



## **The Story of Reed Willis – Worship Leader at Eastside Church**

### **Sunday July 28th – Reed’s Sunday**

At approximately 9:39 on July 28th Reed Willis was finishing worship team practice, when he collapsed. Zack Fetters saw him fall and called out for help. Madeline Fetters yelled to Ashley, Reed’s mother, and pointed to Reed who appeared to be having a seizure. Ashley yelled, “Call 911!” which Madeline did at 9:40—all within about 30 seconds after Reed’s collapse. Reed’s parents, Ashley and John, came to Reed’s side almost immediately. Ashley exclaimed, “He is not breathing!”

When Patty and Cliff Gray had arrived for church on Sunday, they were told there was a medical emergency. Cliff and Patty went in, saw Reed on the floor, and then Cliff got down and checked for a pulse. Reed had no pulse. So about 90 seconds after Reed collapsed, Cliff started CPR and administered chest compressions while John did mouth-to-mouth.

It should be clear that it took a perfect sequence of events to bring Reed back after he was without a pulse for more than 20 minutes.

The Paramedics and Firefighters from York County arrived promptly. The Medics had delivered continued CPR and 2 shocks for a deadly heart rhythm that Reed was in—they had also administered adrenaline medications to aid in restarting the heart. They began to pack him up to transport him to the closest Emergency room, pulse or no pulse. They charged the defibrillator to shock him once more and I prayed out loud for Reed not to leave this room without a pulse. I said out loud to God, “Please bring this boy’s pulse back with this shock, LORD; let it work this time.” Patty felt for a pulse as soon as the shock was delivered. Filling us with overwhelming joy, Patty said out loud “He’s got a pulse; thank you Jesus.”

Reed was taken to the Riverside Doctors’ Hospital and then choppered to the VCU Medical Center. In the Critical Care Building, Reed was “therapeutically paralyzed” and kept very cold in an effort to protect and heal the brain. The doctors could not determine why Reed’s heart stopped, nor could they yet conclude the health of Reed’s brain. Reed’s condition remains critical, but doctors see some good signs regarding brain function. Much waiting and evaluation is anticipated. We all prayed for a strengthened heart and a 100% healthy brain.

### **Monday July 29<sup>th</sup>**

The doctors decide to start the warming process earlier than planned because of a good EEG (brain). The sedation was reduced, and Reed was able to respond to some commands. He opened his eyes and recognized his parents. The doctors take out the breathing tube later in the day, and Reed is able to respond verbally. Reed’s body



battles with a fever as the doctors treat for infection. Doctors cannot fully focus on finding a heart diagnosis until Reed gets over the fever.

Doctors are hopeful that Reed's brain is fully functional. However, Reed is definitely not himself yet. He remains confused and emotional.

## **Tuesday July 30th**

Reed continues to battle a fever. The community prays for Jesus to reduce the fever as when Jesus rebuked the fever of Simon's mother-in-law in Luke 4:38-39. The community also prays for Reed to be delivered from his confusion and to experience the peace of God that transcends all understanding. As the day goes on, Reed is gaining clarity and quietly processing what has happened to him.

A doctor helps Reed understand all that his body has gone through by saying, "You died and came back to life."

By 2 PM Reed's fever is gone.

## **Wednesday July 31<sup>st</sup>**

Reed's short-term memory is progressing well. Rapid heart rate continues to be a problem. Ashley asks for prayer for a normal heart rate so that Reed can have a cardiac MRI at 8:30 AM. The doctors are hoping they can move Reed to the regular cardiac floor so that he can experience greater comfort and privacy.

Reed's heart rate slows enough to allow for the cardiac MRI. The ICU nurse who is assigned to Reed is the same nurse who admitted Reed on Sunday. The ICU nurse gets emotional and states that he never would have expected to see Reed recover so well by Wednesday after having seen his condition on Sunday.

Reed is moved out of ICU and into a new room, as was prayed. Reed is somewhat subdued and battling a low-grade fever.

Reed's personality began to come back and by evening is back to being himself. The family even got to enjoy some laughs (mostly about hospital food). It becomes more and more obvious that Reed is back to being himself as the day progresses.

## **Thursday Aug 1<sup>st</sup>**

Doctors still cannot determine why Reed suffered cardiac arrest. They have ruled out infection as a possible cause. His cardiac MRI results were normal. Doctors are puzzled. Doctors begin to plan for defibrillator surgery for Monday or Tuesday. Doctors



determine that Reed's fever is caused by pneumonia, which commonly occurs in patients who, like Reed, required a breathing tube. Reed is treated with antibiotics.

### **Monday Aug 5<sup>th</sup>**

Reed has surgery to install a defibrillator. It went well, but Reed experiences significant pain due to the surgery and the fact that the surgeon needed to cut through muscle in order to implant the device.

### **Tuesday Aug 6<sup>th</sup>**

Pain management is improved, and Reed is released from the hospital.

### **Follow up**

#### **August 18:**

Reed returns to Eastside and, once again, helps lead worship.

#### **September:**

Results of genetic testing are delivered to the family and show NO genetic cause for Reed's sudden cardiac arrest.

#### **October:**

Reed undergoes neuropsychological testing as routine follow-up for having gone through VCU's arctic protocol. Reed gets an excellent report showing no signs of cognitive impairment as a result of the sudden cardiac arrest or arctic treatment.

**The cause of Reed's sudden cardiac arrest on July 28, 2019 remains unknown.**