



A Providential Meeting

Some friendships are built slowly over decades. Others arrive unexpectedly, almost providentially, as though God quietly arranged the meeting long before either person understood why.

That is how it was with Dr. Andy Doan.

Andy and I first crossed paths around 2016 or 2017 when he was stationed overseas on Okinawa. At the time, he had been scheduled to speak at a conference at the Academy of Health Sciences at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, but because he could not get off the island, I was asked to step in and speak in his place.

Honestly, I was intimidated.

By then, Andy Doan was already legendary in our circles. An MD/PhD. A Johns Hopkins graduate. An ophthalmology surgeon. An aerospace medicine physician. A neuroscientist. A researcher with massive publications. A pioneer in the field of media and gaming addiction long before most people even recognized the problem was real. I had already read his groundbreaking book *Done With Games*, and I deeply respected his work.

So stepping in for him felt like no small thing.

I had even invited Andy previously to speak at Madigan because of how much regard I had for both his intellect and his integrity. He was one of those rare individuals whose brilliance was immediately obvious, but whose heart mattered even more.

After that conference, the organizer asked whether I would like to meet Dr. Doan personally.

Little did either of us know what that introduction would become.

From Colleagues to Brothers

Over time, what began as professional respect evolved into something far deeper. We became brothers in Christ. Deep spiritual friends. The kind of friendship forged not merely through shared interests, but through suffering, honesty, faith, and showing up for one another when life became very hard.

Neither one of us could have predicted that we would eventually write a book together. That we would collaborate on projects, record podcasts, exchange ideas endlessly about neuroscience, trauma, addiction, faith, healing, and human brokenness. The conversations were never shallow. They moved from science to theology, from suffering to redemption, from brain circuitry to the human soul.

And somewhere along the way, we stopped simply being colleagues.

We became family.

Walking Through the Storm Together

Neither of us could have predicted how profoundly we would walk through pain together.

When Andy experienced a devastating emotional upheaval related to his bipolar disorder while out at sea during sea trials aboard the Eisenhower, I had the privilege of being there for him. Not as a detached clinician, but as a brother and friend walking alongside him through the storm. I watched him wrestle honestly with suffering, identity, treatment, faith, and survival itself. I watched a brilliant man brought face to face with the fragility of the human mind.

And I watched him fight.

Later, when my own world was shaken by the death of my twin brother Gregg, and through painful crises and upheavals in my professional life, Andy was there for me in exactly the same way. Quietly. Faithfully. Without fanfare. Without needing recognition.

That is what true friendship does.

It stays.

It remains present when the conversations are hard, when the nights are long, and when the pain does not resolve neatly.

Brilliant Minds and Kindred Spirits

Andy is one of the most brilliant men I have ever known, but what makes him extraordinary is not merely his intellect. It is his resilience. His humility. His faith. His willingness to confront suffering honestly rather than hide behind achievement.

And yes, we are remarkably alike in some ways.

Both of us are complete overachievers. Both of us are intensely driven. Both of us have minds that, once locked onto a mission, can become almost impossible to slow down. There is probably a little subclinical madness in both of us, if we are being honest. We can become consumed by ideas, projects, callings, and purpose. We are both wired with this relentless intensity that can be extraordinarily productive, but at times can also become exhausting.

Yet somehow, beautifully, we help steady one another.

Andy can pull me back when I start driving too hard or carrying too much. He has a way of grounding me, reminding me to breathe, reminding me that life is not merely about output and accomplishment. And I would like to think that at times I have helped ground him too, especially when the intensity of life starts accelerating beyond what is healthy.

There is a mutual understanding between us that does not require many words. We both understand what it means to carry a restless mind. We both understand the burden and beauty of being deeply driven men who care intensely about healing people and making a difference in the world.

And perhaps because of that shared wiring, there is also deep grace between us.

The Sacredness of Friendship

That is part of the beauty of this friendship.

It is not built on performance. It is not built on status, titles, publications, or achievement, though both of us have spent much of our lives in high-achievement environments. At the end of the day, those things simply are not what matter most.

This friendship is built on grace.

On truth.

On mutual admiration mixed with mutual honesty.

On faith in Christ.

On the understanding that brilliance and brokenness can coexist in the very same human being. In fact, sometimes the people who shine the brightest outwardly are also carrying the deepest wounds internally.

Andy, My Brother in Purpose, Faith, and Grace
-Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

And perhaps most importantly, this friendship is built on the sacred reality that healing almost never happens alone.

We need people who can sit with us in our suffering without trying to fix us instantly. We need people who can tell us the truth when we are losing perspective. We need people who can remind us who we are when pain, exhaustion, or illness clouds our vision.

Andy has been that kind of friend to me.

And I hope, in some small way, I have been that kind of friend to him.

Thankful Beyond Words

I thank God for this man.

For my great physician friend. My brother. My fellow traveler. A healer. A scientist. A believer. A man who has suffered deeply and yet continues to rise, to serve, to teach, and to love.

Friendships like this are rare.

The older I get, the more I realize that some relationships are not accidental. They are gifts. Sacred gifts entrusted to us for a season, or perhaps for a lifetime. Andy Doan has been one of those gifts in my life.

And I could not be more grateful for his place in my heart and in my journey.