



## Joyful Confidence in God – John Ortberg

### When God Seems Silent

Because the soul is the deepest expression of the person, the soul is the place of greatest pain. We do not speak of the dark night of the mind, or the will, or even the spirit. Only the soul. The dark night of the soul.

The phrase comes from a brilliant Carmelite monk named John who lived in Spain in the sixteenth century. He devoted his life to reforming the church, but his attempts were heavily criticized, and he ended up in prison. It was there in confinement, with his dreams lost, that he wrote his most famous work: *The Dark Night of the Soul*. It is an account of how God works to change us not just through joy and light, but through confusion, through disappointment, through loss. Because of his commitment in the midst of suffering, he became known as “St. John of the Cross.”

*The dark night of the soul, as he described it, is not simply the experience of suffering. It is suffering in what feels like the silence of God.*

This saint who bore the name of the cross of Jesus said that in the early days of spiritual life, the soul often finds delight in devotional activities: We love to read the Bible, we hunger for worship, we long to pray. We may think this is a sign of our maturity; it is really more a kind of honeymoon phase.

“But there will come a time when God will bid them to grow deeper. He will remove the previous

consolation of the soul in order to teach it virtue...” In the dark night, my prayers feel like they reach no higher than the ceiling. (Although, Dallas {Willard} often said, if we truly understand how radically present God is in our world, reaching the ceiling is more than high enough.) In the dark night, the Bible I read turns to ashes. In the dark night, words and books and songs that once spoke to my soul now leave me cold.

It is important to understand that the dark night, as John writes about it, is not the soul’s fault. of course, it’s possible for me to grow cold toward God because I cling to sin, or prefer an idol, or simply become lazy. These are all real occurrences that require wise response. But they are not the dark night.

The dark night is God-initiated.

*Continued on page 3*

### **A Little Humor**

**How do we know that cars are in the New Testament?**

View the answer at the following link:

<http://www.woodburnmc.org/#!mens/c1za>

**Proverbs 27:17**

JUST AS IRON SHARPENS IRON, SO ONE MAN SHARPENS ANOTHER.

# Meet Phil Rolsten

## **Tell us a little bit about your family.**

Right now, my family consists of my awesome wife Sarah and our 8-year-old dog Sandy! We got married 8/20/16 at WMC. We have loved all the support and all the new friends we have made here.

## **What do you do for a living?**

I work for Ag Plus as a Grain Specialist. I get to work with farmers in the Woodburn, Edgerton, and Monroeville Indiana areas. I focus on creating solid marketing plans for our customers' corn, soybean, and wheat crops. I partner with them in finding the best opportunities to sell their grain.

## **What hobbies or other activities do you enjoy?**

I love working in our garden. It has been a new-found passion for Sarah and me. Outside of that, I enjoy golfing, shooting sports, and watching my OHIO STATE BUCKEYES!

## **How long have you been attending WMC?**

We started attending WMC back in the summer of 2015. I was not originally from the area and my wife had previously attended church in Ft Wayne. We were looking for a local church to call home. We were recently engaged at the time and were hoping to find a great church to get married in, hopefully raise our family in, and to be able to serve our local community.

## **Are you a member of a WMC small group and/or any other ministries?**

Over the last few months, I have gotten the opportunity to serve in men's ministry by cooking the meal for the men's monthly breakfast. My wife and I also participate in the coffee café, serving coffee once a month. I also serve on the media team for the Sunday church service.

## **What is your favorite Bible verse and why?**

"A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Proverbs 16:9

I am a "dreamer". I frequently think about what is to come and dream about what might be in the future. I love to have a "grand plan" for my life. This verse reminds me that it is God's plan and not mine that will prosper.



## **What has God been telling you lately?**

I come from a home where my parents are divorced. Both parents are in my life and are wonderful; however, I know first-hand that divorce has lasting effects on families. Since even before we got married, I have felt God pushing me to invest daily in my marriage. After having just celebrated our first anniversary, I can honestly say it has made a wonderful difference in our lives. Lately, the biggest, loudest voice from God has been telling me to be disciplined in my daily life and walk with God.

## **Is there anything you would like to share with the men of WMC?**

I am thankful for all the great men I have met in such a short amount of time. I wanted to thank everyone for being so welcoming and genuine. I look forward to continuing to grow in Christ and be challenged by the men of WMC.

