

BODYLIFE

The Simplicity of Following Jesus

May 2009

BAIT AND SWITCH

*Trading the Vibrant Life of Jesus for a
Ritualistic Religion Called Christianity*

By Wayne Jacobsen

I saw the sign a year ago in Georgia: *Live Free for Three Months*. It was a developer's marketing strategy for a declining housing market. When I saw it, however, I wasn't thinking about houses. I thought about Christianity and how we invite people to live free in Christ and then soon after saddle them with all the obligations of being a "good Christian". We generally don't even let them have three months.

When the early believers were first called Christians, we don't know if it was a complement or a mockery. We do know that they didn't invent the term for themselves. The culture called them "little christs" because they had found so much identity in following Jesus. Whatever spawned the term, those early believers adopted it for themselves and for 2,000 years it has been the dominant identifier for those who claim to follow Christ. But that might be changing.

Recent surveys show

even believers are becoming uncomfortable with the term. At least in the United States it is increasingly used not for people who reflect the passion of Jesus in a broken world, but for adherents of a religion that has been built on a distortion of the life and teaching of Jesus, not necessarily its reality. The results can be confusing.

"Are you a Christian?" I used to love it when someone on a plane asked me that question. "Absolutely," I'd answer, proud to be on the side of all that's good and right in the world. But over the last fifteen years, answering that question has become far more difficult. Much of what has been done in recent years in the name of Christianity embarrasses me and disfigures the God I love. Some of it even horrifies me.

So now when I'm asked the question today, I hedge a bit. "It depends on what you mean by 'Christian,'" I often respond. If they are asking whether or not I am a faithful adherent of the religion called Christianity, I have to confess that I'm not. I'm not



"Only broken people are truly honest. By nature you and I are full of erroneous judgments... It is only after God has shaken our natural foundation to pieces... only when all our illusions are raised and we have lost the remainder of our inborn self-confidence... only when we see we have misjudgment concerning ourselves... then do we begin to be honorable. Revelation has its price." —Manfred Haller in Christ is All in All

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even trying to be. But if they are asking me if I am a passionate follower of Jesus, the answer would be an enthusiastic yes.

In a few short years those realities have diverged significantly. Perhaps there has not been a time since the Middle Ages, where what it means to be a good Christian and what it means to thrive in a relationship with God, couldn't be more at odds. You can do everything required of a 'good Christian' in our day and still miss out on what it means to know him and be involved in a meaningful relationship with him that transforms you to love as he loved.

How many people endure repetitive rituals certain that doing so endears them to God? How many embrace a slate of ethical rules or doctrinal propositions thinking that doing so ensures God's blessings? Jesus offered us a vibrant life of relationship with his Father, and we ended up creating a religion that often disarms that very Gospel of its glory.

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Mark 7:6-7) These words are as true for us today as when Jesus voiced them to the religious captives in his. His warnings in Matthew 23 about the pitfalls of religion, are more applicable in our day than they were in his. When is the last time you heard a sermon from that text? Read it. You'll know why.

Something Is Broken

For the last few months I've done numerous radio interviews for people concerned about what's being called the collapse of Christianity. *Newsweek*

did a cover article in April about the collapse of Christianity's influence in America and that fewer people identify themselves as Christian or are a committed part of a local congregation.

There's a lot of handwringing going on about those statistics, most of them blaming the culture. But the problems in religion itself have never been greater. Conservative Christianity aligned itself with a political agenda and a party that turned out to be as corrupt as it blamed the other party for being. More and more believers I know are embarrassed at the anger and arrogance of many so-called leaders who speak to the press on behalf of Christianity. So it's no wonder to me that last year 4000 churches closed in America, 1700 pastors left the ministry each month and another 1300 pastors were terminated by their church, many without cause, and over 3500 people per day left their church last year.

Clearly we have a problem that cannot be blamed on the secularization of our culture. The kingdom is no longer a pearl of great price, and knowing Jesus is no longer the fruit of our religious activities. And people who are beginning to see that, are often

