

I remember coming back from summer vacation to grade school, as I am sure many of you do as well, and on the first day we were supposed to write about what we did while school was out. Many of my classmates wrote about their big trip to the Grand Canyon or of the family caravan across this great nation to Florida, but I usually just wrote about playing baseball. I never really had a big story to tell until this last summer. I don't play baseball anymore, I've long since outgrown grade school, and I'm not really sure that you could term what I've been through as a vacation. What I am about to tell you is a story about two brothers and Jesus; a true story full of passion, friendship, and a love like no other.

Excitement was in the air that dark July morning, even though I had yet to wake up. It was 1 A.M. and my brother, Nic, and I were boarding the plane for our first international surf trip to Costa Rica. I was still pretty groggy when we finally sat in our seats and hoped that I would be able to sleep on the plane, a first for me. When I next opened my eyes we were in San Jose, Costa Rica and I felt rested.

Nic and I happily retrieved our massive board bag filled with much more than just our surfboards. It had taken some sweet-talking but Nic had successfully negotiated our bag onto the plane for a mere \$25 dollars. The airline had wanted \$100 as well as the bag going on as stand by, guaranteed to arrive within 6 business days. "That just would not do," I remember Nic saying with an undertone of confidence and winking in my direction. I couldn't help but smile now as the rental car clerk strained to lift the bag, which I am sure came close to matching his own body weight.

We had tipped our clerk \$2 dollars for his trouble after we had successfully reached the rental car agency and he seemed pleased. Nic strolled in and began the paperwork with the rental car agency. I had remembered a couple of my friends coming down to Costa Rica and getting in a car accident without the car insurance and having to pay heavily, so Nic and I paid for the extra insurance. Not that either of us were planning to get into a wreck, heck neither of us had ever even been in a car accident in our life. We prided ourselves on our abilities to drive and control the situation, but in a foreign country we weren't taking any chances.

We had originally made a reservation for a small 4x4 S.U.V., but it seemed that they did not have any of those on the lot. We were then upgraded to the midsize S.U.V. at no extra cost. Nic and I were naturally delighted and loaded up. Next stop Playa Hermosa, just south of Jaco.

The drive to Jaco was crazy! The single lane road going in both directions was supposed to be the biggest in Costa Rica. This road climbed, twisted and turned through the mountainous rain forests like some paranoid concrete snake. Steep ascents followed by switchbacks and rollercoaster like descents were enough to make me sweat as Nic drove. The roads were poorly marked and we debated each time we passed a possible turn off. There was only one thing crazier than the roads, the truck drivers. Men driving tractor-trailers would pass people going downhill around a turn. Or they would lumber by and pass going up hill into the cover of the thick canopy. It was impossible to know if another car

was coming up around the turn or over the hill through the canopy. I couldn't believe it and wondered if they had some form of advanced radar that the rental agency had neglected to sell us.

Apparently they had no such radar as we were stopped in the middle of our journey to Jaco on a steep grade because of a wreck that had happened about a half hour previously. I got out of the S.U.V. and ventured down the hill about 200 yards before coming up to a car that had been mangled and almost pushed off of a sheer cliff. I quickly walked back to Nic and told him of my findings. We both agreed that it would be terrible to be in a wreck so far away from a big city and in the middle of the rain forest. We both prayed for the individuals as their ambulance sped by and we resumed our surfing vacation.

We passed through Jaco and found a place to stay in Playa Hermosa right on the beach. It was great! Nic and I couldn't wait to get into the water and catch our first waves in Costa Rica! We surfed for about 3 hours and then went to bed. The next morning I woke up with a slight ache in my ear. I could tell that if I did not get this taken care of it would develop into an ear infection. This had happened to me before and I was pretty bummed. Nic and I went out and got some cold and sinus tablets and I began taking them immediately. We continued surfing in Playa Hermosa for a couple of days and then we decided to go south to Dominical.

The road south to Dominical was treacherous! It was an unpaved, pothole infested 4x4 adventure! I kept telling Nic that our buddy in Modesto would love this; yes Matt here is your shout out. We had to cross many one-lane bridges and muddy creek beds. We even had this crazy detour that took us out into the middle of nowhere! We were having a great time though, except for my ear. It was getting worse and worse. After we reached dominical my mom told me to buy some penicillin at a local pharmacy. I was shocked that you could just buy penicillin at a pharmacy, and that is exactly what I did. Well, amoxicillin to be exact.

