



The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

Monthly Newsletter of the Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF

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Markéta Lišková, PCFer

Tradition

Coming from a Catholic background I am at home when Christian gatherings embrace an order, and guidelines provide some structure. Boundaries and definition are good. But, as I consider my spiritual attitudes and practices I realize that even though they should facilitate my worship experience, they can also hinder it. I know my flesh patterns, and it is easier for me to stick to something that's been done for many years, keep traditions - even hide behind them instead of exploring something

new and letting go of something old. Letting go can often mean letting God guide me. That can be scary. I'm afraid of failing and ultimately failing people.

Last month Matthew Elphick experimented in leading Holy Communion. Every Sunday as we take communion we follow certain structure. We have three stations, two cups of wine, one cup of grape juice, and three pairs to serve. Normally people take a very small piece of bread and sip a little bit of

wine or juice. Matthew broke tradition! He asked the whole community to gather at the back of the sanctuary around the long group of tables. After receiving some instructions we formed small groups in which we shared Holy Communion with one another in a joyful, friendly way. Matthew's point was that when Jesus initiated communion He was celebrating an actual meal with his friends. So he invited us to enjoy the meal together - "eat all the bread in your group" -

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Tomáš Landovský, PCFer

The Way Is Through—Embracing Solitude

Sometimes the waters of our souls calm down and regardless the level of spiritual maturity, our soul resembles a raft floating in the middle of still ocean with the sun high in the sky scorching us to death. This condition does not necessarily need to be a result of a moral decline, or something we handled terribly wrong - it might be we are waiting for the Lord to cheer our limped souls, and lift us to a new level of relationship with Him.

The reason for writing this testimony is to share how God has lifted me up to a new level of awareness of Him (which I continue to find more and more challenging to maintain). I firmly believe that He did this out of His great mercy - meaning there was nothing I could do to cause myself to see the new perspectives of my life on earth. I also believe that in my case, the path to a better life with God had three aspects that have helped me to open up to what He had in store - brokenness, still heart and withstanding pain. Maybe you would like to hear what happened,

but as I've written this testimony, my focus was more on what preceded His miraculous work - especially His timing and my human condition.

The story of rebirth of my spirit began when my father told me how his friend spent a week alone in a shed, completely sealed from daylight. I thought it was an exciting idea to spend time just by myself, free from the distractions brought to light each new day - constantly observing tangible things. As strange as that idea sounded I thought it was worth a week of my paid holiday. Only later I found that the time would turn-out to be priceless. So I booked myself for a week in the voluntary lock-in that I would later refer to as "the hole."

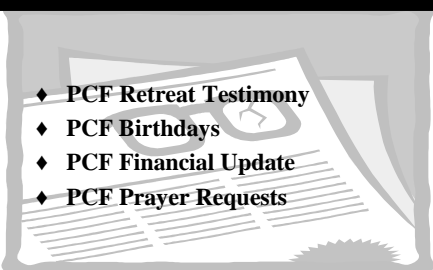
In "the hole" one is supposed to keep from any light during the whole period of the stay which obviously limits the scope of activities one can do inside, but I did take something with me... Kelsie advised me to bring my Bible

with me. It turned out to be such a blessing - it was my spiritual light on an unknown journey.

I knew in the hole I would have to face restlessness, because I knew myself already. What is restlessness anyway? It is something that most people I know run away from all their lives. We keep feeding our restlessness by spending excessive time on Facebook, checking for email, reading news that have absolutely no relevance to meaningful depths of our lives, we chitchat, have dozens of hobbies, etc.. Some women go and buy excessive amounts of clothes, many men search on-line for their next gadget, and so on. In fact, there are

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What's Inside?



- ◆ PCF Retreat Testimony
- ◆ PCF Birthdays
- ◆ PCF Financial Update
- ◆ PCF Prayer Requests

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very few things that drive us towards the hidden place inside our souls which is waiting for us to be discovered and explored. It is a hidden garden that awaits the gentle touch of Jesus. Praise Him, for He is good and He keeps waiting and knocking from inside, waiting if we would hear His call. For some of us it takes a massive earthquake to realize that there is a hunger in our souls that we can't tame by earthly means. Larry Crab describes it in his book, Shattered Dreams. He says that good things such as relationships, health and security are taken away from us so that the relationship with the Lord may be restored through brokenness.

