

SHATTERED

STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED



FRANK PASTORE

WITH ELLEN VAUGHN

FOCUS
for the FAMILY



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
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Shattered

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To
Michael John Pastore,
my first grandson



*The generational chains of sin and bondage
have been shattered.*

*I've written this book to inspire the hope
and vision of your generation,
and to remind you that our God is able
to do great and wonderful things.*

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FOREWORD

Frank Pastore is the kind of leader we need most in today's Christian world—a clear thinker who talks straight. As a Major League™ baseball pitcher, Frank lived the American dream. He achieved the status symbols, prestige, and perks of the good life, as so many people today define it. But he was never satisfied . . . which led him on an insatiable quest for more. Then he began to realize he'd *never* have enough, and that his atheistic worldview was, in fact, pretty porous. He shoved that thought to the side.

Then came a career-ending injury, a disaster that led to a whole new way of thinking and living as a follower of Jesus Christ.

I can relate to Frank. I wasn't a player on the baseball diamond, of course. My journey to faith began when I sat in the office next to the president of the United States, having achieved my professional dreams, and I realized that my success was, in fact, rather hollow. It took the disaster of Watergate—a shattering, humbling experience—to lead me to the most fulfilling life I could have imagined, through the unlikely means of a prison sentence.

Usually, when God allows our dreams to be shattered, He has far better things in store for us, things we would not learn or achieve in any other way. You don't have to be a professional athlete or a special counsel to the president to know this. Everyone can relate to the pain of seeing a dream die. And hopefully, reading this book will help you see how God can use our greatest pains and defeats for our greatest gain, and that the life of the kingdom of God is lived in an entirely

different dimension and on entirely different terms than life according to the values of this world.

I remember the first time I was a guest on Frank's radio show. I was expecting a routine Christianese interview, the type of thing I'd done a thousand times. I expected this ex-jock, prime-time host to be predictable. But I was struck immediately by the depth of Frank's questions and the scope of his understanding. This was no ordinary interview. This guy knew his stuff. He knew *my* stuff!

Since then we've become good friends and colleagues. Frank Pastore is not just a big-league player; he's a big-league thinker. He sees the larger picture and the context in which Christianity needs to be proclaimed and lived. Frank is a brother whose heart beats with the passion of my heart—worldview. He's asking the right questions; he gets the big issues. He has a fast mind and is well versed on current events and how they play out from a Christian perspective.

If there was ever a time when believers need this kind of discernment, it's now. America is caught in the perfect cultural storm. We have a financial meltdown caused largely by moral failures in government, on Wall Street, and in the public sector. We're paying the bill for decades of self-indulgence, fueled by rampant relativism, rejection of the Christian work ethic, and materialism. And there's an army of Islamic jihadists at the gate; their greatest dream is to destroy Israel and the Western world.

We need fresh voices like Frank's, voices that can reinvigorate the church with a sense of hope, deeper discipleship, and worldview teaching. His radio program is fittingly called "the intersection of faith and reason"—just what we need most in today's world.

This is the spirit of Frank's book. It's also a great read—fun, fast, and a real page-turner. That's because Ellen Vaughn helped put

Frank's story into words. Since Ellen and I have been writing colleagues for more than 20 years, I can attest that no one can tell a story better than Ellen.

Frank Pastore is one of the fresh new voices in today's Christian market. He's the kind of person the church desperately needs. We can all relate to his story. It's hilarious, poignant, insightful—and most important, it's not really all about Frank. It's about a God who loves us enough to seek us out, draw us to Himself, and restore and heal our lives for a greater purpose beyond ourselves.

—CHUCK COLSON
Washington, DC
October 8, 2009

WITH GRATITUDE

In writing a book that spans the first 50 years of your life, you have the opportunity to reflect upon those signal events that have altered the course of your life and to remember those special people whose fingerprints have marked your soul.

I have done my best to share everything in here as accurately and honestly as I can, so any errors and omissions in this book are solely my own.

