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The Wonder of...

# Living Loved

Lots of Changes  
at Lifestream  
See Page 10

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Winter 2013

## The Narrow Road

By Wayne Jacobsen

I had just spent the weekend in a country home talking with a group of people about living in the Father's love. Afterwards two of them drove me to the airport nearly two hours away. The questions continued until we were close to the airport. Finally, a twenty-one year-old medical student in the back seat made one of the most insightful observations I've ever heard, "You know what I'm beginning to think, Wayne? Maybe the reason this journey seems so difficult is because it is far easier than we dare to believe!"

Read it again. Having written about finding a real relationship with God for 25 years, I get lots of email from frustrated people. Though they've read my books and listened to most of my audio they still feel as if they have little or no connection with God. Many feel forsaken, others wonder if he even exists.

*The reason this journey seems so difficult is because it is far easier than we dare to believe!*

I know it isn't easy for people to find their way into a loving relationship with the Father. Everything we've

learned and believed before runs counter to the dynamics of recognizing and resting in his love. However, it isn't difficult because God makes it complicated, or because it takes a certain skill set or sensitivity, but because we look in the wrong places for how his life takes root in us.

But Jesus knows that too, and is still up to the challenge of engaging us in a fruitful relationship with his Father.



### Uncomfortable Scriptures

In this article I want to look at several Scriptures that make some people nervous, because they seem judgmental and threatening. Most have only heard them in the context of religious performance and thus dismiss them as inconsistent with his love, but in doing

~CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

*"We are in an age of religious complexity. The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us. In its stead are programs, methods, organizations, and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart."*

- A.W. Tozer

“The reason this journey seems so difficult is because it is far easier than we dare to believe.

so they toss aside some of the most helpful insight Jesus gave people to embrace this journey.

For instance, Jesus warned us that the road into his life is a narrow road. *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it* (Matt. 7:13-14).

I know this has been preached to fill people with fear, but what if Jesus didn't say this to push people harder on the religious treadmill? In fact, I don't think his words are about eternal destiny at all, but rather an encouragement to a different way of living in this age. Salvation for Jesus was not giving out a get-out-of-hell-free card, but opening a door for us into a relationship with his Father.

Only the religious would twist them either to take pride in thinking they practice the right doctrine or ritual, and delight in the fact that those who don't will get what they deserve. Jesus didn't want to provoke exclusivity or fear with his words, but rather to equip hungry hearts to know how to know him. Following the broad way of self-interest will devour us, but there is a narrower path that will lead us to life.

I used to think that people were transformed by hearing the truth of Scripture and then applying those principles to life. Except that it never worked. People can listen to thousands of sermons and read hundreds of books and still feel like they don't get it. No wonder Jesus didn't preach sermons

with application points at the end, but walked with people, answering their questions and stimulating their better hopes. In the face of those realities, he pointed down the road his Father would have them go, where they could know him and live freely in his life.

God writes his will in our hearts and minds, not in sermons and books. Until we learn to follow him in the simplest choices of daily life we'll continue to miss out. I've had many people tell me, *I've been pursuing God for years, and I am no closer to him now than when I started.* My heart breaks for them. I'm sure they are genuine, but I also know they are missing him somehow. It could be that they keep following a broad way and miss his invitations to a narrower road.

That's why Jesus contrasted the broad road with the narrow one. His way is not obvious to our natural inclinations. It may not look as satisfying at the outset, but that's because true joy and freedom don't lie in the things we think we want, or what the crowd tells us we want, but by embracing what God knows is best for us. That's why he also warned us, *Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it* (Matt. 16:25). He knew the way of destruction puts up an attractive façade that appeals to our selfish desires and the illusion of an easier way.

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#### WHERE IS THE TRAVEL SCHEDULE?

You'll notice no travel schedule in this issue. That's a first. And the reason is I don't have anything scheduled in 2013 or any time thereafter, at least not yet. It's not that I lack invitations. I have nearly a hundred on my list. It's just that God's asked me to take a break for a season of writing and attending to some important realities at home. That said, I'm in active prayer now about some invitations to North Carolina, South Africa, Australia, and Brazil in the coming year, but timing on any of these trips is not clear.

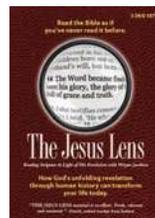
#### JAKE COLSEN MOVIE

I am also involved with a group of people adapting *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore* into a feature film sometime in 2015. As I write this we have a screenwriter working on the first draft of the film. I'll be working as a consultant and advisor in the pre- and post-production phases.



