THE NOBLE HEART™

A dangerous but necessary road

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I recently overheard a conversation between two men. One said, "The strong rule the weak. That's how your God made the world." The other responded, "God makes us strong only for a while, so that we can help each other." To which the first man responded, "My God makes me strong so I can live my life."

This conversation was in a movie I re-watched called *First Knight*, the King Arthur and Camelot story. The first and last man to be quoted was Malagant, the fallen knight from Arthur's Round Table.

Malagant captured in a sentence the general belief of the era that we are living in - "My God makes me strong so I can live my life." In a word this belief can be described as narcissism – and is defined as excessive self-admiration and self-centeredness.

Erwin McManus wrote in his book *Stand Against the Wind,* "When we are in love with ourselves, we are prone to listen only to what we want to hear. We become willing to trade insight for affirmation. We want to feel good about ourselves more than we want to become good."

The pursuit of God and our calling is through the restoration and release of our heart. It is desire, not duty; passion, not passivity that leads and compel us in this pursuit. And yet on this narrow road of desire and passion, we are exposed to the deadly sheer drop-offs of self-centeredness.

To travel this essential road, we must build guard rails – structures that will save our life when we are too close to the edge, but may feel damaging when we encounter them.

Often our guard rails are the words of our friends.

"The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out." (Prov. 20:5 NIV) A person who will do this for us, reveal the purposes of our heart, is a true friend. "The slap of a friend (encountering a guard rail) can be trusted to help you, but the kisses of an enemy are nothing but lies." (Prov. 27:6 NCV)

By its very nature, self-centeredness is blind to its own condition – it is not self-disclosing. It must be revealed by another.

God has made us strong (given us splendor, brilliance, weightiness) not so we might live, but so that others might live. God has given us life and glory that we might offer it to another and therefore both experience life.

“Under [Christ’s] direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Eph. 4:16 NLT)

Malagant was once a noble man who lived by the dictum inscribed on King Arthur’s round table, “In serving each other, we become free.” In his freedom, he plunged into narcissism with the creed, “My God makes me strong so I can live my life.”

What is inscribed on your table? By what creed do you live? Do you sit alone or in the company of others? Is your table round, “no head, not foot, all equal”, or rectangular with distance and distinctions? Perhaps we can honestly answer these questions. Perhaps we cannot and only a friend can see us clearly. As Leo Tolstoy said, "We perceive others by their behaviour and ourselves by our intentions." Our intentions can be very different than our behavior; our behavior usually reveals what is truly in our heart.

Let us put into place and honor the guard rails needed on this essential road of desire and passion as we “Delight [our self] in the Lord and He [gives us] the desires of [our] heart. (Psa. 37:4).

Delighted to be in your company at the King’s round table,

Gary