At the time of starting the venture I had already been walking through my "valley of brokenness" – it had been two weeks since my wife told me she was dating someone else, and shortly after, announced she was moving out. Fortunately, the Lord had been preparing me for it well in advance by drawing me closer to Him. I had re-discovered my desire for Him by reading And The Pressure's Off by Larry Crabb. It touched me and gave me a new desire to give up the concept of an impersonal God who is a source of small blessings, and to grab hold of a new life with a personal God who desires to BLESS with a capital B. Notice the timing of the Lord. I had booked my stay wanting to spend some time on my own (I was thinking of God, but not as an essential part). Then, I experienced my spiritual awakening and found my brokenness. He had managed to turn my selfish purpose into a spiritual retreat. Now I was looking for God rather than looking to feel better.

Despite all the Lord's preparation of my heart and all my anticipation, nothing happened the first night – the shed was strangely empty. I thought that something miraculous was going to happen

when I turned off the light. It began the next morning. I woke up full of pain from losing my wife. It wasn't just the kind of pain when you're losing someone close to you or losing hope to restore a relationship. It was a pain of losing identity. The feelings went along the lines of lack of self-acceptance – "how much am I worth when my own wife is leaving me?"

*His authority
demands more
than my
respect, it
demands my
willing
submission –
and I have
found Him
worthy!*

Why didn't I have my own identity in Christ? The answer is quite simple. All my Christian years I lived with Christ in my head. I maintained the traditional beliefs – in my brain I knew He existed, I believed He died/rose and my sins were forgiven. My life was changed in regards to moral standards (even though I had been failing to keep them over and over again, I knew what was right and wrong, and desired righteousness). Despite all those good beliefs, the real me inside was still bound to the life around me – I was drowning for so long that I hadn't recognized my soul was dying and desperately trying to reach out to the tangible world for help. My identity developed into something purely self-centered. I needed people to confirm my worth and I needed my job/hobbies to be the cornerstone for purpose in my life. If my life was a shell that I had been trying to paint with the acceptance and intimacy of others, the inside was an empty space I

tried to fill with my jobs and hobbies. I don't know what I had been trying to obtain with my hobbies. I only know they came and went – almost like the seasons of the year. I tried playing golf, running, riding a motorbike, snow kiting, geocaching, and many more. Trying one out was good for a few weeks or months at the longest. Then restlessness came along and made me go search on the Internet for something new, or get excited for something I heard a friend talking about. I never really got filled by any of those activities. I felt stupid to sit at home, because everyone else is doing something and they seem to be so "into it" – persistent with their mountain bike trips, playing squash,...you can imagine how many ways we have to stay busy and occupied. I couldn't stand being on my own, I felt inadequate. Maybe that's why I was so excited to hear of a guy who would spend a week on his own in a room with no light. I was so wondering what would happen if I went there? Who would I meet inside me?

It turns out I found lots of stuff that was not me. The main and obvious source for filling up the cup of my worth was dating. You might see me as life-sucking monster, but believe me; most of what I did was done unconsciously. I was so hungry inside, and learned to satisfy my soul by turning to others. It is amazing for me to realize that I was only satisfied by interaction with pretty women or men with strong will and charisma. I realize now that those two aspects are ultimately met in Jesus Christ – or better to say – in relationship with Him. *His beauty* is revealed in His love (if we have experienced it in our hearts) and in the intimate way He can touch inside our souls. *His strength* I found in the ultimate supremacy of His will. Why had I believed that I could find a spouse that would treat me the way Jesus does, and never leave me,... never condemn me?

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Why had I tried so hard to manipulate Him into filling me with nice feelings on my timetable? He met me when He decided (regardless of what I thought I needed at any particular time) according to His sovereign will with passionate unconditional love. Consequently, Jesus now is the real Man for me (person to turn to) who keeps His word and is ever faithful. His authority demands more than my respect, it demands my willing submission – and I have found Him worthy!