#### CHRISTMAS LIST

*If A Man Like No Other* and *In Season* came out too late last year to make your Christmas list, you might consider either one of them a fun way to share what God is doing in you with others you care about.



#### NEW PROJECTS

So what's on the writing list? After this newsletter I want to complete the book version of *The Jesus Lens*. The DVD series has helped many people get see the Scriptures without the religious interpretations that has disfigured its message. Many are find-

ing it a valuable tool to help transform their reading of Scripture. I want make it available in book form and then finish a book I've been working on for some time, called *Finding Church: What To Do When You Know There Must Be Something More*.

#### NEW VIDEO SERIES: ENGAGE!

I'm going to release a new video series this year designed to help people engage their own relationship with God. These 5-7 minute videos will coach people who don't feel like they know how to connect with God into the beginning of a journey with him. They will start with some specific ways you can begin to look for him in your own life, but then I will help people with very specific questions they are having about that engagement. This series will be a resource for years to come as others want to begin their journey as well.

#### LIFESTREAM.ORG MAKEOVER

Early in January we'll be rolling out our all-new Lifestream website. We are making some updates to help people find our resources more easily and to maintain our encouragement to other son this journey.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATIONS.

Check out our web-page for new translations of articles and even some of the audio into languages such as French, Spanish, German and Russian. *In Season* has just been released in German and we are getting ready to produce an e-book and printed version of *He Loves Me* in Spanish, and one in Swahili to be distributed free of charge in East Africa.



#### GRATEFULLY YOURS

Finally, Sara and I want to express our sincere gratitude to all of you who have participated with us last year in helping support Lifestream and the travel we've done around the world as well as caring for 72 orphans in Kenya. Thank you so much for your prayers, generosity, and love. May 2013 be a blessed year for you...

You can find out more about Wayne's books, audio collections and DVDs at <http://www.lifestream.org> and download many of them for free.

### DaRon in Tennessee

God has put within you the ability of a “locksmith”. You have an uncanny ability to put language to what may be stirring around in the hungry heart, and unlock a confirming peaceful assurance that God indeed is still in the “business” of loving people to a place of rest & wholeness! Thank you for all you do. You’ll never know how much it means to us. I couldn’t have imagined when I was a young “buck” in my thirties, that living loved and walking with Jesus could be so incredible and so full of wonder! Keep slingin’ that freedom!

### Jimmy via email

I just listened to the early and middle letters of *The Jesus Lens*. It reminds me of when I first got saved, when I just loved Jesus read the Bible and grew without fear.

### Tricia from Illinois

I just want you to know how thankful I am to you for the books you have written and your website. I have downloaded many of your teachings on to CDs and I listen to them when I drive to work or drive my kids around. I cry almost every time because I can’t believe what you say, but when I hear it, it rings true with my spirit and then when I check it out in Scripture, holy cow! It’s true! I

always thought and read the bible as rules to how I should live and God would punish me if I didn’t follow them. I only started to question what I thought was true about 8 months ago after reading *The Shack* and *So You Don’t Want to go to Church Anymore*. I just sat and cried for probably an hour after reading *He Loves Me!*

### Becky via email

Thank you for *So You Don’t Want to Go to Church Anymore*. I seriously think it saved my sanity. After attending a church with my a Christian friend scary thoughts entered my mind. The church always made me feel more scared after walking out of it, rather than loved. I felt God was mad at me every second of every day. I had the urge to search on the web and that led me to your book. I wish I could write enough to express to you what it did for me. I was trying to check off boxes in hopes of getting my salvation. I was being smothered and I started to feel there was no way I could ever keep up with all I had to do. Please just know this book is amongst my favorites. it signifies the return of my life. You don’t even know me, but your words brought me back from the deepest, darkest most frightened state I had ever been in, in all my life. Who wants to live every day feeling damned, even though they love Him so much?

our various websites, I am most hopeful that we’ll launch some new ideas to help people who feel called to help others live loved. The only enduring imprint we leave in the world are transformed lives that can help others do what we’ve been doing, but in their own unique way. I’m not sure how this will take shape yet, but some of the other news items below are also part of this change.

