

FOCUS ON FAITH

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IT'S THE EXPERIENCE THAT COUNTS

This last week has been a little weird for me. I've been off work following a minor operation on my nose – well that's what the specialist called it but I'm a man and it didn't feel minor to me! It involved day surgery under general anaesthetic and I have to say that the nursing staff at Shrewsbury Hospital were absolutely brilliant.

Obviously I'd been fully briefed about what was going to happen. Before arrangements were made for the operation the consultant explained everything and told me what he was planning to do; why it was necessary and what the options were – basically have this done or keep on suffering with what you've got! He outlined the likely effects and consequences – I won't go into them here for those reading who may be of a delicate disposition – and told me that I'd need a week to 10 days off work to recuperate. In the meantime of course I'd looked up the procedure on the Internet (just to make sure he was telling the truth) and talked to a couple of other people who'd had a similar operation.

The Nursing Sister at my Pre-Op Assessment went through much of the same information and on the day of the operation itself firstly a Junior Consultant explained it all again and then the Anaesthetist told me what he was going to do to me. On several occasions I was given the opportunity to ask any questions I might have had and to even change my mind and back out at the last moment if I was nervous and didn't want to go ahead.

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To be honest it did become a little tedious being asked the same questions by different people. I must have been asked whether I was allergic to anything at least five times (my answer was of course that I'm allergic to pain – they'd probably never heard that one before!) and I lost count of the number of times I was asked my name, date of birth and what procedure I was having. However I comforted myself with the reassurance that if everyone knew who I was and what was supposed to happen I wouldn't end up with someone else's operation!

And there was another reassurance – thankfully the people operating on me and those pumping painkillers into my body so I wouldn't feel what was going on, had done this type of thing before. That was one of the questions I'd asked and I'd been assured that this wasn't their first time and I wasn't a guinea pig for some mad experiment. These folk were experienced professionals who had trained for many years and were considered specialists in their areas of expertise and this gave

me the confidence to believe that they were competent enough to do a good job.

But enough about my experiences – where am I going with this?

Let me bring out a couple of points.

Firstly I knew the theory but the reality is different! We can be told about something or read about it but until we experience a situation for ourselves we can't fully appreciate what it means in practice.

The Bible invites us to ***"Taste and see that the Lord is good"*** but if we merely decline the invitation we'll never know. Whilst the endorsement of someone who is a Christian is helpful we have to experience what faith means for ourselves rather than rely on someone else's experience, valuable though that may be.

One of the comments I've heard people say when they become a Christian is, *"I never knew it could be as good as this"*. How could they – until it happens to you, you will never know for sure.

Secondly, each of us experiences situations differently.

My Consultant is an expert in his field but to be honest he was a detached expert – it was my nose he was operating on, not his. Those folks I'd spoken to who'd had a similar procedure handled the situation in their own way and possibly dealt with the outcome differently to the way I had to. This is my reality and whilst other people's experiences are valid their situations were not the same as mine.

That's why the Bible says each of us must give an account to God for the way we live our lives and how we respond to His invitation to know Him for ourselves. My faith can't be your faith – God through His Son Jesus meets us individually and personally.

There's one final point.

Thankfully my operation was all internal (nothing to spoil my good looks!).

And that's what happens to us when God comes into our lives.

It's an internal remodelling job, working on the inside so that we're changed in attitude and motivation which then makes a difference to every aspect of our lives.

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on local Churches together with contact details, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.