## **Prayer Corner**

- Pray for our men to resist temptation and pursue sexual purity.
- Pray that our men would pursue opportunities to connect and grow spiritually with other guys.
- Pray for the farmers' harvest.

**Proverbs 27:17**

JUST AS IRON SHARPENS IRON, SO ONE MAN SHARPENS ANOTHER.

## *Joyful Confidence in God-cont. from page 1*

### **Waiting in the Dark**

The practices that once fed my soul feed it no more. John of the Cross, writing from his prison cell, says in the dark night the soul is pained but not hopeless. “God’s love is not content to leave us in our weakness, and for this reason He takes us into a dark night. He weans us from all of the pleasures by giving us dry times and inward darkness.... No soul will ever grow deep in the spiritual life unless God works passively in that soul by means of the dark night.” We have a hard time with the dark night. Our churches are practical places, and we generally tell people the answer to any spiritual problem is more: more prayer, more serving, more giving, more trying.

But John says just the opposite. When the soul begins to enjoy the benefits of the spiritual life and then has them taken away, it becomes embittered and angry. There are some who become angry at themselves at this point, thinking that their loss of joy is a result of something they have done or have neglected to do. They will fuss and fret and do all they can to recover this consolation. They will strive to become saints in a day. They will make all kinds of resolutions to be more spiritual, but the greater the resolution, the greater the fall.

Their problem is that they lack the patience that waits for whatever God would give them and when God chooses to give. They must learn spiritual meekness, which will come about in the dark night.

### **What do we do in the dark night?**

*We do nothing.* We wait. We remember that we are not God. We hold on. We ask for help. We do less. We resign from things, we rest more, we stop going to church, we ask somebody else to pray because we can’t. We let go of our need to hurry through it.

You can’t run in the dark.

We love psalms about restoring our souls. They are sometimes called psalms of orientation — psalms that help us direct our lives to God. But there are other psalms. After we learned of Dallas’s diagnosis, my wife delivered a message based on what Walter Brueggemann calls “psalms of disorientation.” These are the psalms where the soul is disoriented; God is absent; darkness is winning. “Break the teeth in their mouths, o God... Let them vanish like water that flows away... like a slug that melts away as it moves along, like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.” That’s one that doesn’t get used at a lot of prayer breakfasts. Eugene Peterson once wrote that before we can love our enemies, we have to pray our hatred. In these psalms — which are more frequent than the psalms of orientation — Israel vented and boiled over at God, apparently believing He was secure enough to be able to take it.

If there is a God who is worthy to be the Father of Jesus, I can trust giving this situation as well as my own feelings joyfully into His hands. If there is not, I have infinitely bigger problems than a merely human circumstance. Either way it is true: this will be a test of my joyful confidence in God.

# COMING EVENTS

## OCTOBER

Saturday	October 7	Pond-a-River Golf Outing (9:00 am)	David Maus
Wednesday	October 11	Men's Ministry Meeting (6:15 pm)	Greg Karns
Saturday	October 28	Men's Breakfast (7:00 am)	Chris Omo

## NOVEMBER

Saturday	November 3	Hayride/Cookout (6:00 pm)	Kevin Buhr
Wednesday	November 8	Men's Leadership Meeting (6:15 pm)	Greg Karns
Sat./Sun.	November 11-12	Couple's Retreat (10:00 am)	Gary Hahn
Saturday	November 18	Men's Breakfast (7:00 am)	Chris Omo

## DEC./JAN.

Wednesday	December 13	Men's Leadership Meeting (6:15 pm)	Greg Karns
Saturday	December 16	Men's Breakfast (7:00 am)	Chris Omo
Saturday	December 16	Oil Change Saturday (8:30 am)	Matt Johnson
Fri./Sat.	February 16-17	Men's Retreat	Gary Hahn

Men's Small Groups	Men's Basketball
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ GET ANCHORED IN YOUR FAITH</li> <li>◆ BUILD NEW FRIENDSHIPS</li> <li>◆ LEARN HOW TO STUDY GOD'S WORD</li> <li>◆ DISCOVER GOD'S GAME PLAN FOR YOU!!</li> </ul>	<p>Tuesdays 7:30 pm</p> <p>Thursdays 7:30 pm</p> <p>Saturdays 8:30 am</p> <p><b>Location: Activity Center</b></p>

**Proverbs 27:17**

JUST AS IRON SHARPENS IRON, SO ONE MAN SHARPENS ANOTHER.