### LAST MAIL-OUT NEWSLETTER

This is our last mail-out ISSUE. We’ve been sending these out for free for almost 17 years. I know it is very convenient to receive it by mail, but technology has moved on and the cost of printing and mailing out this newsletter every month seems poor stewardship in this day when things can be accessed so easily and cheaply over the Internet. If

Every day we make dozens of choices about how we live our lives and how we treat people around us. In these moments we’ll be confronted with a number of options. Many will be obvious and fit into our self-satisfying cultural and religious norms. But those roads won’t lead us to life in him.

The doorway to his life runs through narrow doorways, not grand ones. In our daily choices we have the opportunity to merge off of the broader way and find a more gracious home on a narrower path. I know that isn’t glamorous, and some would prefer a spectacular revival service or rigorous discipleship school. But the life of Jesus is about learning to listen to his impulses in the next choice before you.

### The Broader Roads

So at moments of choice, what determines the path you take?

Sometimes it’s as simple as following the flesh’s desire, either to maximize our happiness, or to minimize our pain in whatever circumstance we are in. Simply doing what’s easiest, what makes us feel good, what soothes our ego, or what is in our financial or personal self-interest, will work to our destruction. We can easily lose ourselves just going along with the distractions of this age, be they too much entertainment, political arguments, or the mundane chores of life.

At other times it can be far subtler, the still lingering coping mechanism that helped us survive childhood trauma, but now leads us to harmful routes. Religious obligation provides a compelling voice in most situations, especially since we’re doing what we have to do, not what we want to do. But it is all the more dangerous because it appears to be righteous even as it draws us into the appearance of self-denial. Even trying to build a ministry or an income stream from it,

instead of simply making God’s gifts available will drive us to choices that will prove more hurtful than helpful.

Almost all of these pathways were sculpted in our youth or in our religious training and they come so automatically to us, we may not even be conscious how much they shape us. But, when God begins to invite us

“ True joy and freedom don’t lie in the things we think we want, but in participating in God’s purpose in the world.

into his life, he does so in the simplest places. It often has far more to do with how we treat the next person before us with love and forgiveness, or doing something he’s given us to do.

Making space for him and his thoughts and following them is the only way off the broader road. We find the narrow road when we find rest in his love for us and then recognize his leading as he offers us a different way to see what’s going on around us. We often don’t even see a new trailhead until he nudges us towards it.

At first, everything in us wants to resist his nudge. *No, it can’t be that way. I could get hurt. I could make a mistake. What if it goes wrong?* But if he’s the one inviting us, we are safer doing what he asks than anything we do to save ourselves. We are not asked to indulge our preferences or live in resistance to them. We are simply called to follow him, in the simplest of choices as best we recognize his invitations. As we do, his life will unfold in us with ever-increasing reality.

### How Do You Know?

God speaks to all of us. You don’t



### A CLEAN SLATE

Over the past couple of years Sara and I have unwound the complications surrounding our lives at what we’ve felt was the Lord’s request. That has allowed us to take a fresh look at the next season of our lives and ask God how we complete the work he’s given us to do on the planet. We have put a lot of resources in the world to help encourage people to a real relationship with God and in that find genuine expressions of community with other people. While I’m relatively certain I’ll be writing some new books and continuing to encourage others through

have to be a spiritual giant or a gifted seer. You only have to have a heart that wants to follow him and he will teach you how he speaks to you and invites you into life.

Many think they've never heard him, but that may only be because they have not yet learned to recognize how he speaks to them. I've no doubt he's speaking, but they may be looking for

“**Many think they've never heard him, but that may only be because they are looking for a voice instead of a nudge or wanting him to say something different than he is saying.**

a voice instead of a nudge or wanting him to say something different than what he is saying. Listening to him is not living by feelings, but by recognizing those impulses he brings to your mind and following them. Initially they will encourage you to rest in his love and to be more gracious to people near you. In time, he will show you more of his wisdom to guide your life.

You will only learn by practice. Yes, you will do some things you thought God was leading you to do, only to find out by the fruit of it that it was more your thought than his. That's part of the process. How else will you learn? But you'll also get some things right and the joy of that will help tune our heart to his. In the process, you'll be drawn closer to him and come to recognize your more selfish aspirations, and the misplaced trust you have in your own wisdom or abilities.