It rained like we were in the middle of a rainforest, which we were, for the entire night. Nic and I still caught some good waves and agreed to head back up North in the morning. We were going to try and get to Tamarindo. During the drive back our battery light came on in the SUV, which freaked us out. We would pass a branch of our rental car agency in Jaco and decided to stop there. It turned out that our alternator had died and they again upgraded us to an even better truck. The truck we received was a big 4x4, 4-door diesel beast. We were stoked to get it and continued our journey to Tamarindo.

It was a beautiful drive and we were enjoying ourselves until we saw a large delivery truck in the distance slam on his brakes. Apparently he was going too fast through the steep windy grades. We watched as he screeched off of the road, hitting several trees, until he came to rest on one of them. That tree was the only thing keeping him from dropping down the side of the mountain to his death. Nic and I were in a state of shock for about 5 minutes to say the least, and then we resumed our surfing vacation.

We had 3 solid days of surf in Tamarindo including Witch's Rock and Ollie's Point. We even surfed this place called the Labyrinth and it was

awesome! We probably caught the best waves of the trip at the Labyrinth. Nic and I were now at an impasse. We had gone from Dominical, to Playa Hermosa, to Jaco, to Boca Baranca, to Tamarindo and finished ahead of schedule. We decided to go down the Nicoya Peninsula to Mal Pais. We had just filled up and it was just about 9:50 in the morning when our surf vacation in Costa Rica ended.

Nic and I were really excited about finding a place that sold Snickers candy bars and I was stuffing my cheeks with the chocolate, nuts and caramel. We were driving around a bend, going the speed limit that was about 60Kph or 37.28Mph, when Nic saw a large Mack dump truck careen into our lane and occupy the entire road. Nic quickly swerved to the right to avoid getting hit by the truck. There was about a half foot or foot difference between the elevated road and the dirt along the shoulder. Our truck fell off of the road except for the driver side tires. We missed the Mack truck by less than a foot but were still in peril of getting clobbered by the tree-lined shoulder. Nic quickly tried to jerk the truck back onto the road, however the elevated road acted like a train track pushing our turned tire straight ahead. This was bad news because we were quickly coming upon a 100-foot ravine crossed by a concrete bridge. Everything was happening in slow motion now, and I watched as the dirt shoulder shrank behind a line of trees. I watched as a tree ripped off our side mirror. Nic later told me that at this moment he was thinking, "Man, I hope that doesn't cost too much to fix!" I then looked at Nic and he was looking at me. We shared a fraction of a second in a deep discussion of the eyes saying above all else, "My brother I love you." I then looked ahead to see the concrete buttress of the bridge directly in front of me. I watched as the windshield slowly began to spider crack it's way toward the driver's side of the truck and then the dashboard jumped out to meet me. The next thing I remember was waking up spitting blood and snickers. Blood was also draining from my nose and I thought that I had broken it for sure. Nic had already crawled out of his window and was trying to pull me out, but my leg would not move. My femur was completely broken in half and the dash was pinning the skin together where bone had once been. I remember hearing Nic run into the street yelling in a frantic and strained voice, "Call 9-1-1, Call 9-1-1!" His tone of voice sent shivers down my spine and I knew that I was in bad shape. I woke up again to see Nic bend down the top of my door, and then he rocked and ripped it from its hinges. I thought "Ya! That's my brother and he's gonna get me out!" I woke up again in Nic's arms while he was brushing the blood soaked hair from my face and kissing me on the head. Our air bags never deployed. An American Angel named Mike showed up at the scene and told Nic that he would take all of our stuff and make sure that he got it to us safely. Nic asked him to clean out the bloody cab and retrieve everything and he said he would. He then told Nic to make sure that I was taken to CIMA hospital, no other! Mike then began to toss all of our gear into his truck. The Mack dump truck that had caused the wreck disappeared over the horizon.

