

Spring 2022

Dear Friends,

I've dated this letter *Spring 2022* because I meant to write to you in March...but March slipped away. Then I meant to write to you early in April...but now April is slipping away. So we'll just call this my Spring letter!

Over the years, what I've tried to do with these letters is to share with you what I'm hearing from Jesus, and what I'm seeing unfold in the world, so that we all might walk more closely with him and strengthen ourselves with his strength in this Hour. I think that's the single most helpful thing I can offer.

So here's what I have been sensing lately...

At the top of the year, when Stasi and I were doing some listening prayer (asking Jesus his advance words for 2022 for us), one of the things he said was, "Defend margin." We had a sense that we needed to make extra room in our calendar for unforeseen circumstances that were coming. (So kind of God not to tell us what was coming, just to create some margin.) We created that margin...and then it got eaten by those unforeseen circumstances. But I'm very glad we at least had some breathing room built in. If we hadn't, we would have been candles burning at both ends.

Then I began hearing a number of stories from different people, each with unique circumstances but all with the same theme—life becoming so full and demanding they haven't really any personal time to catch their breath.

The stories kept coming—folks navigating all sorts of challenges in their personal lives for months, perhaps years, as well as the global trauma and the warfare of the Hour which we've been talking about on our podcast and in these letters. The effect is that these dear people are now running on very low reserves. These are mature saints, folks who know how to live responsibly, walk closely with God, and practice soul care. But nevertheless, the demands keep coming and they find themselves awfully tired at the end of a week. But then comes the next thing demanding their attention.

Here's the dark twist—the stories all have enough differences that the people in them feel unique and rather alone in their situation. They don't see their stories as somehow confirming larger movements. What they *see* is their child's learning disabilities and heartaches. What they *see* is their spouse's battle with cancer. What they *see* is the financial strain, which they feel embarrassed about. And each story is so personal, it feels isolating, so they don't realize that most of the friends of Jesus are undergoing the same thing.

I've been feeling for some time now that the Enemy's plan is to wear people down, and then offer us some sort of relief, which isn't the same thing as deep intimacy with God. (Relief and restoration are very different things.) Relief says, just get me to that vacation. Let me buy some new clothes. Let's just go out to dinner. I just want to veg and watch movies.

Whatever else you think about the pandemic, I want to point out the *psychological* drain that the common, long-term physical effects have on a person. A friend of mine still can't get out and cycle even a year after his bout with Covid.

Another has rallied, but he's noticing if he ever really pushes himself physically, he's wiped out for a few days. One friend's daughter has had to give up her dancing because her body has just not recovered; she now has chronic fatigue. And of course those heartaches then weigh on the parents, maybe even more deeply, because they can't seem to help. These are widespread phenomena, and they point to the larger, draining nature of this Hour.

I don't think it's a coincidence that when Daniel talks about the work of the enemy towards the climax of the age, one of the phrases he uses is that he will *wear down the people of God*.

“He will defy the Most High God and wear down the saints...and he will try to change all laws, morals, and customs.” (Daniel 7:25 TLB)

I do have to say, I'm seeing that everywhere. But especially among the friends of God.

Notice I said *the friends of God*. There's an important difference between people who identify as Christians and people who are the friends of Jesus. It has to do with devotion, and attention; it has to do with priorities. It *especially* has to do with partnership, because the friends of God want to partner with God and what he's up to. Our enemy is happy to leave casual Christians alone for the most part. The folks that get his attention, get into his crosshairs, are the true friends of God. And those folks are telling me a lot of stories of personal situations that have them pretty worn out.

Back to what Jesus said to Stasi and me at the start of the year. *Defend margin*. We did, and then the crises came, and thank God we had the margin. But it all got used up. So now what I need to do is look at the next quarter, and make sure that I am creating margin again.

Summer for us is usually a time for recharging our batteries. But with some shock I looked at the calendar and realized that our summer is almost filled with demands. So I'm going to have to go back and create margin. And defend it.

The Enemy is a brilliant strategist. He knows the friends of God are his biggest problem. So he's wearing us down, making it difficult for us to navigate the challenges of the world in this Hour.

So this is my simple recommendation to you—defend margin. Create it, even if it is costly to create. And then *defend* it. Because we can't control all the twists and turns of life. What we *can* do is make wise plans that accommodate for what is happening to the saints in this Hour, and one of those pieces of wise accommodation is to create and defend margin.

You'll be so grateful you did.

Offered in love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.