



Tunnel Vision: Good or Bad?

Dear friends,

God had a “tunnel summer” in His plans for our family. We asked you to pray for a surgery back in June and much has happened since then. Along the way, we carefully tried to answer the many requests we received for an update, and we thank God for the many emails, WhatsApps and good old phone calls! Reception remained good even inside the tunnel! Thank God!!

Here’s a quick description of our journey. Simeon was blessed during the recovery with strength and patience through a very high and intense level of pain. Six weeks after surgery he went in for his first check-up. It became immediately clear that he needed careful attention. A rare complication had developed with a great amount of liquid that had built up around his lungs.

We quickly realized that Stephanie needed to change her return flight while I returned to our church family in Florence. Healing became slow and complicated with pain lasting much longer than what had been predicted. A month after my return to Italy it became obvious that I needed to return to Indiana to support Stephanie as she was very exhausted in caring 24/7 for Simeon.

After a few weeks, once again, I had to leave her behind as Simeon’s recovery remained very slow and uncertain. It was painful for him and it was painful for us to see him suffer for so long. I was in line at the airport check-in in Chicago when I received a call from Simeon. He was at the emergency room with Stephanie. She was the patient this time... and she needed surgery.

Yes, I was at the airport... getting ready to fly... but God had another tunnel in mind. I rented a car and “ran” back, about 6 hours south, to be with Stephanie... and Simeon once again! When I met him he was waiting for news... Stephanie was in surgery... and it was time to wait some more... together. Praise God, the surgery was successful, Stephanie is ok now, and we are back in Florence! Oh, and I almost forgot, as soon as I came back to Florence, after visiting an unsaved friend in the hospital, I came down with Covid. So, now that’s out of the way as well!

Conclusions:

- Tunnels are ok. They are God’s provision to get through to the other side.
- There is light not only at the end, but inside the tunnel as well, Psalm 119:105.
- Jesus is the author and finisher of this journey. Hebrews 12:2. No tunnel is too hard or too long.
- Inside the tunnel, we are never alone. Even in the darkest hour we rely on His vision, His strength, and His perfect love.

You mind if I proceed with an invitation? :)

- Are you in a tunnel today?
- Do you feel like this tunnel is too long, too dark... just too much?
- Are you doubting God's control?
- Are you struggling?

Answered "yes" to any of these questions?

Well, congratulations! You are a real human being! Lately I had to think, once again, about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Any of you have fully understood what went on there? Sometimes I wonder if we think we need to act like we are "better" than Jesus! Is it ok to feel the weight, the darkness, the struggle of our tunnels? I believe it's ok to struggle, cry out to God in despair, and grip His hand when life is very dark.

We know that by holding His hand we experience His love in our darkest moments

What did Jesus do? He never left the Father out of His sight. Dear fellow tunnel travelers, all we have to do is cling to the Father, talk to Him, beg Him for help. He is calling us to develop "tunnel vision". "ONE THING". "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus". Phil. 3:13-14

Now, let me add to the "sermon" a few more praise items!

- First of all, Simeon is doing much better now. Praise God!
- We finally had a very exciting return to Florence.
- We recently counted fifteen new visitors in our most recent Sunday services.
- One of these guests: last Sunday a lady walked in toward the end of the service. I quickly went after her at the end as she was leaving hastily. Her name is E., she is in Florence from Vicenza because her three-month-old baby, C., has significant genetic problems and we have a well-known pediatric hospital in Florence. I stopped with her for a while and asked if I could pray with her and gave her my cell number offering our assistance. A minute later I was greeting Teresa, one of our members who works as a hospital technician. As I told her about C. she remembered this baby and said she had first welcomed C. to her room! Now we have a very special new connection with this family! Please pray as we seek to serve and reach them with the Gospel. What an amazing God we serve!!
- Last Sunday we also had three new people from Ukraine in our service. We heard they are coming back this week!
- On November 6th we plan to have four precious souls, two men and two women, give their testimony through the powerful proclamation of the Gospel through baptism. We expect many unsaved friends to be there.
- Last night, in our house group meeting, we welcomed A., a friend of Emanuele, another college student who just started to attend our services.

God bless you, dear fellow-tunnel-travelers. May God continue to use us together to meet and invite many to the light we have received in Him!

And, as always, thank you for your prayers and for your support!!!
Steve, Stephanie, Simeon and Elisa

p.s. Simeon's pain level is bearable, he is in physical therapy and in full swing with his second-year medical school studies. Elisa is doing well and growing in her love for music and worship. We praise God for the amazing journey our family is on!

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