

KITCHEN COUNTER MUSING

From Pastor Mark for Friday, August 1, 2025

LIFE IS A CHRONIC CONDITION

Jesus said, “**I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly** (John 10:10).” What he didn’t say was that life wouldn’t hurt. Here’s one reason why.

Years ago, I saw a physical therapist who kept me from going under the knife for almost three years. My left hip has been constantly hurting. Sometimes it left me limping. I finally went to my primary care doctor.

I came in thinking he might give me a shot of cortisone. Instead, he spent all his time testing movement in my hip which he said had become limited by osteo-arthritis. He gave me an RX for physical therapy.

Six sessions of physical therapy with my doing appropriate stretching in-between restored most of my flexibility and eliminated almost all the pain. But I was told I had to keep stretching. I said to my physical therapist that I hate stretching. He smiled and said, “You have a chronic condition. Your choice moving forward: stretch or suffer.”

As I reflected on the experience, I realized that I was hoping that my injury was acute, something that could be addressed with a “one-time shot.” That is, I was hoping the problem was something that could be fixed by someone else without my really having to do anything different. In essence, I was looking for an acute answer to a chronic problem.

It occurs to me that this is what most of us do, not just with injuries, but with life. We want quick fixes, acute solutions, to life-long issues. The reality is that life is a chronic condition and often don’t offer acute solutions.

Relationships are chronic, not acute realities. They take time. I abhor the “quality time” versus “quantity time” debate. The first presumes that relationships are acute. The second knows that meaningful relationships are built with hard work--time and devotion—chronic solutions. With my wife, my children, and my best friend, there is no “button” to push to make things work. My wife needs me sitting with her for coffee, walking the dogs, listening to her day. My children need me to be present when they need presence (NEVER on my schedule). My best friend and I take trips to baseball games, with the drive often being better than the game.

Health is a chronic problem at which we throw too many acute prescriptions. More rest, better eating, some exercise, these are choices by those who know that life is chronic. Listen to any radio station and somebody is ready to sell you an acute solution to your chronic health problems. The results are rarely satisfying.

Wealth is, for most people, only achieved with chronic results: hard work and saving. Most of us still have an acute hope for wealth—a lottery ticket, a stock exploding, or our house trebling in value. That more than half the nation, the Atlantic Monthly stated lately, has less than two months’ worth of savings is a startling statistic. Retirement has now become an acute problem for many because of a failure to understand the chronic nature of our lives when we were younger.

Faith, believe it or not, is a chronic condition until we leave this life for more life (see Revelation 21:1-7). We must work at faith. When life hits the “fan,” faith muscles that haven’t been “stretched out” by prayer, worship or study rarely work as we would like them to. If we only use them under acute circumstances, they, well, they hurt more.

And so now I stretch every day, well, almost every day. Jesus gave me this condition called, “life.” It is abundant, yes, but it’s also chronic. Life takes work. And time. Both, I believe, are part of Jesus’ RX for abundant living.

And, yes, I still fantasize as I prepare to stretch about a “shot” that solves all my problems. But then I smile, go downstairs and begin with deep knee bends.