PCF Bank Info:

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181730394/5500 V.S.: 10261

Contact Evžen Pekárek for
assistance at
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Upcoming Birthdays

The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

Matthew Elphick	November 1
Kirsten Chappell	November 2
Bruce Novotný	November 2
Elizabeth Sposaro	November 3
Dawn Custalow	November 3
Jan Overwater	November 4
Chris Morris	November 5
Joshua Fagan	November 8
Alan Crowther	November 12
Tanya Sperier	November 12
Markéta Ceplová	November 13
Ondřej Fúšik	November 13
Peggy Kareyo-Wafula	November 14
Steve Gower	November 15
Andrei Spiridonov	November 15
Pauliina Vasko	November 15
Chris Lewis	November 16
Ray Wilck	November 16
Jan Kupidlovský	November 17
Matthew Pollard	November 17
Blessing Ndubuka	November 18
Austin Sheffield	November 18
Lambert Asondjo	November 19
Junior Olukayode	November 20
Ipin Borgert	November 20
Klára Šedivá	November 23
Vicki Čermáková-Pigors	November 25
Christy Ellison	November 26
Renata Vaňková	November 27
Charles Moloney	November 28
Eliška Landovská	November 29
Tania Razlivkina	November 29

I wanted to share so much about what I have experienced during my week in the dark. There was so much that was revealed to me such as the impact of experiencing a lack of love from my father - ever since I lacked healthy self esteem and couldn't trust the Lord. He showed me how badly I treated women in my life, how I used them to try to fill up my hungry soul. At the moment all of those were deep revelations. I think most of it is linked back to growing up in a family who did not know or walk with God, and the bitter fruits that are grown from such a tree.

Walking with the Lord never ends. One stop at the repair shop can help us find our direction, but not "the" answer. It is more like a small door that leads on *the* narrow pathway. I found myself thinking that the door God showed me that week in the hole was an exit. Wrong! It was an entry point to a path on which there are dozens of other doors which are getting smaller and smaller as we let Jesus work in us, decrease us and increase Him. My door is still too big – I barely need to bow my head to get through. But it's a start, and God is giving me the grace to desire... and keep on walking. ■



PRAYER REQUESTS

- 1) **Church Finances** – provision to cover our expenses and wisdom in spending and giving.
- 2) **Former PCF members involved with full-time ministry** such as David Snell, Kelly Kuest, Sam Ewell, Michael Stadler, Will Porter, and Roger & Robin Harsh for God's total provision and protection in their lives. "Always keep on praying for all the saints." (Eph. 16:18)
- 3) **Church staff** – Please pray that God would call some worship leaders to come help with PCF and IHOPP.
- 4) **PCF Mercy Ministry**– for God's direction/leading– Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, etc.

(Cont. from page 1... Traditions)

"drink all the wine." Later as he observed the small groups, he realized that people were still leaning towards keeping the old habit of passing the bread and the cup... limiting themselves to tiny bits and sips. Why? I suspect it's because the old routine is so familiar to us. We're used to it. It's supposed to be this way, isn't it?

I've decide to risk failing God and people by following Him even when it is outside of my box. The reality is that at times I do fail God and people by staying so comfortable. One thing I know, I desire to grow in knowing God, the Christ – the One who loves me so deeply, who would even stop the world just to spend time with me. I'm precious in His sight. And so are you!

Letting God in my life is an everyday challenge. It's easy to say, but harder to live. I'm talking about living it out... asking Jesus not just verbally, but asking Him to dwell in my heart, and actually letting Him *in* my heart. Can you see the difference? Traditions can be a way of keeping God at a safe comfortable distance.

Do I want to be stuck with "my traditions" or do I desire to be more like Christ (who broke lots of traditions) and keep opening my heart to Him? The latter is my choice. The good thing is that the Gospel is *good* news which means it's **good!** It is more than a good story with a good ending – it is hope for our lives that can keep us strong and draw us close. As we come to intimately know God, we find His good is not necessary good in our earthly terms, and life can be tough to face. However, the glorious ending is worth it. Jesus is worth it. Surrendering to His active voice is worth the risks.

