

Prophetic Voice James Goll: How to Guard Your Heart in This Trying Season

“Be strong, and He will strengthen your heart, all you who wait for the Lord” (Ps. 31:24).

The state of your heart is crucial when walking through a valley or a traumatic season in life. How you close one door in a time of transition makes a huge difference in how well you walk through the next door in your life’s journey. One thing is certain—when walking through a valley (see Ps. 23), you can’t afford to sit down in that low place and have a long-term pity party. Sometimes, you have to choose to put one foot in front of the other and just keep on walking!

I went through three bouts of cancer over a nine-year period, lost the wife of my youth to heaven, became a single dad of four, and was plunged into hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical debt, having never missed a bill payment in my life. Then I attempted to rebuild my life while having an international ministry, which removed the privilege of going behind closed doors. (After all, I was James W. Goll, an international prayer and prophetic voice—I felt like I lived in a public gold fish bowl!)

Soon I discovered that I needed to take a deep look at the condition of my heart.

Watching Over Your Heart

I would have to guard my heart and look after its welfare, following the advice of the proverb: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). To resuscitate it fully, I would have to learn how to speak life to it.

With plenty of Scriptures to go on, I knew the Lord would be more than willing to help me. For example, “For the eyes of the Lord move about on all the earth to strengthen the heart that is completely toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9a). I may have thought that my heart no longer felt or even remembered anything but despair, but nevertheless it was still “completely His.”

It was vital that I figure out how to get it beating stronger than ever. I inaugurated a new goal: to end this race better than I started it. I decided that after I go home to God, I want people to say, “James Goll loved God and he taught other people how to love Him too.”

Finding My Bearings

Extended times of trial and transition can be hard on your heart. Even if you try to keep loving God and others as well as you used to, you just do not feel that you have as much to offer. Even when things settle down a little, you might remain exhausted from grieving and adjusting to your new reality. You know you are still on a journey, but you do not find it as easy to get your bearings.

Finding your bearings has to become part of the journey, or you will just go in circles. You have to ask yourself some really basic questions, such as: “Who am I?” “What do my roots tell me about myself?” “What do I love to do?” “What brings me life?”

“Who Am I?”

This is easy to answer, right? Well, not when you are still reassembling your identity after a major trauma or loss. I had been married to the same person for over half my life, and my functionality—and thus a major aspect of my identity—was wrapped up in being her husband. Now I was a grieving widower. Still, I was a father, right? Yet my kids were all leaving the nest to pursue careers, find love and marriage and build

families of their own. This would have been a time of major readjustment for me, even without the cancer, the intense sciatic nerve pain, sleep deprivation and Michal Ann's death.

I was still in full-time vocational ministry. I could teach. I still prayed; I was an active intercessor. I loved to write. I kept pondering and thinking about how to move forward in life. I found myself asking an odd question, "What do my roots tell me about myself?"

To find my bearings, I felt the need to reevaluate my personal life history. I decided to look back at my childhood and find some sweet spots to revive some pleasant memories.

Somehow, looking at my root system helped me find my bearings a little bit more. I soon realized I was born to sing.

Born to Sing

When I asked myself, "What do I love to do?" one of my first answers was, "I love to sing." I have been singing since at least the age of 3, and in high school I won awards for singing, as other young guys might win awards for basketball or some other sport. I didn't sing in order to win prizes; I sang because it was my life. I would go on walks down the railroad tracks, and I would sing Sunday school songs and hymns from the brownish-red Cokesbury hymnal. I would sing anything I heard. I would sing with the radio. I would sing in school programs. I would sing at church. I would even sing with Lawrence Welk. I would sing everywhere I went! I actually grew up being known as a "singer."

I kept on singing after I grew up and when I got married. (Somebody gave me a T-shirt that says, "I Sing Real Loud.") I would sing when I was happy, and I would sing when I was sad. I would sing in the shower and sing in the car. I would sing in during corporate worship, and I would break out into singing in the middle of my own sermons. It didn't matter if I was having a "bad voice or good voice" day—I would just sing

anyway.

But in the midst of my cancer treatments and severe traumatic pain, I had not been singing much at all. I was slowly losing my voice. One of my greatest joys in life was sitting with pitch-perfect Michal Ann at our piano bench and singing duets together. Once I put my finger on the fact that I was born to sing, I figured out that one of the best keys for healing my bruised and rather beat-up heart would be telling my heart to sing again. I would sing it back to life.

I think that is something anyone could do, even those who cannot sing a note. Even if you don't use outright singing to do it, at least you could speak to your heart to revive it. Tell your heart the truth. Tell your heart who is on the throne. Tell your heart about God's faithfulness and goodness and how much the Shepherd cares.

Ask yourself, "What brings me life?" Look back across the years to find precious memories and helpful clues about what brings life to you. Read the Bible as if it was written to you personally, rereading the parts that speak most to you. To experience the hidden power of praise and singing, start with Psalms 148, 149 and 150. Tell your heart to start singing!

I started singing again. Now I ease my pain and shift the atmosphere over my own life through song. I sing day and night. I sing in every hotel room I visit. I sing in my kitchen. I sing in the shower. I sing outside when I take a walk. I sing by myself and I sing with others.

Recently, I sang crooner songs in a marble lobby of a 5-star hotel in Taipei, Taiwan with a classical pianist. I found out what time of the day this pianist was going to be performing in the lobby. I even got dressed up, came downstairs and began singing inspirational songs with this world-class Berkley School of Music graduate. People started gathering around and asked where I was from and I proudly told them Nashville. They

took videos thinking I was an internationally famous singer.

That brought life to my heart. I sang “Moon River,” “Hello Dolly” and “I Left My Heart in San Francisco.” But deep down I have always loved singing hymns the most.

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness/ I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name/ On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand/ ... When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in him be found/ dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

Hidden within the lyrics and melodies, the power of praise and worship builds up my heart and orients me in the right direction. It sometimes takes a moment to overcome the feeling of being shut down, too sad and tired to breathe out a note of a song, but once I make the effort, I am so glad I am alive and held in God’s capable hands.

What Is God Singing Over You?

God himself is the “singing God,” you know: “The Lord your God is in your midst, a Mighty One, who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will renew you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17). What is God singing over you? I can tell you that he is singing an anthem of hope. He is singing, “I love you and I have a plan for you. I have a great future for you. I have you on my mind and in my heart. I am working everything together for you.”

Closing Invitational Prayer

Father, I believe that all of creation is a painting of your beauty and majesty. I believe that you sing over your creation—including me. I believe that the heart is an amazing organ and that out of it flow the springs and issues of life. My heart needs to be revived. I want to tell it to sing again. I speak life to my heart and I declare, “Hope is standing

right in front of me," because you are right in front of me,
even right inside.