

September 2021

Dearest Friends,

The early stages of fall are upon us. Children (of all ages) are back to school, churches are gearing up for their fall programming, small groups are reconvening, work is getting busier, and summer vacations are in the rearview mirror. A season of transition.

And how is your soul feeling about making this transition? Might be good to check in right now.

All change feels like loss at first, but especially this year because our recovery is still tender. When we pass through a series of chronic disappointments like we have in the last eighteen months, we are sensitive to anything that feels like more disappointment. It's a good idea to check in with your heart...

How are you feeling about leaving summer behind and entering into what is usually a more demanding time of year?

Are you ready to move into the "push" from September to the holidays?

I've been writing to you each month (well, most months; I take a break now and then) about guiding our hearts and souls into recovery and resilience. At the start of summer, I suggested that you and Jesus write out a "prescription" for your recovery. Mine was a rescue, though I fought Jesus on it at first.

I knew I was beat up and probably overestimating my capacity. But everything in me wanted to travel and go on adventures. Jesus kept saying, No. I kept asking, "Well how about this? How about that?" We had to work through my insistence that adventure travel was what I needed. Jesus kept saying no, and let me quickly say that looking back, I'm so grateful he did. I needed a really simple summer. Part of my delusion was based on the assumption that I'm fine; things are fine now.

As we move into the fall season, I think we'd better keep recovery and resilience in front of us.

Just as I needed a "prescription" for my summer, I need one for this fall.

We are living in uniquely demanding times, dear ones. I think everyone feels it. In fact, I polled our staff last week on how everyone was doing. I asked the team, "Where do you fall into these three choices?"

- I feel like we're getting back to 2019! Normal life has returned.
- I feel I'm still in the turbulence of these unsettled times.
- I feel that things are strangely more intense, though I'm not sure why.

The vast majority of our team put themselves between turbulence and more intense.

How about you? Reread the choices, and let your soul answer for you.

Very few folks can honestly say things have settled back into normalcy, into pre-pandemic life. This is why we need to ask Jesus about our fall. We need to be honest about our situation even if the world around us is in global denial. (Which it is, because without Jesus and his kingdom, folks have to cling to every cliché of hope, even if it's delusional.)

*Jesus, what is the rhythm and pace you have for me this fall? What do you want me "in," and what do you want me "out of"?*

Here's a fun and informative exercise: If you could become a monk, what is the lifestyle you see yourself living? (Come on, we've all dreamed about unplugging from our 9–5, running away from it all, living in some beautiful place at a soulful pace.) What would you do if you could have that life? What would it involve as a daily rhythm? Quiet, prayer, meditation, walks, simple work like baking bread.

Honestly, you can probably incorporate most of that into your normal life.

So, write yourself a prescription for this fall. You know your strengths and weaknesses; you have a sense of what's being asked of you. What would you recommend to yourself if you were really taking seriously the strength of your soul at this time?

I strongly recommend you also ask Jesus for his prescription for you in this hour. Ask him about the plans and assumptions you've already made for your life. (Do you really need to have those people over for dinner? Do you really need to repaint that spare room? Do you really need to call that person back this evening?) Honestly, I'm startled at how much I deem to be utterly necessary, but when I ask Christ about it he rescues me from so much pressure. I didn't need to make that call. I didn't need to do that project. I didn't need to get involved in someone else's drama even though I felt I should.

Jesus has consistently opened up margin in my life that I didn't think was possible. And in that margin I have been able to go stronger.

When athletes are preparing for a big event, they make a plan. They adjust their daily routine in order to rest, eat well, and train. They prepare themselves for what's coming. Military forces do the same—they up their preparations before deployment. I think it would be really wise to chat with Jesus about your plans for the fall. We want to be resilient, not just "getting by."

Offered in love, and because I began to experience the "trend" myself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'John'.

PS: Our September podcast series will really help you find resilience this fall! Hope you tune in!