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1560-1 Newbury Rd #313
Newbury Park, CA 91320
(805) 498-7774 • Fax: (805) 499-5975
email: waynej@lifestream.org
Web: <http://www.lifestream.org>

a story about grace penetrating a broken life as I've read. A broken marriage forces a man to confront grace in a way he never has, and the process is incredibly engaging. The second is ***The Misunderstood God: The Lies Religion Tells Us About God*** by Darin Hufford, that is a reworking of a self-published book he did called *The God's Honest Truth*. He holds up God's claim of being love itself to the definitions of love God gave in I Corinthians 13. The result is a revolutionary book on God's nature that will set your heart at ease in his character and purpose in you. Over the last few months, however, I've become increasingly aware that I am a writer not a publisher. I have been asked by my Father to encourage people whose eyes he is

opening to this incredible journey. I have more to write, places to visit and people to encourage. I don't enjoy the contractual relationships publishing demands, nor compelling people to do what they promise to do when they decide it doesn't serve them any longer. It was far more fun encouraging people with their writing as a friend, rather than deal with them as a publisher. As fun as this ride has been, my life was in a better place three years ago to do what God has asked me to do, than I can now in the increased notoriety and attention all this has brought to my life. I'm not sure how all that sorts out, but I am looking for some things to change around here as I get back to the simple freedom God has given me—to live loved and to love.



BOOKS by Wayne

- **HE LOVES ME! (\$12.00)**
- **SO YOU DON'T WANT TO GO TO CHURCH ANYMORE (\$12.00)**
- **AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS (\$14.99)**
- **THE NAKED CHURCH (\$13.99 from createspace.com/3374565)**
- **TALES OF THE VINE (Sorry, this book is out of print.)**
- **THE SHACK (by William P. Young, in collaboration with Wayne) (\$15.00)**



CD COLLECTIONS by Wayne

- **HE LOVES ME! as read by Wayne Jacobsen (4 CD set - \$20.00)**
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The politics and agenda of the people in the church drive me crazy. So many parts of your book struck home with me. It was such a surprise to find answers when I wasn't sure what the questions were. I have been struggling with my church life after being a leader in the church for years. Thanks for the book and a new part of my life to enjoy with God.

Tim in the US Navy

I am writing you to tell you how your book *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore* helped me. I have been struggling with my faith for quite awhile I remember giving my life to Christ when I was four years-old I still to this day remember what it was like. (Recently) I made the mistake of giving into sexual temptations. I do regret it. I remember the morning after that I was walking in a mall bookstore just browsing the religion section



We moved! We also moved to a more retreat-like setting, which has been incredibly nourishing to my heart and a great blessing to share with others. That means we have a new address and phone numbers here, though the office address is just a mail drop: 1560-1 Newbury Rd #313, Newbury Park, CA 91320. Phone: (805) 498-7774. ☛ This fall Sara left her job as a high school counselor, to work with me full time in managing Lifestream and my other pursuits. She's the feminine voice you hear when you call. She's an amazing gift both administratively and in her ability to help others on this journey as well. It's great to have her around all the time and collaborate more than we were able to in the past. ☛ For those who want to follow the goings on at Lifestream, please subscribe to Wayne's blog and The God Journey Podcast (www.thegodjourney.com) as well as watch his on-line travel schedule. Obviously once a year newsletters won't be able to keep you

and I found your book. The title struck me as somewhat odd but after reading it for a bit I felt like the Holy Spirit told me to buy it. I have read the book several times and listened to the *Transition* series on your. The Father is drawing me to himself. Its like I am falling in love the God all over again.

Jonathan by email:

Since reading "The Shack" and "So you don't want to go to church anymore", I have found a greater reality in God than I have ever lived. I am learning to trust Him in greater ways everyday, Thanks to your books and podcast, I have been encouraged to let go of some of those things that I was using to replace relationship with God and instead follow Him gladly.

Check our website for more letters we couldn't fit here.



WAYNE'S TRAVEL

- April 24-25: Carmel, IN
- April 26-28: Anderson, IN
- May 15-16: Madison, WI
- May 17-18: Walworth, WI
- June 12-13: Tulsa, OK - Because of Jesus Conference
- June 14: Tulsa, OK - Believer's Church
- June 14-16: Edmund, OK
- July 12-14: Denver, CO
- July 19-21: Grand Rapids, MI
- October 22 - November 3: South Africa (Ladysmith, Durban, Cape Town)

We are also praying about invitations to
Portland • Kansas City • Kenya • Australia

up to date. ☛ A lot has changed since I last wrote a newsletter in June of 2008. Life has continued to be overwhelming in dealing with issues related to *The Shack* and the increased readership of my own titles. I've put in a ton of time with Windblown Media to help with all of that as well as to prepare two new books we'll be publishing this fall. **Bo's Café**, by Bill Thrall, Bruce MicNicol and John Lynch is as wonderful

marginalized as rebellious or unsubmitted for simply wanting what Jesus promised them.

