

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Be Resilient

By Shane Freeman
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Don't it always seem to go, you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone. That Joni Mitchell lyric from her 1970 hit song, *Big Yellow Taxi*, has recently become very timely in my life.

OUCH!

A few months ago, I was working in my study when two of my sons called and invited me to play disc golf with them at a local course. Although I hadn't played in a year or so, I wasn't about to miss an opportunity to spend time with them. (When your adult children ask you to do things with them, you do it!)

They arrived at the course ahead of me and had already warmed up, so I barely even stretched my arm before throwing two drivers at hole one, taking the best lie from which I made a relatively short put. When making my drive toward the second basket, I felt – and we all heard – a loud “RIP” in my arm as I threw the disc.

It would take a series of x-rays and then an MRI to confirm that the bicep tendon in the bend of my elbow had snapped in two. The repair required surgery that immobilized my right arm for two months and left me with a lovely five-inch scar.

Physical therapy for range of motion and re-strengthening continues even now.

Did I mention that I'm right-handed? Actually, I'm extremely right-handed due to an injury and subsequent surgery on my left wrist thirty years ago when I was in the Army. As a result of that old injury, I have rarely used my left hand for anything significant for three decades.

I didn't realize just how dependent upon my right arm I had become until I couldn't use it. I discovered there were some essential activities that I could not perform. During this time my wife became more of a helpmate than ever before, and in ways that I would have never imagined or expected.

I am so thankful to again have the use of my right arm, but the temporary limitation forced me to make some adjustments and innovations that I hope to retain.

Major adjustments

The same realities exist in other current life experiences and ministry. I was quite accustomed to the way things were before our world was temporarily immobilized by a global pandemic. I didn't realize how dependent I had become on things being the way they were.

Of course there were constant changes but for the most part, those changes were improvements that provided advancements, opportunities, and greater accessibility. Like most others, I was not prepared for the radical social, financial, and health safety changes brought on by the pandemic.

These changes have made me think long and hard about several matters, like how and why we gather for corporate worship. I have also been reminded how immensely important relationships are and how crippling isolation can be.

I am much more appreciative of the freedoms we enjoy and the

blessings we have. I'm also striving to be more aware of the new ministry opportunities these radical changes have provided.

Press on!

In this present state of constant flux, I hope to maintain a spirit of flexibility, resiliency, and positivity that glorifies the Lord. Our world is full of chaos and division, violence and pain, politics and propaganda. It's easy to become distracted, dismayed, and downcast if we focus on what we have lost or long for what was. We need to accept that we live in a new normal, and we don't know how long this normal will last.

Be resilient. Make necessary adjustments. Re-strengthen your resolve and press on boldly as you continue to serve others and share the Gospel.

My prayer for us is with the words of the Apostle Paul: *"Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Jesus Christ, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one mind and one voice"* (Romans 15:5-6 CSB).

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