

THE
MOSSY
CREEK
CHRONICLES



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CHAPTER SIX



Shoulda Seen It Comin'...

2nd Kings 2:1-12; Mark 9:2-9

Matt looked distracted. He was sitting alone looking at his feet. He didn't know what else to do. So when Bobby Ray sat down beside him, Matt was happy to have some company. They talked about small stuff mostly—the weather, work, and their families. That didn't last, and it wasn't long before Bobby Ray said, "I see where the Tigers just signed that All-America quarterback from Georgia." Matt looked back down at his feet again and said, "Yeah, I saw that, too. They could sure use the help. You think he'll be ready to play as a freshman?" Bobby Ray was doubtful. "They haven't had anybody like that since Josh." Matt nodded his head in agreement. "Yeah, we haven't seen anybody like him in a while. Josh was something else."

He looked back up and said, "I remember the first time I ever saw him throw a football. I stopped by to see his dad about one of his projects we were working on at the plant. It was a Saturday morning, and he and Josh were out in the backyard throwing a football around. Every time Will Grey caught that ball, you could hear it just

smacking his hands. He kinda laughed and said, "Here, you catch a few and give me a break." Man, his hands were red! And I'll tell you what, it wasn't long before mine were, too. Josh had no idea how strong his arm was. And he was just an eighth grader."

Bobby Ray just shook his head in amazement. Matt went on. "Will Grey said, 'Watch this.' He took off runnin' through the back yard and headed towards the barn. It was every bit of thirty yards, maybe more. Josh threw him a pass that was straight as an arrow. And he dropped that ball in Will Grey's hands just as soft as a feather. That boy had some kinda arm. Bobby Ray murmured, "Oh, yeah. Josh was one of a kind."

Matt nodded his head in agreement and said, "You know it wasn't long before people were saying he was better than Mr. David and Charlie. Now that's something." Bobby Ray agreed and said, "But it was hard to see that sometimes. I mean, Josh took a bad beating in high school. When Coach North had Josh running that option offense his sophomore year teams just pounded him. The next year Coach North changed the offense, but Josh's line wasn't too good, and he ended up taking the same kind of whuppin'." Matt said, "But even then you could still see he was going to be great. It didn't matter who was playing, Josh made them look good. He made them better players, and that's the truth." Bobby Ray looked over at Matt and said, "All-State three years in a row and an academic All-American all at the same time. Can't beat that."

Matt said, "You know what gets me? He does the same thing in college—never misses a beat. Everything is always in balance all the time. School, ball, and church—not everybody can do that. Shoot, some people don't even try." Bobby Ray said, "I heard that. And Josh was majoring in biology. It wasn't like he was taking the easy way out. Matt nodded and said, "And then he lets on he's thinking about going to medical school once he gets out of college." Bobby Ray mused, "But I thought that was going to be a ways down the road if it ever happened. I mean, here he is playing in a major conference and just tearing the league up. Everybody's saying he's going to be a number one draft choice. I don't think anyone had any idea he was going to pass up pro ball. I sure didn't."

Matt looked back down at his feet and said, "Yeah, that was a shock. Go through the draft, and you're set for life. It just doesn't look like that interested him much." Bobby Ray wondered out loud, "What would it be like to wake up every day and get paid a fortune to play ball? He woulda been travelling all over the place and meeting all kinds of people. He coulda done anything he wanted and gone anywhere he wanted. It was all up to him."

Matt shook his head and said, "I don't know about all of that. But maybe we shoulda seen it coming. He did all those mission trips in high school and kept right on doing them in college. And he did end up travelling all over the place—Tennessee, Central America, Africa. It's amazing all the places he went and all the things he did." Bobby Ray agreed and said, "I was just thinkin'. Maybe that's where all that medical school stuff got started."

Matt looked over at Bobby Ray and said, "I asked him about that once. You know, how are you playing ball, making the dean's list, and doing church and doing them all well? He said he prayed every day and spent some of that time listening to Jesus. He got the idea from the Bible. He said he was reading this scripture where Jesus says the people who follow Him have to deny themselves and take up their cross. The way Josh had it figured at first, Jesus was just saying discipleship wasn't easy. But then Josh said that same scripture claimed that anybody who tried to save their life for themselves would end up losing it instead. The next thing that happens is the transfiguration. And Josh said that was what really changed him. Peter, James, and John see Jesus talking to Moses and Elijah. They don't know what to do. When Peter interrupts Jesus, God tells him to be quiet and says, 'This is My Son. Listen to Him.' Josh said after he read that, he just figured if he was going to follow Jesus, he had to spend a little time every day listening to Him. That's how he arranged his life; that's how he kept his priorities straight."

Bobby Ray shook his head in amazement. "I know that's what the Bible says, but that isn't exactly easy, is it? I mean, if Josh had played pro ball, he would've had a lot of money he coulda used to support hospitals or mission trips. There's more than one way to follow Jesus." Matt nodded his head in agreement. "I get that," he said. "But Josh said that Jesus meant His disciples had to be willing to lose their lives for His sake and the sake of the Gospel. Josh said he got to the point where he just figured losing his life for Jesus and the Gospel meant giving Him everything he had. I'm telling you, the way he stayed true to what he thought was right was amazing to me. That's a God thing there. Pastor Marianne is always talking about praying that the Lord will renew our baptisms every day by renewing the Holy Spirit in us. Looks to me Josh really took that to heart. The way I see it, only the Holy Spirit could get you to take a pass on all that money and everything that woulda come with it."

