

CHAPTER 1

The Path of Most Resistance Begins

“**G**od, what’s wrong with you? Why don’t you heal me?”

These angry words erupted from my mouth as I stood behind the little church I pastored in Clifton, Texas. In 1968, I was 23 years old, despondent, brokenhearted, and deeply disappointed. I was faltering on the path of most resistance.

Days before, when I went to renew my driver’s license, I had almost failed the vision test.

“Mr. Fields, you better take care of those eyes!” the Highway Patrol officer said while shaking his finger at me. A knife in my heart would not have hurt any worse than his words. I drove home confused. *How can this be happening to me? I’ve tried with all my heart to believe God for healing, but my vision keeps declining.*

Back to the Beginning of the Path

In December 1945, hundreds of young women excitedly chattered as they waited for the train bringing their

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husbands home from World War II. The young wives standing on the railroad station platform in Ft. Worth, Texas, talked noisily about nothing in particular. All ears listened attentively for the train whistle. It was a great time to be alive and to know that your husband had survived the war in the South Pacific.

My mother, Joanna Fields, was almost 23 years old on that cool December morning. She beamed with joy at the prospect of seeing her husband, J. R., step off the train. Dressed in her best outfit, she strained to hear the train. She straightened the little jacket and hat on her seven-month-old son (me), and prepared to present her firstborn to the husband she so thoroughly loved. I appeared to be a nice, plump, healthy boy. But those eyes—they swerved in different directions and seemed so unfocused. Well, at that moment, nothing mattered except her husband's safe return.

There it was—the unmistakable shrill whistle of an oncoming train! Slowly the locomotive passed, the passenger cars clanged to a halt, and the doors opened. Looking through the surging crowd, Mom finally spotted her husband. They embraced. Tears of joy flooded their

eyes as they experienced the reunion, which, for so long had only been a dream. Mom then handed me to my father. Dad didn't mention my chubbiness, my cute baby clothes, or the elation at seeing his firstborn son.

“What's wrong with this baby's eyes?” he blurted out.

For some unexplainable reason I had been born with scarred macula. The macula, a tiny point on the back of the retina, contains the highest concentration of light responsive cells. It absorbs ninety percent of the light that enters the eye. It's one hundred times more sensitive to detail than the peripheral retina. Scars on the macula created areas of total blindness in the center of my vision. In an effort to see around these blind spots, my eyes swung wildly from side to side and worked independently of one another.

The pediatrician, Dr. Edward Weir, had assured Mom that by six months of age, I would be able to focus normally. Dr. Weir's confidence had soothed Mom's concern, but now, Dad watched my eyes cross, then turn outward, re-cross, and swing up and down. Something wasn't right.

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As Dad carried me out of the train station, he determined to take me to an ophthalmologist.

My folks took me to Dr. Speight Jenkins in Dallas. After examining the plump, seven-month-old boy, Dr. Jenkins recommended glasses immediately.

“How can you keep glasses on a seven-month old?” my parents asked. “Do we tape them on? Do we tie them on?”

“No, Mr. and Mrs. Fields, your baby will instantly notice the difference in his vision when we place the glasses on his face. He’ll leave them alone.”

As they walked out of the doctor’s office, my young and inexperienced parents concluded that the doctor didn’t know what he was talking about. No seven-month-old would ever leave glasses on his nose.

A week later, Dad held me in his arms as he sat in the doctor’s office. Dr. Jenkins knelt down before me, placed the glasses on my nose, and wrapped the ear pieces behind my tiny little ears. I reached up to feel the cause of this new sensation. Dad gently lowered my hand. “No-no Jim. Don’t take it off.” And I never did. Dr.



**Joanna Fields
with her 7 month
old son and his
first glasses**

Jenkins expected glasses to correct the focusing muscles.

My parents moved from Dallas to Corpus Christi, Texas, in January 1945. Because an infant's muscles develop so rapidly, the doctor had to change my prescription frequently. Mom and I made the 400-mile trip from Corpus Christi to Dallas four times a year, and each trip required new glasses.

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**J.R. Fields with his 21 month old son
following eye surgery**

On one of these quarterly trips, Dr. Jenkins surprised my parents by recommending eye surgery. My folks consented and allowed the doctor to operate on the eyes of their 21-month-old child. The surgery on the eye muscles enabled them to work together but did not remove the scars from the macula. The blind spots remained.

During childhood, I functioned pretty well. My vision actually improved. I passed the requirements for

driver's license and, like any 16-year-old boy, excitedly moved into the driver's seat of my parents' car.

About this same time, I accepted a Sunday School teaching position. In addition to preparing for the class of first grade boys, I started visiting the boys' homes. *Man, I can't read these street signs. I wonder how other people see them.* I didn't have an answer, so I just kept stopping the car at street corners and walking within a few feet of the signs so I could read them.

During my senior year of high school, my eyes began feeling very tired and my dad took me to another ophthalmologist. "I recommend bifocals for your son," the doctor said. Both my parents and I accepted Dr. House's advice, and I wore bifocals my final year in high school.

Looking For the Wrong Kind of Healing

During my last year in high school, reading the Bible convinced me that Jesus not only saves our souls, but also heals our bodies. I readily accepted divine healing and expected God to touch my eyes and restore perfection to my vision.

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For six more years, I eagerly anticipated a miraculous healing that would enable me to throw away my glasses. I believed in God's healing power. I sought healing by fasting, praying, having faith, attending healing evangelists' services, being anointed with oil by the elders, memorizing Scripture promises, and by striving to believe with all my heart. However, my vision declined while pain and muscle fatigue increased.

But God had another kind of healing in mind. He wanted to heal my angry spirit that accused Him of wrongdoing.

I Don't Like This Path of Most Resistance

God, what's wrong with You? Why don't You heal me? Those angry questions in 1968 revealed my total distaste for the path of most resistance. *I can't lose my driver's license and still pastor a church. What's going to happen to me?*

A few days after raising my fist toward heaven and angrily shouting at the Lord, I faltered once again. As I sat inside our small mobile home, discouragement

saturated me with despondency. Suddenly, I reached for my Bible, flung it against the wall, and shouted, “God, Your promises aren’t true!” Immediately, I ran across the room, picked up the Bible I so loved, and hugged it to my chest. “I love you, God, but I’m so angry. Why aren’t You helping me?” Tears gushed from my eyes, and sobs welled up from my inmost being.

God just kept loving me!

God loved me before the creation of the world.

He is love—eternal, infinite love. Love motivated all His decisions regarding my physical condition. The birth defect that placed me upon the path of most resistance served God’s loving purposes for me.

“For You created my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother’s womb.”¹ “This is what the Lord says—He who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you.”² “Listen to me...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived and have carried since your birth....”³ “He...formed me in the womb to be His servant....”⁴ God was not absent when blind spots developed on my retina. He saw how much I could profit from the path of most resistance.

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I wanted so desperately to walk the path of least resistance. I could not imagine any benefit in difficulties, trials, and disappointments. Nevertheless, the One who loves us with infinite love wisely chose a physical handicap for me that proved to be my best friend.

“Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your unfailing love you kept me from the pit of destruction.”⁵

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