

SHATTERED! *By Daniel Pope*

It seemed easy enough. Climb the ladder to the roof of the house, adjust the TV antenna, then climb back down and enjoy watching the Chicago Bears football game. Except I failed to notice, on this frigid early December afternoon, that a sheet of ice had formed on the north side of the roof. Cell phone in hand, my wife, Miriam, on the other end to let me know when the picture on the TV came in clear, I had one more slight adjustment to make. As I stepped on the north side of the roof, however, down I went. The only thing that slowed a 25-foot tumble to the ground was a shingle I had managed to grab. Praying for something else to hold on to, I stared in disbelief when that shingle began to tear away.

As I slid down toward the frost-covered ground on my stomach, I heard almost audibly, "Land on your feet." In a split second I miraculously managed to right myself and land

feet first. As my feet impacted the ground I heard the sound of shattering bones as my left tibia/fibula plateau crumbled into 40 pieces. My right heel was crushed and two lower lumbar vertebrae fractured. As I lay there crying out in pain I did not realize Miriam had seen the whole mishap.

I was unaware of the severity of my injuries until the paramedics arrived and I heard one of them say, "Oh, this is bad" (not the first thing you want to hear from an EMT!). The next several hours were a blur as I was transferred from our local hospital to the University of Iowa Hospital. A blood clot had formed in my left leg, traveled through the heart, and lodged in the main artery of my left lung. It was another miracle that no serious damage took place. The doctors say the clot will dissolve completely in time.

After the first of what would be three surgeries, the

Holy Spirit showed me it was not only my body that was shattered. Over the last several years of a 15-year bi-vocational ministry, like a frog slowly cooking in a kettle, I had allowed my pastoral and spiritual life to disintegrate too. I let the business of life and ministry take precedence over my intimate time with the Lord. Sure, I spent a few minutes a day with Him, but the passion and hunger for more of Him had waned. No

wonder I had become exhausted, frustrated, lonely, and empty. It took six weeks of confinement in a hospital bed for me to be "still" enough to hear Him speak to me about me, instead of hearing only messages for others.

As I wept and repented the Holy Spirit showed me I was not alone. Thousands of pastors face the same crisis - many silently suffering from exhaustion, frustration, loneliness, and emptiness. Some acknowledge this fact. Others try to ignore it. Still

others, like me, believe they will never be able to have that intimacy with God again and give up trying.

Whether you are a pastor or a layperson, if these words ring hauntingly familiar, stop, be still, and know that God - above all else - desires intimate time with you.

"And therefore the Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]!" (Isaiah 30:18, Amplified).

He is waiting. Are you willing?



Dan's daughter Caelan, visits him in the hospital



Daniel Pope, a third generation Open Bible pastor, serves as assistant pastor at First Church of the Open Bible in Ottumwa, Iowa. He and his wife, Miriam, also founded and direct Open Bible Generations, a ministry for pastors' children. Undergoing therapy to learn to walk again, Dan is believing for a complete recovery.