Many people giving up on local institutions are not doing so because they've rejected Jesus, but finding that the culture of Christianity is actually diminishing their faith not enhancing it. In an email I got the other day, from a frustrated pastor trying to help people follow Jesus, and is just coming to realize that his own job may be at odds with his greatest passion. "Church has become a hindrance to building relationships and loving others."

He's not alone. Many of us came to faith enamored by the life and teachings of Jesus. We were promised a relationship with God but were handed a religion of doctrines we had to believe, rituals we had to observe, obligations we had to meet and a standard of morality to adopt. While most of those were true enough, many found that their attempts to follow them did not produce either the life of Jesus it promised, nor the reality of true, caring communities of faith.

We have traded the simple power of the Gospel for a religion based on human effort. We were invited to relationship and ended up with a host of irrelevant dogma and burdensome obligations. Fortunately people from all over the world are waking up to

a fresh hunger to shed the dictates of religion and embrace the wonder and power of a love-filled relationship with the living God.

Was Christianity Ever Meant to Be a Religion?

I guess all of this begs the question, did Jesus intend to start a religion called Christianity, or did we do this to ourselves? I suspect the latter. I

am wholeheartedly convinced that he came to end all religions, not by lashing out against them, but by filling up in the human spirit what religion promises to fill but never can. Religion seeks to manipulate human effort to earn God's approval, when such approval can never be earned.

Abraham, a Jewish man, lead the tour portion of a trip to Israel I was on fifteen years ago. Some of those on the tour had been rude to his faith as they tried to "help" him embrace Jesus as the Messiah. On the last morning, I found him alone by the bus and had the chance to ask him if he'd been offended by some of the remarks.

He smiled. He told me he'd been guiding tours for 30 years and someone is always trying to convert him to their faith—Christians, Reformed Jews, Muslims and Mormons. Then he asked me, "Do you know why it makes no difference to me?"

I shook my head. He led me out to the street and pointed at a building, "Do you see that synagogue with the star of David? That's our building. The one over there with the cross on it is yours. Further down, do you see the dome? That's theirs. On the surface they may look different, but underneath they are all basically the same. You would think that if one of us was serving the Living God, it would look differently."

"You would think that if one of us was serving the Living God, it would look differently."

I still remember how much his words impacted me. Religion is the same all over the world. It is a prescribed set of doctrine, rules, rituals, and ethics. It celebrates sacred space, exalts holy-men as gurus and tries to muscle its way into the culture. For 2000 years many have practiced Christianity as a religion, essentially no different than the others, except in who it claims to follow. *But*

if one of us was serving a Living God, wouldn't it look very different?

When we cram the life of God into a box, we rob it of its life and power and only distinguish it from other religions by claiming a more truthful doctrine.

Could that be why Jesus didn't teach his disciples how to gain a following or build institutions. He didn't teach them how to meet on Sunday mornings at 10:00 with a worship band and a

leader to lecture the others. He didn't give them a prescribed set of behaviors that people were suppose to follow as the means to serve God.

No, he invited them into his Father's house, and a reality of relationship with his Father that would transform them and opened the way for them to share that love with others. That you can't put into a religion and trying to only chokes out any hope of relationship. Putting creed and doctrine above a growing friendship with him supplants the reality he offered us, no matter how correct our doctrine or moral our ethics.

Don't get me wrong. Truth is vital, as is righteousness, but without love they are also empty. Learning to live as a beloved child is far more transforming than the greatest principle you can follow. The life of Christian community isn't found by sharing religion together, but by embracing a journey of growing relationship with him that transforms us by his grace and power.

Losing Your Religion

What does this mean for us? Should we stop calling ourselves Christian or judge those who do? Should we come up with a new term to franchise so we could separate the ones who live

it relationally from the ones who are caught up in religion? If we did, we'd only be making the same mistakes that have diminished our life in Jesus over the centuries.

The truth is that Christianity as a religion is a dangerous disfigurement of the God of the Bible. But not all who call themselves Christians live religiously. Given all the excesses and failures of Christianity, I am delightfully grateful

that the Gospel of Jesus is still relatively intact inside its doctrine. Unfortunately it only lets new believers live free for so long before burdening them with religious obligations.

And I meet many believers and leaders who have a profound faith and are seeking healthy ways to communicate that journey with others. I rejoice in that, as I do the amount of compassionate aid that such groups share with the world in need. But too many people miss out on the life Jesus offered them by practicing it as a religion instead of growing to know him.