To my coauthor Ellen Vaughn—thanks for guiding me so well through the process of sharing my life’s story thus far. You’re a gifted professional and a joy to work with! And thanks to Lee, Emily, Haley, and Walker and the kids for letting me steal Ellen away from her far more important duties as wife and mother to write this book. I couldn’t have done it without her.

To Jim Steck—thanks for caring enough to push hard. Thirty-five years later, I still carry the momentum from those early shoves.

To Larry Arnn, Charles Kesler, Harry Jaffa, and the rest of the Claremont Institute—thanks for your trailblazing, your leadership, and your generosity.

To David Rosales—thanks for your faithful teaching of the Word of God, week in, week out, over these past 20 years. You’re more than my pastor; you’re my friend.

To Dr. G—thanks for allowing the Lord to use you to teach me how to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

To my boss, Terry Fahy—thanks for the shot to do a daily, drive-time radio talk show. I strive every day to remind you that you made

the right decision. And thanks to the great KKLA team at Salem Los Angeles: Chuck Tyler; Richard Kennedy; Bob Hastings; Terry Harris; Dave McBride; my technical producer and engineer, Ann Aragon; and assistant Nate Hanson.

To my biker buddies and their wives, Mark and Cindy Stapleton, Bruce and Teresa Erickson, Dave and Merle Pentz, and Sean and Linda McDougal—it's great to know you guys are always right behind me!

To our close friends for more years than I dare to remember: Roger and Diane Ingolia, Don and Kristi Kase, Eldon and Pam Lahr, Mike and Joanie Morrell, John and Kim Pomierski, Joe and Veronica Roggeman, and Walt and Marty Russell,—hey, isn't it your turn to buy dinner?

To Andrew and Judy Arena, and their kids, Andrew Jr., Richie, and Melody, thanks for adopting me into your beautiful family when I was going through those dark minor-league years in Tampa. I sure miss Mom's paella!

To not only my extended family but to my dear friends Johnny and Staci Pignotti and Don and Marina Gardner—thanks for teaching me what it means to be part of a big family. I love you guys.

To my mother-in-law, Ann Pignotti—thanks for all your love and support, and for being our "Nina."

To my daughter-in-law, Jessica Pastore—thanks for answering my son's prayers for a delightful and godly wife.

To my kids, Frankie and Christina—I'm so proud of you both, and I love you both so much! It's great to see how wonderful you are despite all my shortcomings. As we all know, we can thank only your mom for that.

To my truest friend, my most trusted confidante, my most hon-

est and insightful counselor, my life partner, my darling Gina—thank you for the wonderful life you have built for us. You are the rock of our family and the ongoing joy of my life.

To my two dads, John Pignotti and Frank Pastore—I wish you both were still here. I'd give almost anything to play catch with you guys just one more time, or to share a steak and a bowl of spaghetti, or just to watch a ball game with you. I miss you every day.

And, finally, Lord, thank You that as the Master Craftsman, You take the shattered fragments of our lives and recast them into beautiful mosaics, through which Your light shines, evident to all.

1



OUT OF THE BLUE

It was a clear blue day in Dodger Stadium, perfect for baseball. And my life was perfect too.

At age 26, I'd been pitching for the Cincinnati Reds for five years. I had a beautiful wife, a young son, and a baby on the way, a decent fastball, and the cars, condos, and cash of the good life in the fast lane. My dreams had come true.

I was cruising to a 3-1 victory, with two outs in the eighth inning. I threw a 2-1 fastball on the outside of the plate, something I'd done a thousand times before.

It's odd how life can change forever in the blink of an eye.

My pitch was 91 miles per hour. As Dodger Steve Sax swung and connected, the ball's impact exerted roughly 8,000 pounds of force on the bat in a hundredth of a second. The violent collision compressed the ball, changed its direction, and packed it with kinetic energy. Rocketing through the air at about 132 miles per hour, the baseball covered the 60 feet 6 inches from home plate to the pitcher's mound in less than an eighth of a second. I didn't even have time to blink.