A van with a red cross on the side showed up and lifted me onto a makeshift cot. Nic grabbed the insurance papers from the truck and jumped in. They did not stabilize my leg and Nic was left to hold it steady as we drove. I

was lying with my back on the cot and my leg was turned as if I were lying on my side. Each time we hit a pothole, in the pothole-infested road, my body would shake and grind the broken bones within my leg. The pain was intense and without relief. The only thing holding my leg together was the skin and muscle. 45 minutes later we arrived at a small one-room clinic. The “nurse” on duty said that it was definitely broken and that I would have to be taken to Nicoya, which was 1.5 hours away. They gave me a shot of antibiotics and we were on our way.

Nic was still holding my un-stabilized leg and we seemed to be hitting every pothole on the road. We had to stop and weave our way through a multitude of cows as they were being led across the road. The people in the van with us attempted to set up an I.V. drip of saline solution, but had nowhere to hang it. They attempted to jam a wooden tongue depressor into the roof of the van and hang the I.V. bag on that. I can tell you that it worked well for about 5 seconds. It kept falling on me until finally they decided just to hold it.

We finally reached the Nicoya clinic, which reminded me of a warehouse. It had concrete floors and large opening that you could fit a truck through. I was wheeled in and the doctor immediately knew that I needed to go to San Jose for surgery. They took me to the X-Ray room and I became aware of the large crowd that I was attracting. There were many people gathered around me that were dressed in just regular clothes and just looking at me. I didn't know what they were doing or why they were there, but then again I was using all of my focus to deal with the pain. The doctor then came in and two men rolled me onto the metal X-Ray table, it hurt like hell. They took my X-Rays and I watched as the doctor examined the one of my right femur. It looked gruesome. The bone was completely broken in half, and two other smaller pieces had been fractured off. The doctor shooed all of the people out of the room and slid what reminded me of a barn door shut. A man then came in and pulled my leg straight. I heard the bones and muscles violently clash and pop with each other and tried to squeeze the pain from my mind. I was sweating profusely and realized that all of my teeth had been chipped and some were cracked. The good news was that my nose wasn't broken. They then used a piece of cardboard and tape to stabilize my leg. As you can imagine, cardboard is not very strong and each time they moved me they would grab my heel and my leg would bend at the break. I would hear that now familiar grating of bone and feel the sear climb up my leg.

While I was in with the “doctor”, Nic was out trying to take care of the insurance and call our parents. He found out that everyone in the town knew of our wreck, it was big news. After we hit the bridge, our truck had flown 10 feet vertically into the air. When it came down all of our tires were popped and some of the wheels were broken from the axels. The wheels were thrown into the bed of our truck, breaking all of our surfboards. He was sent to some other office to deal with the insurance and no one was helping him. Remember, he speaks no Spanish, and the people speak no English. Somehow he found the right place and took care of the paperwork. He came back and saw me on the stretcher with the van guys just hanging out. He tried to use the phone at the hospital but they would not let him. He offered to pay \$20 dollars to make the call but they said

no. So Nic had to go and get a phone card, then he had to pay a bum \$5 dollars to show him how to use it. He talked briefly with my parents and came back to me. I asked Nic to buy all of the guys in the Red Cross van a Coke, to ensure our delivery to San Jose. The Coke was a big deal to those guys. Nic told the "doctor" that we wanted to go to CIMA but he said that he was responsible to deliver us to the Hospital de Mexico. We were to tell them that we wanted to go to CIMA and then they would transport us. We finally started our 2-½ hour drive to San Jose.

I became really sleepy during the drive. I remember thinking, 'I've got to stay awake.' Nic saw me struggling too and kept slapping and nudging me to stay awake. We arrived at the Hospital de Mexico and the first thing I saw was the cracked, water stained ceiling tiles as I was pushed into the E.R. I remember thinking 'If the ceiling looks this bad, do I really want to look down?' I did look down to see a multitude of tattered people clogging the halls like cholesterol in the arterial walls of fried chicken lover. They were all huddled into their own groups, just standing and waiting. I looked over at Nic as he was frantically trying to tell the nurse that we wanted to go to CIMA. No one spoke English except for the E.R. doctor who poked his head out of intermittent curtains, yelling translations to the nurse. She finally understood and had me sign a handwritten document releasing me from the hospital to CIMA, and then I waited. Lying on my back I wondered where Nic had gone. I wondered why the nurse kept running around me, I realized that I wasn't their responsibility anymore and no longer received attention. I could hear Nic whistling and tried to cock my head so that I could see him. I laid there for two hours asking for my brother, and when I would go. Finally Nic came in and said we're out of here in ten minutes.

