways while you're wearing an embarrassing gown! Remember, those hospital gowns are like insurance policies—neither covers you as well as you think! (*Romans 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 7:5-7*)
- 8. Get it together and prepare to meet your God.** It's time to organize your paperwork. Pull together your critical documents, like your will. Find photos. Write down the details of your life. Settle relationship issues. Is there anyone who you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness? It's time to make things right. (*1 Corinthians 14:33 and Amos 4:12*)
- 9. Teach one another.** Are there tasks only you know how to do? Now is the time to teach others how to set the clocks, work their cell phone, DVD, A/C, computer, sprinklers, balance checkbooks, wash clothes, cook, and lube the car. (*Romans 12:10-13*)
- 10. Savor each moment and drink slowly.** Enjoy the little things in life: a cup of Starbucks coffee or a real strawberry milkshake with whipped cream and a cherry on top from Jack-in-the-Box. (*1Corinthians 10:31*)
- 11. Let the pressure transform you. It will make you more like Christ.** Don't waste the trial by trying to get back to your previous way of thinking. (*2 Corinthians 4*)
- 12. Be Happy.** Remember your sense of humor and joy. It's better than some of the meds you're taking! (*Proverbs 17:22*)
- 13. Be kind.** Be patient, and friendly with the hospital personnel who care for you throughout the long days and nights. (*1 Corinthians 13:4 and Ephesians 4:32*)

“Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life!”