As the ball blurred toward my head, I instinctively threw up my right arm to protect my face. If I hadn't, the ball would have split my

forehead, and it's unlikely I would be writing this book, since I'd be dead.

The ball exploded against my right elbow like a hammer hitting a glass bottle.

There was an eerie silence in the stadium. All eyes, including mine, turned to watch the replay on the big video screen in left field. People gasped as they watched—again and again—the destruction of my precious pitching arm.

For the crowd, it was like a NASCAR wreck, a type of gruesome entertainment. For me, it was a bad dream unfolding in slow motion. As I cradled my elbow in agony, I could push the bone fragments around like broken pieces of a cookie in a plastic bag.

But of course the game must go on. As Tommy Hume, the Red's relief pitcher, made his way in from the bull-pen, my mind was as jumbled as the jigsaw pieces of bone in my arm.

"God!" a voice inside me screamed. "Why would You let this happen?"

And that made me madder still. Prayer was for weaklings and losers. The fact that my pitching elbow and my dreams were both shattered had nothing to do with God. I didn't believe in God. I was raging at Someone who didn't exist.

2



THE GREAT ADVENTURE

It's a long way from that day in Dodger Stadium to today, and you may be thinking that the last thing you need right now is a tome full of fond sports memories from a pro athlete, now geezer, reliving his few glory days on the field.

Believe me, if that's all there was to my story, I wouldn't bother writing it.

But this story was worth writing—and hopefully you'll find it worth reading—because it's really about what happens to all of us at some point. Pitching arms get randomly whacked. Careers end. Accidents, illness, and death destroy lives. Loved ones betray us. Relationships rupture. Kids break our hearts. We mess up. Life can be so hard, and sometimes the difference between what we want and what we get almost kills us.

So this is a story about brokenness and how sometimes the things you fear most can actually change your life for good. That's what happened with me—not just with the shattered elbow that eventually ended my pro sports career, but also in all kinds of ways over the years. Each shattering broke me apart . . . and then God put the pieces back together again, better and stronger than before.

I wish He would do His work in some other less painful way. I wish life were easy.

But it's not. Anybody who cheerfully tells you that you just "receive Jesus" and things will go smoothly and prosperously is either lying or has never read the Bible.

Don't get me wrong. I wouldn't trade my worst day as a Christian for my best day as a pagan. I've found the Christian life to be the greatest adventure I could ever have imagined, a journey so full of passion, power, and just plain fun that I cannot fathom why anyone would choose to believe anything else.

That leads to the second reason I wrote this book. I travel and speak a lot at conferences; I receive tons of e-mails in response to my daily radio show. A lot of people, particularly men, share their experiences with me, which has led me to believe that many Christians never get the big picture about their faith. They are satisfied with far too little. They think of Christianity as something like this: Jesus died for my sins, I received Him, I'm going to heaven when I die, and till then, I'm supposed to sin less.

Well, I'm all for sinning less, believe me. But the purely personal lens of faith misses so much! It reduces the great drama of the gospel down to me, me, and me: It's all about *my* salvation, *my* sanctification. It's Christianity for narcissists.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about the ultimate victory of real, robust good over sick, twisted evil. It's about justice for those who can't speak for themselves; it's about peace with God and peace in relationships with other human beings. It's about right racial relationships and the care of God's green earth. It speaks to economics, philosophy, government, and law. The big gospel vision informs

everything from our birth through our dying breath; it encompasses eternal dimensions we can't yet perceive.

The Big Story is not about what leads the daily newscast or gets the buzz on talk radio. The real story is the cosmic battle between good and evil—a conflict in which *we* are invited to participate.

The gospel is a lot bigger than fire insurance—you know, making sure we get to go to heaven when we die. It's a lot more than just getting saved, great as that is. Sometimes, as I said, we're satisfied with far too little. We need a bigger perspective of what the kingdom of God is all about. Let me give you an illustration.