Let's not limit God: let's be open and let Him change our hearts, AND our traditions. ■

Autumn Retreat Testimony



The retreat turned to be an amazing blessing! But I struggled a lot getting there. I didn't want to go at all.

My strategy usually is to ignore events as long as possible, to postpone the struggle. But then it hits me - Thursday night (packing) and Friday afternoon leaving. We had some difficulties meeting with Dana at Opatov (changed to Chodov... I CAN read maps!) The closer to Dlouhý the worse I was feeling. Approaching the Immanuel Center was really painful. I didn't want to meet *anyone*. Didn't want to be asked how I was. At some point I even had to leave the building. I returned after a while but the idea of joining others was still unbearable. Matt knows about what I call my *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mrs. Hyde* issue and helped me out of the Mrs. Hyde down cycle. You might have seen us sitting in the lounge - heard Matt's calm and professional voice (it drives the Mrs. Hyde in me berserk). We talked, and he prayed so I could enjoy the rest of the evening.

Walking outside I realized some sort of scheme. It *seems like* I feel this bad almost every Sunday night after church (especially when Matt leaves), sometimes when Matt's around, on BBQ Saturdays, or any time I am supposed to spend with PCFers. I could have come to the conclusion it's church and Christian related things

that make me spiral down, but over the last couple of weeks Matt did a great job explaining the concept of our common enemy to me. However, I still kept blaming myself for everything. By the way, any mentioning of "the enemy" makes me feel really awkward.

But, let's get back to the retreat. On Saturday morning I woke up stiff, sick with a headache, and down again (it is common for me on Saturday mornings or holidays). Surprisingly, I had no problem joining in after breakfast. The small group was a great opportunity to share bits, and the prayer time with Renata at the end of the day was just amazing! I left before the others finished. I wanted to say "good night" to Matt and go to bed, but God had had more amazing stuff for me.

There was Kat sitting outside the meeting room. She said Matt was still downstairs and asked how I was. Encouraged I shared a bigger bit of the awkward stuff and she offered prayer, conceding it might not be as powerful as what we had experienced earlier. I accepted, and as she was praying for breaking old bonds, my struggles seemed to take a form of a vision:

It reminded me of dance lessons we take as teenagers... sitting, waiting to be asked for a dance. I didn't want to go with the one who was asking me. I wanted to say, "no," but was unable to do so. It wasn't right to go with someone who came out of the darkness off to the right (Kat was sitting on my left). Then it hit me: "I've been going out with the wrong guys my whole life" (literally and metaphorically)!!! I suddenly felt unprotected, left alone and weary. I couldn't stand up and tell him off. I started to cover myself with the

heaviness of depression as a protection (... "can't go. I'm disabled"). But this time this strategy didn't feel right either. I realized I needed help. And I was ready to accept what God was offering through Kat. Her prayer covered exactly what I needed. It was amazing (we both don't remember really the words)!!! The help has always been there, but I was blind, deaf and too busy protecting myself. The strategy to prevent anything bad from reaching me, also prevented the good stuff from reaching me as well. For a while I felt torn between the light and the darkness. When it was over I felt relieved, free, protected and really loved.

And I still do! I shared with Matt straight afterwards and I got back to Kat on Wednesday night. I was afraid the enemy might hit back like a jealous ex-fiancé ("if I can't have you, you shall not be happy"). But looking back, this strategy of the enemy was happening over the past months ("Don't spend time around PCF guys! And if you have to, don't enjoy it!").

A creepy thought... but it seems like I've been engaged to the enemy. I might now be saved in a totally new dimension. Praise the Lord!!! ■

PCF Finances

September 2009	
48,982	Total Income
5,093	Internet & Comm.
7,590	Office Rent & Elec.
8,500	Church Rent
2,396	Supplies & Equip.
225	Copying & Publishing
39,128	Salaries/Employ Tax
2,000	Evangelism & Teach
3,000	Church Giving
1,491	Fees & Advertising
0	Miscellaneous
69,424	Total Expenses
-20,442	Net Income

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is November 20, 2009.