Bobby Ray looked at Matt and said, "You know, Josh woulda made out OK as a doctor. That's a pretty fair living. He coulda helped a lot of people that way. Go to medical school, do all of the stuff you have to do to be a doctor, and go to work. I mean, isn't that what college and grad school are all about?" Matt laughed and said, "I know at least one person who had it figured that way. Remember when Josh and Shelby started dating? He's setting the world on fire. And it's just about then that he starts talking about medical school. By his senior year he's talking about passing on the N.F.L. Shelby went with Josh on that mission trip before his senior year, but she wasn't signing up for what he had in mind. And that was the end of that." Bobby Ray chuckled. "Yeah, I remember that." Then he got serious. "I guess that kinda makes Josh's point: everybody has to decide how they're going to follow Jesus. That summer Josh must've been getting pretty close to making the decision to give it everything he had. Shelby just couldn't see that. Or maybe she did figure it out now that I think about it. That sure wasn't the life she had in mind."

Matt looked back down at his shoes and then at Bobby Ray. "Yeah, that mission trip she went on with him is where he got involved with Doctors Without Borders. Maybe that's where he got the idea of turning his whole life into one big mission trip. I

don't know everything about Doctors Without Borders, but I've figured this much out: they end up in some pretty tight spots. You know, when Josh kept talking medical school and mission work, I wondered how that was all going to turn out. You're right. Josh coulda done a ton of stuff by playing pro ball. And he coulda done a lot of good being a doctor right here. I guess it all comes back to what he said about listening to Jesus every day. Josh coulda listened to some people and made a million dollars. But he kept right on listening to Jesus instead. You gotta give him credit. He always took the Bible seriously and ended up taking Jesus dead serious. Listen to Jesus... What if we all did that?" Matt looked at his watch, unrolled a piece of paper in his hands, looked at it briefly, and then rolled it back up again.

Bobby Ray and Matt sat in silence for a little bit before Bobby Ray said, "You know, you really do have to admire Josh. Think about it. He finally finishes all his schooling and the next thing you know he starts working in places lots of people never heard of. He always seemed to figure out where he could do the most good, and the next thing you know, there he is. Best I can tell, it didn't bother him that he was making a living but not making much money. The pictures he sent back with his e-mails were amazing. He was all the time laughing and smiling. The people he was working with really liked him—you could tell."

Matt looked over at Bobby Ray and nodded his head in agreement. "It's like I was saying. Josh made everybody around him better. Once he was a doctor he started making them feel better. And I betcha if you asked 'em, the people he worked with would tell you he made them better people, too." Matt paused. "You know, I was just thinking. I'm starting to see what Josh meant about the transfiguration. When he changed, he started fixin' people up. That's how he ends up changing them and their lives."

Bobby Ray interrupted and said, "Let me get this right. You're saying the important thing about the transfiguration is how it changes us? You think it makes us more like Jesus?" Matt looked over at Bobby Ray and asked, "Why not? What would

keep that from happening? You know, Pastor Marianne always says that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper we get the body and blood of Christ. When that happens, we have Jesus in us. We're carrying Him with us forever. That's gotta change us, doesn't it? Doesn't it? I don't see how it couldn't. I can see where Josh had Jesus in Him and how that made all the difference. I sure don't think the Lord sent Jesus to live with us and leave us the way He found us. I've never seen Jesus face to face, but I believe I would recognize Him if I saw Him. Somehow or another he would look something like Josh. Or be like him. Something like that."

Bobby Ray said, "Well, I feel like I have seen Jesus face to face. And the thing I learned that day was that the Lord loves His people and expects us to love them, too. What you just said is starting to make all the sense in the world. Josh was good at loving people the way Jesus did and the way Jesus wanted him to. Now that I think about it, I see what you're saying. The main thing about the transfiguration is that Jesus changes so His disciples can see who He is and what they're supposed to be. And maybe the transfiguration ought to change us so that people can see Jesus in us. Maybe it is all about changing. We go from what we are to what Jesus was and then to what He wants us to be. We start living for the Lord. The next thing you know, we're living for others just like Jesus did."

Matt said, "Yeah, makes sense to me. But you know, when Jesus said, 'Take up your cross and follow Me,' I always figured He was just talking about how tough it was to be His disciple. But you know, the next time His disciples saw anything like the transfiguration it was Easter morning. Bobby Ray agreed and said, "That's right. He died so we could live." Matt sounded exasperated. "Well, here we are. Now what? What does He want from us? Our lives? Are we supposed to die so other people can live?" Bobby Ray said, "Yeah, I guess so. We die a little bit every time we give up on anything that doesn't keep Jesus' ministry going." "But flat out dying?" Matt asked. Then he shook his head. "Jesus did say He'd die. How did His disciples miss that? And how on earth did they miss what that meant for them?" Bobby Ray looked at his watch and said, "Yeah, well hindsight is 20-20, isn't it? Come on, it's time to go." Matt

unrolled his piece of paper one last time, looked at his watch, and said, “You’re right. Let’s go.”

Matt and Bobby Ray found their wives and children and went into church together. Before it was all over the sanctuary was packed. When the organist quit playing, Bobby Ray whispered to Matt, “You’re right. They shoulda seen it coming. We shoulda, too.” Pastor Marianne stood up, moved to the pulpit, and said, “We have gathered here this afternoon to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and celebrate the life of Joshua Anderson Fuller. Let us worship God.” Amen.