Ultimately the transformation from practicing religion to living inside a relationship with God is not an institutional battle; it is a personal one. We could tear apart all of our religious institutions today and nothing would change. I've been in many a house church filled with people who see the institutional church as the problem and are oblivious to the fact that they've just moved their religion into a home, where close fellowship only makes it more oppressive.

So how do we know if you've been tricked into religion?

- When God is a distant concept to you instead of a real presence.
- When you find yourself follow-

ones from the street, prostitutes and those who have burnt all their bridges. It is awesome to see God working. Since we are in the South many of these women have roots in the church, but have felt unworthy. They got the message of religion, but missed the one on grace.

Pammie by email

I have just finished reading your book *He Loves Me*. I am speechless and in awe of the love of God.

Szilvi in Scotland

I am a Hungarian living in Scotland with no family, friends, or relatives. I bought *So You Don't Want to Go to Church* just last Friday. It was just the right time, and amazing answer from God. I went to a bookshop to buy a book for a colleague and there was this book. I have been struggling with Christianity and faith since the murder of my best friend four years ago. Your book confirmed what I felt inside and helped me to realize what I've been missing. By the second day of reading, I felt a huge rock fall off from my heart. I felt free, and happy as I haven't been for a very long time.

Lynette in Australia

Some months ago bought your book *He Loves Me*. I want you to know what a blessing this book has been not only to me but to many others I have felt led to give it to - close to forty at the moment. I know I was set free of the fear that I am never quite making it, or doing enough for the Lord and it has just been beautiful. I am sixty-five and have been a believer since I was a child.

Ben in Seattle

I like listening to the *Transition* series because I feel that for so long I had been sitting by a beach and gotten soiled with crude oil from a tanker. My skin was all dirty and miserable. The series has been like a spring of fresh water to take all the oil of legalism, guilt and shame away. The oil doesn't come off easy, but over time it is getting better and

better and the freedom feels great.

Daron in Tennessee

In the past month, I've read both *The Shack*, AND *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Any-more!* Thank you guys for being sensitive to the Holy Spirit and obeying, what I would consider somewhat of a "God mandate" to write these amazing books! Selfishly, I'll have to offer a personal thank you for confirming the possibility that I haven't indeed lost my freakin mind over the last 8 years!

Lori in Russia

I just wanted to send a quick note thanking you for your ministry through the Lifestream website and through publishing books like *He Loves Me* and *The Shack*. God has used these in my life and helping me to grow in relationship with Himself. I am just basking in His love for me. He has been teaching me much about grace —so many things that I was never taught growing up in a traditional church. I'm a missionary serving in Russia, but for the first part of our time here I was doing it for all the wrong reasons. He led me to read *The Shack* (and) it put into story form so many lessons that I felt like God was already teaching me through experiences and Scripture. Thank you for making many of your resources free through the Internet. Living overseas, it is often hard to get my hands on helpful resources.

Cindy by email

I just finished *So You Don't Want to go to Church*. It was offered to me by someone who wanted my opinion because I have a M.A. in comparative religion and they think I know more than I do. I read your book in order to respond to her honestly, but did not expect much. So, I want to thank you because it is a beautiful story that always needs to be told. It warmed my heart and made me remember whom I belong to.

Charlene by email

Your book addressed some of the things that I had not even been able to put my finger on.

struggling with church structure, programs and such and asking myself why we couldn't just meet together as I did with my friends from different churches. I didn't feel free not to attend a structured church meeting, but didn't feel free attending either – I had lots of questions. Having heard of your book and wanting to read it but not having funds to buy it, I then found I could read it on line, thanks to God and your generosity. I read your book and now all the questions I had have been answered and I am so excited.

Harald in Norway

I just finished reading about Jakes journey with John, and it is a long time since I have cried so much reading a book. It touched something deep within me. Last September I began asking Father about my frustration with church and ministry (yes, I am a pastor), and he has begun answering in ways I had never imagined. And in his perfect timing, he also led me to read your book. I am so grateful and very confused. And still strangely at peace

Kim in Iowa

I am reading *He Loves Me* and have to say that it is probably the best book I have ever read and I have read many. It is so real and believable. Finally someone has helped us to make sense out of all this madness of religious confusion! Thanks for being real.

