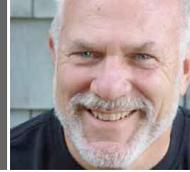


I've been thinking...



New Year's Resolution
January 2011

I'd been thinking New Year's resolutions were for the birds. Why is December 31 a more compelling reason for decision making than, say, April 14 or July 11? But this January 1 begged for some rethinking.

So, the high-definition television is glaring and blaring. But I'm not really watching the Rose Bowl. It's just background noise this year. Not because my team's not slugging it out but because last night I took a blow to the head when I realized I really am saying goodbye to my brother—not for the year but for good.

A few weeks ago, neurosurgeons did their best. Eight hours of cutting removed most of the glioblastoma in Ed's head, but the 20 percent left behind remains the most aggressive cancer found in the brain. Yesterday's visit drove home the reality that my days with him are numbered, which seemed to align with the doctors' estimates of weeks vs. months.

Today, the Beatle's *Yesterday* rings in my mind as clearly as when we played it on our car radios in 1965, a year after Ed's high school graduation—a year before mine.

Suddenly, my brother's not half the man he used to be. My interesting, insightful, articulate sibling's head is scrambled. He can't remember who he's with, where he's at, or how things work. Though he's more gentle and affectionate than ever, he's washed his cell phone in the kitchen sink, mentioned serving in Nam though he's never been to Southeast Asia nor worn a uniform. And, he's been mentioning things to *me* about "his brother." I am his only brother. There's a shadow hanging over me.

Competing for mindshare is another 1965 hit by the other mopheads. The Byrds' *Turn! Turn! Turn!* echoes ancient wisdom Pete Seager borrowed from Israel's Koheleth. I located the text tonight near the center of the Gideon Bible from my hotel room's nightstand:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3, New International Version, 2010

In more ways than I'll mention, these words brought resolution. Though the shadow yet hovers over my heart, the lens of this text is clarifying thoughts in my otherwise fuzzy head. The display in my brain packs more pixels per square inch than ever.

Feeling the brevity of life, I see that each day we have together is a time to embrace, a time to laugh, a time for love.

And pondering that there really is a time to die also nudges me toward another kind of resolution—the resolution of conflicts. Today is the time to mend fences, to pursue peace, to seek and grant forgiveness.

Finally, though my brother's cancer is untreatable, I find myself re-resolving to continue helping hospitals gather stones and build better point-of-care systems for preventing unnecessary harm and promoting healing for other people's brothers.

Discovering that the *Turn! Turn! Turn!* text was in the middle of the Bible sparked my curiosity to locate the very center line of the book. Turns out it's a bit to the left in the Psalms: "Forget none of God's benefits." I assume "none" would include benefits past, present, and future. I'm counting my blessings.

Life, lovely while it lasts, is soon over.

Life as we know it, precious and beautiful, ends.

The body is put back in the same ground it came from.

The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it. *Ecclesiastes 12:6-7*

Yesterday all these troubles seemed so far away. Now it looks as though they're here to stay. But I don't believe in yesterday. See you tomorrow, bro.



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