

The DIAZ Dispatch

October 2017

INTRODUCTIONS

Since we mailed out our last newsletter, several brand new introductions have taken place in our lives. I'll fill you in on just three of them:



Dodger James meets his family

On Tuesday morning, August 30, we were suddenly but sweetly introduced to **Dodger James Diaz**. Dodger is Jonny's and Libby's second child and our 12th grandchild.

He was in a hurry at 4:00 a.m. when he decided that it was finally time to show up. He and his parents almost didn't make it to the birthing center on time! Dodger weighed in at 8 lbs. and 2 oz. with dark brown eyes and a full head of hair. He is adorable!

Gwen was in Nashville for his birth while Ed waited anxiously at home in Lakeland. Gwen ("Maury") held him within minutes of his entry into the world, and it wasn't long before Ed ("Pap") was introduced to his fifth grandson via FaceTime. Did we mention that we both think he is absolutely precious?

Happily for Dodger, his 2-year-old, big sister, Charlie Grace, adores him. After all, she is the one who chose his name. For months, when anyone asked what her baby brother's name should be, she insisted on "Dodger." Fortunately it was one of the names already on Jonny's and Libby's list of possibilities, because I'm not sure Charlie would have ever agreed to call him anything else.

We are very blessed and can't wait to introduce Dodger to you.

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Less than two weeks later after our sweet introduction to Dodger, we were brusquely and brutally introduced to a hurricane named **Irma**. As she was blustering her way up the west coast of Florida, she decided to pay us a personal visit. So she veered ever so slightly to the east in order to pass directly through Lakeland.

Our town is still digging out from the destruction and debris. We were very fortunate to sustain as little damage as we did. We lost a lot of plants and were without power for the better part of a week. But compared to others, we have no complaints!

Ben's and Lydia's home near Orlando took a tree through one of their windows and Matt's and Leslee's home in Winter Haven is now in need of a new roof.

Both of their homes were for sale at the time, so they are hustling to make repairs and restoration. Please pray that God will sell both of these homes quickly and easily so that both couples can move closer to Lakeland – bringing our grandchildren with them!

Irma helped us to get to know our neighbors even better than we already did as we all worked together to prepare for her visit and to clean up after she left. Those with generators (like us) shared freezer space and hot showers. Our pool became the hangout for the neighborhood children (and their parents), since September is typically one of the hottest months in Florida. (It is very hard to air condition a whole house using a portable generator.) Please pray for eternal consequences for some of these relationships that were deepened.



Neighbors help us prepare for Irma's visit

Thanks Irma, for introducing yourself. It was neighborly of you, but please don't suggest that your friends stop by for a visit any time soon.

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Jonny performs at the Ryman

Less than one week after Irma waved a hearty goodbye to us in Central Florida, Jonny was graciously and glowingly introduced at the Ryman in Nashville, TN. The Ryman is the original venue for the Grand Ole Opry and is a coveted place for Nashville artists to perform.

Jonny was invited to join Steven Curtis Chapman, Amy Grant, and Scottie McCreery to perform at "Sam's Place – Music for the Spirit." Steven explains the evening as an opportunity to "bring today's hottest contemporary Christian acts together." So it was a very special honor.

Please pray that God will continue to bless Jonny's music and use it to bring others closer to Himself.



THINGS I HAVE LEARNED and WANT TO PASS ON

by Ed Diaz (with a little help from Gwen)

#1 - My True Identity, Dignity, and Security

In his popular book *Wild at Heart*, John Eldridge illustrates a point from the movie *Gladiator*:

In a climactic scene at the Coliseum, Russell Crowe, as the Gladiator, has defeated his opponents and is visited by the false emperor Commodus, played by Joaquin Phoenix. Commodus demands to know Crowe's origins and character, "Who are you?"

After a dramatic pause, Crowe responds with defiance and disdain: "I am Gladiator. My name is Maximus Decimus Meridius; commander of the Armies of the North; General of the Felix Legions; loyal servant to the true emperor Marcus Aurelius; Father to a murdered son; husband to a murdered wife. And I will have my vengeance in this life or the next."

As I read through *Wild at Heart* with a group of men, we challenged each other to write our own "identity" statement. This is what I submitted:

"I am Edward Lee Diaz; child of the King of the Universe; committed Husband to Gwen; Proud Father of 4 godly sons; and Grandfather to 12 incredible grandchildren! I am a 'Keeper of the Door'; I am a Maker of Disciples; I am gifted by my heavenly Father to declare His Word. And I will spend Eternity with all of my brothers and sisters in Christ – worshipping in the very presence of God."

On his very last night with his disciples, before he celebrated the Passover and instituted the Last Supper sacrament, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Then he commanded them (and us) to do the same: "For I gave you an **example** that **you also should do** as I did to you (John 13:15)." What was it about Jesus that allowed him to humble himself and serve his disciples even in the face of their denial and his imminent death?

As we read John 13, we realize that Jesus was acutely aware of three crucial facts:

¹NOW before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

²And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,

³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given *all things* into His hands, and that He had come forth *from God*, and was *going back* to God,

⁴rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about.

Before he washed a single foot, Jesus was aware of:

1. **His true Identity** – He wasn't from Nazareth or the child of an unwed Mom. *He was sent here from God!*

2. **His true Dignity** – He wasn't a penniless, homeless carpenter. *He was worth everything his Father had!*

3. **His true Security** – His final destination was not a cross or a tomb. He was going back to his Father!

In a sense, Jesus was equipped (like an astronaut going into space) with a three-compartment "backpack" that enabled him to not only survive in a hostile place – but to thrive!

And the great news is: we are equipped in the same way Jesus was!

Look at these verses:

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. *(I, too, am a child of God. This my true identity!)*

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. *(I too am blessed with every spiritual blessing. This is what gives me true worth and dignity).*

Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *(I couldn't ask for greater security!)*

As a maker of disciples, I am called to wash others' feet. When I focus on my true identity, dignity and security, I am free to focus on others instead of myself. I can wash feet just as Jesus did!

- It does not matter where I am from – I am a child of the King!
- It does not matter how much earthly stuff I own – I have every spiritual blessing!
- It does not matter what happens in this life – I will be with Him forever!

Perhaps, more than any other truth, knowing that I am equipped by God to serve and thrive in a hostile world has shaped the ministry I have been blessed to be a part of for so many years. Gwen and I both know that our job is to get out there and "wash feet."