I know there are many examples of those who claim God told them to do the most bizarre things that are hurtful and destructive to themselves and others. You can usually tell if someone's listening to Jesus by how open and relaxed they are. If they are closed and defensive when someone questions them, be careful. I walked away from an encounter recently with

one such person and commented to a friend, "That's the kind of person that gives listening to God a bad name."

One thing I know about people who listen to God, they don't act destructively and they aren't arrogant about what they think they hear. Learning to listen to God is a humbling process. You're never one hundred percent sure of what he's asking. You just have

an impulse in your heart you can't explain. It grows over time, but he is never forceful or manipulative, and that is also true of people learning to listen to him. They can be firm, but not defensive and are always willing to sacrifice for others, instead of asking others to sacrifice for them.

### **Choices Matter**

God does love you, but that love only transforms you to the degree that you can trust his love enough to follow him on to the narrow road. His love doesn't mean that everything will work out the way we want, nor that we won't be the victims of other people's hurtful and destructive choices.

But he wants to be with us in those moments to help us navigate our experience in a broken world and be transformed through it. He invites us to participate with him, which is why love and obedience go hand in hand in the Scriptures. As you grow to trust his love you will want to obey him, and it's in following him that you get to live in the fruit of his love.

Jesus repeatedly made clear that our actions matter. Scripture often invokes the reality of sowing and reaping to express this truth. How we live either leads us more into his life, or draws us

over & over that has quite literally saved my life!

### **Kent on the blog**

False belonging is trying to find meaning and peace that is outside our true belonging inside the circle of Father Son and Spirit. When that is out of whack all our external longing gets malformed and we spend our lives trying to scrape meaning and affirmation and happiness from others and from things. It's a destructive enterprise. When we come home to ourselves and learn to be at peace in that solitude...our inner world...the kingdom within...then all our outward activity isn't of the needy kind... it's of the giving kind. It redefines what healthy relationship is and what healthy individuality is. The false belonging all has to do with the malforming effects religion has on us. It leaves us attempting to scrape meaning and affirmation from a god that does not exist. It's made up from within the dark fallen mind. And it is completely self centered and self serving.

### **Kate in Belgium**

I was given a copy of *He Loves Me* by a dear friend. It has so blessed me and set me free. I can hardly believe the difference between before I started reading it and now. Thank you so much for sharing what the Lord has indeed revealed to you. I sense a freshness inside and a new trust in him like I had when I first came to faith.

### **Steve in Indiana**

Nearly every time I re-listen to the "Jesus Lens" I think about sending you an email to thank you. So... here it is. Thank you. I am grateful to have been one of those in attendance and passed along DVD's of the "Jesus Lens" to friends.

### **Valerie in Virginia**

In addition to being eternally grateful to Papa for the love he has shown through lives of men such as yourself and how sharing that love with those who read your books and listen in to your teachings and podcasts... I absolutely love hearing about your love for your family, your daughter and son... and your precious grandchildren. Having grown up with a dread of my own earthly father, and seeing how that has impacted my ability to rest assured in the love of my Papa... I find it heart-

warming to see that there are men out there who openly adore their children and grandchildren. For those of us looking in... and catching a glimpse of your life, it makes your message and the sharing of your life's journey more credible. Have a wonderful, and wonder filled day!

### **Sharon in Australia**

I am learning a lot through Lifestream Journeys just looking at how people respond to each other on your website. How they resolve conflicts before they escalate and how they empathize with those in some sort of trouble or pain. I like the way many of them don't preach. They seem to come alongside and stick to sharing from their own experience of God. So they don't come across as if they have all the answers. That is a refreshing and honest way to go about things. Some don't have any advice at all, just empathy. I am changing the way I respond to those around me too as a result of what I have learned from your website. More honest, less know it all.

### **Tim in California**

I am writing to say thank you for your incredible work. I have instinctively known that there are problems with institutional church for many years, but could never quite verbalize them. I began to discover others outside the box about two years ago, (during a time that included) a near fatal automobile accident, a divorce, and receiving the left foot of fellowship from my church. I have been detoxing for about eight months and discovered your ministry only about six weeks ago. In that time I have read *The Shack, So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore*, and *The Naked Church*; listened to the *Transition* audio recordings repeatedly, along with many episodes of *The God Journey*, and am now about 2/3 of the way through *He Loves Me*. The past 72 hours have seen some of the most profound revelation I have ever received and I think I finally "get it." I realize that this is merely crossing a threshold into a whole new journey, but I am overjoyed to have finally reached this point in the process.