Wes in the UK

I wanted to write and thank you for the unique experience of reading *So You Don't Want to Go To Church Anymore*. Not only has it coincided with a stage in my own journey but it has added a fresh dynamic to the questions we are dealing with in the UK. I have recommended that the other leaders in the Network read it too, as soon as they can. It has been a window in to God's heart in my recent questioning, study and searching into how we live authentically with, in and for Jesus as his inclusive community. There is a great hunger resonating in the heart of parts of the church for something which, has been present in the hearts of the non church community for lon-

ger than we, as leaders, would dare to admit—a longing for the authentic Jesus, which is not found in the confines of church activity or dogma. I love the all consuming simplicity of just listening to Jesus. We do not need a newer version of the system, we need to live with Him.

Dana by email

Of So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore. Loved it! Thanks for an awesome, eye-opening, riveting story.

Fran by email

Keep on freeing people to live in Father's love. I will never be the same.

Paula

I have to tell you someone gave me your book (*He Loves Me*) at church and I know it was Abba who put it in my hands. I never heard of it before. I have cried in every chapter of this book. I can hardly find the words to express the love and healing I have received from what you shared about our Abba. It was like he was coming to Father me on every page.

Robby by email

I have just come to the end of your book (*So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore*) and I feel like I've just come to the beginning of my own story.

Patricia by email

Your *Transition* series and your book, *He Love Me*, have been a great inspiration to me and all whom I have shared them with. I have listened to all eight messages three times and some of them more. I have made numerous copies of the CDs and given them out and those people have passed them on as well. I am involved in a faith-based women's treatment program. Your teachings have deepened and inspired mine. We are seeing God save and set women freed from long held bondages. They are getting the message of God's love for them. Since we don't charge the women to come to our facility we get many of the "hopeless" ones, the

ing another man, woman, or a set of principles instead of following Jesus.

- When fear of eternity, not measuring up, or falling into error drives your actions.
- When you find yourself in empty rituals that do not connect you in a real way to him.
- When you are burdened by the expectations of others and feel guilty when you can't do enough.
- When you look at others who struggle with contempt instead of compassion.
- When the approval of others means more to you than remaining in the reality of his love.
- When you hesitate to be honest about your doubts or struggles because others will judge you.
- When you think of holiness as an unachievable duty, rather than a glorious invitation.
- When you think righteousness depends on your efforts instead of his grace working in you.
- When following him is more about obligation than affection.
- When correcting someone's doctrine is more important than loving them.
- When God seems more present on Sunday morning, than he does on Monday.

If you have only known Christianity to be a set of doctrines, rules and rituals, I have great news. Jesus came

and died to open up access between you and his Father. Religion supplants that, distracting us with discipline, commitment and hard work that never yields the fruit it promises. If you've been worn out by religion, don't think you're alone. Others are

just pretending, afraid they are the only ones, too. Life is only found in him.

Switching Back

There's something about our flesh that craves the illusion of safety that religion affords. Anyone of us can find our heart easily turned toward following rules instead of engaging him. When we recognize that happening, we can simply turn our hearts back to him and choose to move away from the religious traps and connect once again with God as our Father.

Living the Gospel means we live in his love. We come to know the Father's love for us and then sharing that love with him, and with others he puts in our path. (John 13:34-35). No other motive will suffice; no other is necessary. This is where the journey begins and this is the only place it can continue.

Returning to our first love isn't as difficult as we like to make it. For me it just means finding a quiet place and talking to God. When you find yourself caught in religion, tell him you're tired of chasing a religion that isn't working and you want to know him as he really is. Then, wake up each day with a similar prayer on your heart. Watch how he makes himself known to you in the simple reality of living each day. Follow the nudges he puts on your heart instead of the obligations and rituals. Find others who are on this jour-

ney and find ways to share the reality of a growing relationship and help guard our hearts about following into empty religious practices.

If you've been steeped in religion for a long time, you'll find yourself going through a very disorienting time. One woman I met called it a Pharisectomy, which is simply having your inner Pharisee removed. You might feel

“There's something about our flesh that craves the illusion of safety religion affords.”

guilty, lonely, lost, or fearful in the process. Your former religious friends may feel threatened that you're no longer doing the things they do. But in time you'll find yourself sliding into the reality of relationship with him that is as increasingly real, transformative and engaging.

Among It, Not of It

So let's not go to war with religion, railing against its failures fighting against its dictates. Instead let's do what Jesus did—let's live beyond it. Let's find a reality of freedom and authenticity in him that can walk alongside anyone with patience and gentleness. Religion is what people crave when they haven't found life in him. Taking their religion away won't fix that. The only thing that will be helping them see a reality of relationship with God that makes all our religious activity unnecessary and unattractive. Jesus could be in religious settings and not be captured by them. He could care about a Pharisee as much as a prostitute.

