

# BodyLife Past Article Archive

## Breaking Free

By Wayne Jacobsen & Friend

BodyLife • November 2004

Can someone try too hard to walk with God?

Absolutely!

I know that sounds odd, but relationship with the Living God cannot be earned by human effort, even extensive human effort. And sometimes those trying the hardest to make it happen, find themselves furthest from it. It breaks my heart to find people there. Religion never tires of telling us to try harder and giving us an increasing array of tasks to 'help' us find him.

Our self-effort still focuses on us, however, and we end up missing Jesus, who is right there to lead us into relationship with his Father. This is something he does at our invitation, not something we can do by our diligence.

Recently I met a man who was struggling with this very thing. If a relationship with God could be earned, this man would have earned it. He is a humble man, with an honest heart. He had spent decades in Bible study, prayer, teaching seminars, and local congregational leadership, trying to do whatever he knew to please God and was frustrated at how fruitless it had been. He felt as if God was a million miles away and had abandoned him in some of his greatest struggles. The first time I rode with him, he poured out decades of anguish and told me how empty he felt.

Over the next few days we talked about learning to live in Father's affection, rather than trying to earn it. I encouraged him to relax in his walk with Jesus, to give up trying to control it and simply let Jesus take him for the ride of his life. It wasn't easy for him. It isn't easy for any of us. Religion has taught us that our relationship with God depends on our diligence, our commitment and our effort. It robs us of true relationship while piling on obligations that wear us out. I don't know exactly what finally connected with him. I rarely do. But two weeks after I returned home I received a letter from him.

I have shared this letter on my blog, Brad and I discussed it on [\*\*The God Journey\*\*](#) and I'm reprinting it here because it is an incredible look at the beginning stages of someone breaking free of religion to find a real relationship with God. I hope it encourages some of you to give up on your own efforts without giving up on how this Father really feels about you and what he wants to do in you:

***This journey that I am on is really something else. I thought you might be interested to hear what the Lord is doing. First I want to tell you that I can't remember any conference I've attended having the same lasting affect on me that your weekend***

*visit has so far. It's the gift that keeps on giving. I suppose I hear at least a hundred times a day, "Relax!" I never realized just how much of my life has been based on performance, or how deeply ingrained has been the idea that somehow I must produce the things that Jesus wants to see in me. You can well imagine the sense of relief and freedom I am feeling. Your CDs are a big help, but more importantly I am hearing more clearly than ever before directly from Father Himself. How wonderful!*

*All the things I used to do that were spiritual (more religious, actually) are being overhauled into a new dynamic. Now, I find that my days are filled more with fellowship with Him and that the things I used to do to get close to Him are woven into our relationship as I walk through each day. And in that I am discovering how desperately I have always needed a Father, one that I never had. And He is revealing Himself as my Father! Man, oh man!!!*

*The other day I was struggling through some disappointments when I lost it and threw a mini-tantrum. After I calmed down, I went back to Father to apologize. Same old perspective - You are Holy God and who am I to challenge you like that, etc. What he said stunned me, "You never had a father to whom you could express yourself like that. And when you did it would have been better if you hadn't." Then he showed me a picture of how I was with my sons when they did the same thing, reminding me that I didn't punish them but let them vent, encouraged them, and came along side of them to work through the issues with them.*

*Wayne, I have never made the connection until now - honestly. God showed me that that's how he is! Matter of fact he said - "You are my son! I understand and here I am to work through it with you. We are partners in this." Isn't that amazing? He actually said that to me.*

*Then a little while later I was thinking about Scripture and pondering something I had read. Father said, "you know, the problem is that all along you've viewed the Scripture from the perspective of 'must do', 'must perform', 'must make happen'. All along the Scripture has been intended to be viewed from the perspective of discovery of who I am and who you are and all that I have for you and intend to work in you but only in the context of relationship with me." This is amazing & probably elementary to you but a real revelation to me.*

*So, this is how my journey is starting out, Wayne. I understand now what you meant about Father's "tangible" love. I'm experiencing it. It's not an emotion but*

***something a lot deeper. There's a connection that's never been there before and the reason I know it's true is because it is there day after day, all day, - not fleeting like emotions. I am beginning to have a sense of sonship with my Father. And He is answering literally, lifelong cry of my heart - to know Him and know His love. I can't get my mind around the freedom and peace I am experiencing. I can't get my mind around this sense of being a son and having a father. It's amazing!***

It truly is amazing! Look at how his entire perspective has shifted. Instead of trying to get God's life for himself, he's beginning to know the Father as a constant companion who is rewriting how he looks at God, himself, the Scriptures, and life itself. Jesus is doing this work in him, and even though he will go through some ups and downs in the days ahead, he can walk through them certain of Father's affection and presence with him. That's where this journey thrives.

So, if you find yourself in the same frustration and despair of religious practice that my friend was in at the start of this story, don't let this letter be one more incredible story for someone else! I hope it inspires you to launch out on a similar journey yourself.

No, it won't happen the same way. You are too unique and Jesus too creative to resort to formulas, but Jesus will carve out for you a relationship with his Father that is tangible and grows with each passing day. He wants you to cease from your own labors and learn to relax into a relationship that he desires more than you do. All you need to do is ask him.

---

© Copyright 2009 Lifestream Ministries

*Permission is hereby granted to anyone wishing to make copies for free distribution.*