### **Claire in Holland**

Your book *He Loves Me* is so life-giving and clear about misconceptions in thought patterns and I am only at 30% of it. I can't wait to finish it.

it slowly, as I don't want it to end - The message of the book is transforming my life and bringing a freedom I always have longed for. I said to my husband, that it feels as if old mindsets are crashing down as the truth of God's fatherly love for me is invading my mind and heart!

#### **Carolyn in Canada**

I've listened to *Transitions* and I can say that it sounds like "home" to me. You have a wonderfully soothing voice and the God that you know is a God that I want to know. What you speak about speaks to my spirit and I can hear the Divine Amen.

#### **Alena in Canada**

I can't thank you enough for sharing your experience, your journey and your insights! You've introduced me to a God I've never known but always wanted and given me hope that I can know Him as you know Him.

#### **Tom from Wyoming**

Your *Living Loved* article, "Betrayal, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation" is a God-inspired piece of work if ever there was one. Your understanding of the issue of betrayal and God's method of handling it is nothing short of a revelation, and you have a real gift for expressing your thoughts in a clear and relevant manner. I am one of the legion who have struggled mightily with betrayal for many years with not much hope until now. Thank you for showing me how I've mishandled it, and then revealing God's path out of the darkness.

#### **Sharon from Australia**

I appreciated latest newsletter. Thanks for taking time to distill what you have obviously learnt from life experience on this important topic. I felt relief and peace reading through it. Succinct, sensible, logical and easy to understand. I have waded through a number of books on this topic and felt overwhelmed with information and rules and processes that I have never been able to apply or remember when required. I am grateful.

#### **Alan in Missouri**

Re: "Betrayal Forgiveness and Reconciliation". This is just beautiful! Wherever the Lord has had to take you to write such things which are living I applaud

Him, and you for choosing to stay the course when so many other ways were open to you.

#### **Jill in Texas**

I am being transformed by the reading of the book *He Loves Me*. As the wife of a minister for some 33 years, I've walked many years with the Lord. One trial after another sent me into a tailspin of depression and anxiety. I am coming out of it, slowly. With the guidance of a christian therapist, I bought this book. I looked through it thinking, "Eh, it's okay, but I know God loves me." It has taken me reading it a second time to "get it" and boy am I getting it. I have finally convinced my pastor husband who is weary in well-doing that he must read it. He has just begun...

#### **Judy in Canada**

My old friend and I spent 3 days at a hotel with your *The Jesus Lens* DVD and she was so blessed. The weekend ended up being a spiritual retreat that really fed us both and strengthened us. I received added blessings by my being able to listen to more of your super disk on the 8 hour drive to see her. I have just ordered another copy for her and two more for friends. You have really led many of my friends to liberty in Christ and onto a different road where they seem to be pretty well 'dancing' along their spirituals way now. Our spirits have really been revived.

#### **Lauralee in Australia**

I really wanted to tell you how much your writing has brought healing into my life. I had recently lost a baby boy plus previously twin girls. Anyway, through your encouragement I have come through the depression, finally I 'get it' Jesus loves me, God does exist and there's nothing that can separate me from Him! I love your books and have passed several copies around to friends. My favourite is *He Loves Me*. God has gifted you with such insight into the freedom found in just being loved. I am so tired of church people that have agenda's, create issues, praying against this & that. If we all just loved and be loved this 'junk' that they are praying about/against would fade away!! I feel most peace when I read your books/newsletters so if peace is my guide then I am convinced your teaching is spot on. In fact I know it was through reading *He Loves Me*

away from it, whether we'll contribute to his redemption in the world, or be part of its destruction. That's what Jesus meant when he affirmed those who followed, *Well done! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!* (Matt. 25: 21)

Many find verses like this disconcerting, especially when Jesus warns the faithless that even what they have would be taken away. It sounds like those who have, get more and those that don't have, are left out. But Jesus was not talking the language of reward and retribution here; he was talking about the unseen consequences of our choices. If we follow a bit, the road will get clearer. If we follow our own way instead, we'll lose sight of him.

That doesn't mean you have to be perfect for God to work in you, or that you can't reverse the trend any day you want to. He is always ready to lead you one simple step at a time and never asks for what you cannot give. Following in small things today will open more doors tomorrow. If we're indulgent and dishonest in little things, we will be indulgent and dishonest in larger things. If we can learn to follow him in simple ways of loving others and being true to our word even when it hurts, his work in us will grow in ways we'd never conceive.