Live among religion if he asks you to, loving toward those mired in it but

you never have to be *of it*. The Gospel opens the door for us to re-engage the transcendent God, to know him as our Abba and to walk with him through the twists and turns of life, sharing his affection with others.

Live in the reality of that relationship and you'll find it quite naturally finding expression through you as you love and treat others the same way God treats you. People who refuse to live to fear, conform to ritual or put doctrine above love will find themselves having ample opportunity to help others on this journey as well. A dear friend wrote me recently who was feeling a bit swamped by all the people seeking out his help these days, "You didn't say anything about being safe is like hanging up a "counseling available" shingle."

We live in a great day. The emptiness of tradition is being seen for what it is and people are hungering for the reality of relationship. Live there each day and there's no telling where that will take you or who you'll end up walking alongside as Jesus becomes your life.

Then you can live free, not just for a few days or even three months. He came to set you free eternally! ☘



H. in Georgia

The Scriptures are coming alive to me in a new way. I still have a lot of questions, but many things I once read, are just automatically reinterpreting themselves. Most of this revolves around who God is, and what his attitude toward man is. Your understanding of wrath has changed much for me. I have been confused all my life. I've unknowingly seen God as a strange duality, but I've been very unsure as to how to tell what his attitude is to any given person, and especially myself. Your visit really painted in color what he had already laid the framework for.

Jutta in Germany

Let me tell you about listening to your book *So You Don't Want to Go To Church Anymore* (on a road trip). We finished all five CDs and we all agreed that we need to listen to it again, more than once. Our thirteen year-old daughter was so excited about your book. It has answered questions for her that she has had for years. (That's funny to have questions about that for years when you are only 13.) She had asked many people before, ministers, friends, us, of course. And she was thrilled that some questions are answered in a satisfying way now. My husband and I are also very blessed by the book and the *Transition* series. It has catapulted us into another arena.

Karen via email

Thank you for your faithfulness to God's calling—for writing books that find their way into all our lives scattered across the world. Finally after years of "it just doesn't make sense", God and the real church make amazing sense. What God alone has taught me, you confirmed above and beyond.

Sally in Mississippi

Your book *So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* brought me through so much heal-

ing. I mark books when things that are written touch me and I almost highlighted the complete book. All my adult life I have struggled with guilt over not doing enough for God and then when I did more I was left feeling even more guilty because it wasn't fulfilling. The harder I worked and more I took on the more empty and guilty I would feel. I finally started to listen to Father's nudges and stepped down from a full-time position last year. For the first time in years I felt alive again because I had time to spend with Father on as well as with my family, instead of doing things for the organization. Then the guilt set in again. Last week I finally took the time to read your book. Father, has opened my eyes and I now know that I am truly loved! I am truly in awe of the work Father is doing inside my family! We are full of more life and the freedom to live in love than we have ever been!

Shannon via email

I read *The Shack* and followed it with *He Loves Me*. I can't explain it, but as I read both books, God began to give me new eyes to see Him with. His beauty, so breathtaking, so overwhelming! The floodgates of freedom broke open when I read Chapter 21 "In Exactly The Same Way" of *He Loves Me*. You wrote of, "If where you wrote about Jesus' words, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching". I too have always taken that verse the wrong way and felt so condemned by it. You said, "If we get the loving right, the keeping will take care of itself. Those who love Him as they are loved will follow Him wherever He leads." This spoke life straight to my heart and unraveled so many lies. By the time I was done with *He Loves Me*, I was a different person. The fear I had of God had been swept out and I was clearly able to see His great love for ME!!!! My trust in Him has blossomed. I'm learning to live loved! For the first time in my life I am experiencing true freedom.

Gaye in New Zealand

Thank you so much for allowing me to read your book *So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* on the Internet. I have been

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Parenting Kids in Grace



I get asked all the time what it looks like to parent our kids with grace instead of fear and intimidation. I have finally found a book that expresses this process as well as I've read it anywhere. It's called *Loving Our Kids on Purpose* by Danny Silk. I have not read a book in the last two years that I would recommend with more enthusiasm than this one. Not only will it give you a framework to deal with your own children, it will also help you understand the process by which Jesus deals with us. It's a real two-fer—grace without permissiveness. And even if you don't have children, this book will help you understand the process whereby God disciplines us. Go find a copy of this book. You won't regret it.