It turned out that Nic had been on his own adventure. The police would not allow Nic to come back and wait with me. He tried to get to me three times and was almost arrested on the third. He then looked for the Red Cross people who had brought us there but they had vanished, as far as they were concerned their job was done. He then bartered with the administration for an ambulance to take us to CIMA, a ten-minute drive, and they said they couldn't do it. They said that we should rent a car or call a taxi. Nic offered them two hundred dollars to take us and they said they would try. They gave Nic a note and told him to take it to the ambulance dispatch two blocks away. He did so and they said the earliest that they could get an ambulance would be an hour. Nic returned to the hospital, praying along the way. A man saw the distress in Nic's face and asked him if he needed help in English. Nic explained that he was trying to get his injured brother to CIMA despite the many obstacles being placed in his path. The man said that he worked for CIMA and not to worry. He then dialed CIMA's direct line and told Nic that an ambulance would be here in ten minutes.

Two men accompanied my brother into the E.R. and they were dressed like E.M.T.s here in the states. I could see the disapproval in their faces as they assessed my situation. I was lying on my back, practically naked, with a depleted I.V. resting on my chest. The method in which my leg had been stabilized brought them a particularly stern look. They took hold of the situation and moved me onto their gurney. The way in which they moved and handled

themselves gave me great relieve. I could tell they had confidence in their training and in themselves. I could tell that they were good and that I was going to a better place. I could tell that they cared. Hot damn, the Calvary had come with my brother riding point and holding the flag!

They wheeled me into a real ambulance, and we were on our way. They asked me why had we not requested a helicopter from CIMA. Nic told them that he had asked many times. They told us that the Red Cross drivers do not get paid until they deliver the patient to a hospital. That my life was put at risk so that they could earn a measly couple hours pay. We finally arrived at CIMA, nine hours later.

I arrived at CIMA with a 105° temperature because of the infection that had developed in my leg. My right thigh had swelled to four times the size of my left, and I thanked Jesus because the ceiling tiles were beautiful. I was immediately placed on a large bag of I.V. antibiotics and the nurses giggled as they cut off the tape and cardboard. My leg was then placed in an air cast. My doctor strolled in and the first thing I noticed was how nicely he was dressed. He was in a very nice suit and tie, and flashed me a smile as he asked what seemed to be the matter. He viewed the X-Rays and told me that my orthopedic surgeon would be in soon and that my surgery would take place shortly thereafter. I was informed later that if I had stayed at the other hospital, my surgery would have taken place a day and a half later.

A big ol' dude, about 6'6" walked in with a big smile. He too was dressed very nicely. He began to talk to me about the surgery and described the possible risks. He said that I could develop a blood clot that could go to my lungs and kill me. I agreed that we should try to avoid that complication. He told me that it was possible that he could make a mistake and cause nerve damage resulting in loss of feeling. I looked up and said "Doc, right now it's you and me. You're the man, you're my man!" With that he smiled and said that he would prep for surgery. An hour later I remember being wheeled into the O.R. I remember looking at this 6'6" man horizontally suspended 3 feet off the ground pushing on some sort of harness with his foot. I remember thinking how funny he looked and wondering what the heck he was doing. Then it hit me, he was preparing the harness for me... then the drugs took me away.

I woke up early that morning to see Nic asleep on the couch in my room. As a result of the I.V., I needed to pee like every two hours. Nic would jump up and get my metal pot, warm it in warm water, and give it to me with paper towels. Then he would empty it and go back to sleep. He waited on me hand and foot for the next day and a half. I was concerned about him. He looked ragged and wasn't getting good sleep. Everyone was worried about me and waiting on me, but who was for Nic? He had been in the wreck too. He had sustained trauma injuries to his muscles, not to mention the emotional and mental trauma. He had much more of the imagery of the wreck than I did, as well as the burden of being the driver. This is where the family of God came to the rescue.

My parents had been in contact with many people, in particular the families of Andy Albrecht and Paul Newkirk. Andy contacted the parents of Rachael and Ali, a couple who lived down in San Jose. Rachael came by to

check on us and offer any help that she could. Her family was a huge help and reflected what it really meant to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul offered to fly down for support and my Mom asked Nic if that would be a good idea. Nic asked me and I said, "Send him." I heard Nic say, "Send him," and the next thing I knew the dude was there!

