

# FAITH & VALUES

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## VOICES OF FAITH

# Forgiving is the key to healing

By the Rev. Donald Paine

"You are one lucky man," the surgeon said. "I don't believe in luck," I said. "I see things with an eye of faith."

On Father's Day, I was struck from behind while walking to my car on a road in Great Barrington, Mass. I went by ambulance to Berkshire Medical Center and was airlifted to Albany Med. As they took me out of the helicopter on a stretcher, I asked if we could pause for a moment.

"Are you OK?" a crew member asked. I assured them I was.

Looking up at the stars in the crystal clear sky, I said, "I just wanted to thank God who is the maker of heaven and earth for being with me this day."

I heard someone say, "With this kind of spirit, he'll be fine."

I hear a lot of people say a lot of things about forgiveness. Some would make you feel you have a right to be angry and you don't have to forgive a person who does something wrong that hurts you.

**Moments after the accident, when I looked at the man who lost control of his car and hit me asking if I was going to be OK, I knew in my heart I had a spirit of forgiveness toward him.**

Moments after the accident, when the man who lost control of his car and hit me asked me if I was going to be OK, I knew in my heart I had a spirit of forgiveness toward him. I had no anger or bitterness, which released me to focus on my healing. At the same

time, I knew he was accountable to God for what he had done. Even God, who forgives all who truly repent, holds people responsible for their actions.

I had surgery to repair my severed pelvis and woke up with the determination to recover fully, to follow the instructions of my doctors, nurses and physical therapists and to exercise faith in God. Three weeks later I left the rehab center Phelps Hospital in Sleepy Hollow, I was certified "independently mobile." I'd learned to use a wheelchair and how to hop on my right foot using a walker. My left foot is still non-weight-bearing but that will change soon.

I have received flowers, notes, texts, tweets and Facebook posts from family and friends across the street and around the global village. They have created a river of encouragement that helped me remain optimistic even when negative distractions surfaced.

I do not know what good God will bring out of this. I wonder when they hear my story who will be encouraged to not give up hope or how someone who asks "Where is God when tragedy happens?" will understand my answer: "With me feeling my pain, assuring me of his love and whispering to my inner spirit: 'I give you the power of forgiveness to produce the spirit of courage and compassion.'"

My goal is to be back swimming in three weeks and walking in four. Maybe I will take a scenic helicopter ride with my son and grandson on Father's Day next year.

► *Donald Paine is a pastor and marriage and family therapist. He lives in Massachusetts and has an office in Albany.*