

Tranquility in the Face of Terrorism

By Ken Hekman



The Hekman Group

Medical Management Ingenuity

4623 Forest Lane, Suite 100
Holland, Michigan 49423
(616) 335-5700

Copyright © 2007 The Hekman Group

I didn't have an enemy to finger... I was left with only inconsolable anguish.

The quietness of my soul comes, instead from an affirmation at the core of my being that God's in charge.

Sorrow has blown away my blinders, and drawn me toward the plight of suffering people everywhere.

Great pain offers great opportunities for personal growth.

The terrorism that we can no longer ignore seems awfully familiar to me. I faced my own equivalent of the terrorist attacks three years ago when I lost my 17-year old daughter in a car accident. The only difference was I didn't have an enemy to finger. Black ice was to blame, nothing more. There was no place for justice, only inconsolable anguish.

The terrorist attacks on our country have served as a test of the state of my soul, and I'm amazed at the enrichment I have found. I resonate with the sadness of the country, and especially with those close to the losses. None of that can be minimized. I'm fully conscious that there are now millions that have joined the ranks of grieving parents, grandparents, spouses, children, siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts, close friends and acquaintances. I found myself pondering what the waiting lines for heaven – and hell – looked like on September 11.

But I have no fear. I don't fear for my own safety, or even for the safety of my immediate family members. We are each ready to die without being either suicidal or fatalistic about it. The terror that may have been intended for me seems to have bounced off without a trace of damage. My sense of security is not because I live in the heartland. I think everyone is equally in harm's way regardless of where they live, and I do not expect to curtail my traveling.

The quietness of my soul comes, instead, from an affirmation at the core of my being that God's in charge, and that I am at peace with him. This isn't about Osama bin Laden or his followers. It's about who God is. I still don't understand how or why he permits this kind of atrocity, but I don't feel the need to know. I'm contented with knowing only that he uses the incredible pain, fear, anger, patriotism and sorrow, on both sides of the conflict, for greater good in an eternal sense, for something way too wonderful for us to comprehend.

I also recognize enrichment that has come from service to others. My personal sorrow has heightened my awareness of the pain in everyone's life. No one is immune to it. Its source and character may vary, but we're all connected to each other and interdependent far beyond our imagination. Sorrow has blown away my blinders, and drawn me toward the plight of suffering people everywhere. I feel everyone's pain and can no longer pretend to be unaffected by it. I have responded by writing and serving, sharing of myself to a much wider audience. I have made myself vulnerable to people and institutions in developing countries, only to be shocked at how pouring out my heart so richly feeds my soul.

Great pain offers great opportunities for personal growth for those willing to let it be their teacher. It strips away all pretension about who we are and reveals the truest picture of the human condition. It demands answers to the most basic questions about the purposes of life. It leaves us naked and vulnerable before God, insisting that we figure out what to do with him. It offers a clean slate for aligning priorities. It gives us a chance to choose what it means to be centered, to live a balanced and fulfilling life. It gives us a chance to redefine joy as a sensitivity that is incomplete without grief. Fearlessness does not come from trying to avoid or prevent sorrow but by learning to live with it.

... by letting pain speak for itself, by letting its special kind of humility draw us to the deepest truths of humanity.

My heart goes out to everyone touched by this unspeakable tragedy. Restoration is impossible for them and we do a disservice to speak about it as though returning to a prior condition is a realistic, or even desirable, goal. There will never be "closure." History is never finalized. Each chapter is merely a platform for the next. We serve those who grieve, and ourselves, far better by letting pain speak for itself, by letting its special kind of humility draw us to the deepest truths of humanity.