He immediately focused on Nic and getting him better, which gave me great relief and made me happy. He also protected me from the psycho shower nurse. This male nurse would put me in the shower with cold water. I would begin to shake, which would shake the bones in my leg and cause me great pain. I told him that I needed hotter water and he began filling bowls full of water from the sink and then poured them on me. The water was getting hotter and hotter until I finally saw steam coming from the bowl and said no way Jose! He would have scalded me if I had not said no.

Mike called and said that he had our stuff and would like to get it to us. Rachael took over and made arrangements for our stuff to make the 5-hour journey to San Jose. It turned out that a local hotel had a shuttle that was going right by Mike's house, I mean right by it. They do not accept luggage without the passenger, but it just so happened that a woman was traveling to San Jose without any luggage and agreed to take charge of our luggage. The shuttle passed right by Rachael's house as well and unloaded our luggage onto her front door. She went through all of our stuff, after gaining permission, and washed and dried everything. Rachael and Ali, you guys are AWESOME!

I remained in the hospital until that Tuesday. Both of my doctors came by to visit me frequently. They both were always dressed very nicely and were awesome guys genuinely concerned with my welfare! I was told that if I had remained in the other hospital that my thigh would have been cut opened and the bone wrapped in wire. I would have been in a cast, both legs, up to my chest for 6 months. As I stand right now, I have a rod with three screws and no cast. I have two incisions on my right buttocks and two puncture wounds below my knee.

It is amazing to me to look back and see how Jesus moved through this crisis. I was on antibiotics because of my earache seven days before the accident, which helped fight the infection in my leg. Nic was given the ability to miss the oncoming truck that would have killed us. Nic missed the 100 foot drop that would have killed us. Nic was relatively uninjured and was able to take care of me. Nic ripped the passenger door from its hinges. Nic remembered to get the insurance papers from the glove box. I didn't damage the femoral artery. I only broke my leg. Mike came out of nowhere and took care of our stuff. Mike told us to go to CIMA. A man at the Hospital de Mexico called CIMA for us. My surgeon interned with the Cleveland Browns and Indians. Rachael and Ali showed up and took some of the responsibility from our shoulders. Paul and Andy worked together to relieve much of the burden from our parents and us. One thing that Andy said will stick with me for the rest of my life. He said to the hospital, "Spare no expense, I don't care about the cost, get those guys home; safe!" Paul arrived and took care of both my brother and me. My parents allowed Paul to come instead of them selves. God orchestrated the return of our

luggage. Rachael cleaned it all for us. She and Ali even went out to buy coffee so that I would have gifts to give upon my return.

I still have a long way to go. My bones look like the wood of a shredded pencil. Life is a fragile thing, but the grip of my loving God is not. My Jesus is an international Lord and there is nowhere that I can go to escape his loving hand. I know that I have left many details from the story, but the one thing that I want you to understand is this. Pain and suffering cannot penetrate the love of Christ, and His family is real!

I would like to thank my brother for saving my life. I would like to thank my parents for orchestrating the Calvary! I know it was difficult for them to remain in the U.S., but it was for the best. Thank you for having everything ready for our return. I would like to thank Andy and Laurie for all that they did and continue to do for us. I would like to thank Paul and Elaine for sending Paul to help us. I would like to thank Rachael and Ali for their great help. I would like to thank Kori and Steve for sending a pastor to see us, and all they did and continue to do to help and support our family. I want to thank Mike for getting our stuff and telling us about CIMA. I want to thank my wonderful Doctors, the fantastic Hospital CIMA and their staff. I want to thank that guy who called the ambulance for me. Thank you my family at L-3 Communications. You guys have been a non-stop source of support and compassion through this experience. I feel especially blessed to work with such a fantastic group of people. Thank you Uncle Sonny for your compassion and understanding. Thank you Seth, my bro in Kentucky, for tracking us down all the way in Costa Rica. Thank you Jesus for your plan!

Thank you all for your prayers! I believe if God has put it on your heart to pray, then He will also use you in the answer.

R.P. Seitz