A long time ago, when our son, Frankie, was three and I was pitching for the Reds, I had an off day during spring training in Florida. I took Frankie to Disney World. I had talked it up for days, telling him about Mickey and Minnie and the monorail and all the cool rides and Disney characters. He was pumped. I strapped him into his car seat and drove toward Orlando, getting more and more excited every minute.

"Are we there yet?" he kept asking.

"Not yet," I'd say. "Almost."

We finally rolled into the big parking lot. I pulled Frankie out of his car seat and carried him to the tram that took us to the gate. We bought the tickets, got our hands stamped, and pushed through the turnstiles. We'd finally made it to Disney World.

If you've been there, you can visualize it. As you pass through the turnstiles, there's a large patio area with two tunnels, one on either side, leading into the park. There are beautiful plantings and bright flowers, and if you're lucky, some of the Disney characters are entertaining the crowd.

Frankie's eyes were huge. He looked up and saw the big Mickey Mouse face made out of flowers on the hill. Just then, the Disney World train pulled into the station just above Mickey's face. The engine spouted plumes of white-cotton smoke into the azure sky. The whistle blew.

Frankie loved trains. He was so overwhelmed by it all that he was on overload, like a T1 data line plugged into a 286 computer chip.

I grabbed his hand, thrilled about what the day had in store for us.

"Come on, buddy," I said. "Let's go!"

He didn't move. My normally compliant son locked his little legs and stood there in rigid defiance. Tears squirted out of his eyes.

"No," he said, slowly shaking his head from side to side.

I knelt down and grabbed his shoulders. "Frankie, listen," I said. "This is just the *beginning* of Disney World. There's tons of cool stuff inside. C'mon, buddy!"

He didn't get it. As far as he was concerned, we'd come all this way to arrive at this special place. It couldn't get any better than this, and here was Dad, ready to leave. He was gonna stand his ground.

I understood. But since I outweighed him by 200 pounds, I picked him up and started through the tunnel that would take us to Main Street.

"I don't wanna go!" he screamed. "No! No! No!"

People were staring. Frankie was crying and beating his fists on my back, the most miserable little person in the "happiest place on earth!"

It was the longest 20 seconds of my life, but as we emerged from the tunnel, there was Cinderella's castle, its towers white against the

blue sky. There was Goofy walking right up Main Street in his giant shoes. There was the Matterhorn roller coaster in the distance, with people screaming in joy as they rode the bobsleds. There was candy, hot dogs, music, dancing, bright colors everywhere—more than we could possibly take in.

Frankie's mouth was wide open. "Ooohhh!" he finally managed.

"Come on in, buddy!" I yelled.

And for the rest of the day, I took my son from wonder to wonder. Around every turn was a new adventure. Each ride we got on, each food we tasted, each character we met, Frankie would smile so big I thought he'd burst.

Despite all the sugar he ate that day, the little guy crashed right after sundown. He fell asleep on my shoulder, exhausted, a smile still on his face.

I've heard from a lot of Christians who think the whole point of Christianity is just to get saved, to get "in." They're like my son at the entry area of Disney World. They don't know there are adventures beyond the entrance.

And like my showing Frankie around Disney World, exploring new thrills at every turn, God wants to take us farther up and farther in to the adventures in His kingdom. Our experience won't be perfect until the ultimate restoration, when sin and death are banished forever. But life with the King in His kingdom begins *right now!*

When I was an atheist, I knew nothing of this adventure. I thought Christians were stupid and Christianity was a bunch of man-made rules. But when I learned the truth, what pulled me in was the big picture of it all.

This is a team I want to play for, I thought. This is worth fighting for.

This is worth dying for. Magnificent. Awesome. This is what I've been looking for my whole life. I've got to be part of it.

My story begins about as far from magnificent and awesome as you can get. It begins under the less-than-tender care and tutelage of a sociopath who would have ruined me for life had God not intervened.