This is not about earning his life by our obedience, but participating with him as he transforms us. Everything I get to experience of God today began with simple choices years ago. They set off a chain of unforeseen consequences that opened doors to where I live now. The simple nudge to go to public schools with our children and volunteer to help began a series of opportunities that eventually led to twenty years of consulting public schools on religious liberty conflicts.

“ He will lead you one simple step at a time and never asking for more than you can give. Following in small things today will open more doors tomorrow.

Listening to Jesus say, "I have more to teach you if you walk away," when my former co-pastor wanted to force me out of the fellowship we helped build together, opened a trailhead into personal transformation I adore and opportunities for growing and sharing I would not have found without him.

At the outset, all these choices looked more difficult than other options I had in mind. I'm glad he won me into following him and the choice to do so now is far easier. I don't even trust my own desires anymore because following him, even though painful at times, has always yielded better fruit.

#### **It's A Process**

If you view the life of Jesus as a performance treadmill, what I'm writing will only create anxiety and pressure for you to work harder. That will lead you to despair and hopelessness, which is the opposite of what Jesus intended. Learning to merge off of the broad way and onto the narrow road is a process that he wants to work in you, not a requirement he's made for you. It's simply a matter of learning to lean into him a bit more each day and leaning away from what draws you down the broader road. You can't do this alone.

And this does not mean you have to carefully listen to Jesus at every moment and try to figure out what he wants so you won't miss out. Doing that will

leave you frustrated and exhausted. We find his way much more simply than that. In fact, the anxiety of having to hear him will make it more difficult to do so. Instead go through your day with a growing awareness that he is with you. Whenever you have it, follow that inner sense that seems to encourage you one direction or checks you from going another. When you come up against choices of significance, ask him what he has in mind. Let him show you in his time. You don't have to hear something every day or in every circumstance. Relax in him as he connects your heart with his.

Learning to live out of your spirit, rather than your intellect or emotions alone, will take some time. Ask him to show you the next step ahead and relax in a growing trust that he will. The Spirit makes his direction clear in a variety of ways—it might be that stray thought in your mind, affirmed by something that you read or hear, perhaps even a lyric of a song in the background that resonates with your heart. Don't look for a "voice" per

“**It's simply a matter of learning to lean into him a bit more each day and thus leaning away from the broader road.**”

se, but a growing awareness of his thoughts in your mind. Of course, familiarity with his words in Scripture and conversations with others on a similar journey will also bring clarity to what he's showing you.

As I go about my life, I become aware of options that are better than my own, especially in helping someone near me, or drawing me into a quieter space with him. At first, I don't always like where these nudges would lead me, which is why Jesus saw this journey as a narrower road and why most people miss it. Our flesh so easily dismisses what it doesn't want to consider. And,

no, you don't have to always get it right. No one does.

As you make a few choices down the narrow road, you will find yourself becoming more relaxed and able to live in the moment instead of trying to manipulate your circumstances. The questions you'll find yourself asking might be these: *What does he want to show me about himself today? What might love lead me to do in this situation? How does loving others, even at the expense of my self-interest perpetuate the kingdom? How does my forgiveness or service to someone else today, make the world a better place?*

But even when you miss him and find yourself on a path of your own making, he is there, too, still nudging you toward a better road. Don't be hard on yourself, just keep coming back to him over and over. You are loved, even in your brokenness. Today is the day God cares about. As they say, the best time to plant an oak tree was twenty years ago, but the second best time to plant it is today.

As you learn to live more on the nar-

row road, you'll have a better idea just how destructive the broad way was, to yourself and others. Rather than be embarrassed by it, embrace that new reality. One of the most redemptive things we do on the narrow road is to go back to people we've wronged, seek their forgiveness and offer restitution where we can. Such moments bring great healing and clarity to all involved. Yes, it may not be easy, but that's exactly the point of the narrow road—most fruitful things aren't fun at the outset, but yield great joy later on.

Learning to follow him in the reality of daily life will have far-reaching

consequences that will open up possibilities you would never see coming. That's why Jesus warned Nicodemus that if he couldn't believe him about earthly things, he'd never grasp what Jesus wanted to show him about heavenly things.

### **True Discipleship**

The room was filled with a church planting team that gathered weekly in a coffee shop. But every year they don't meet during the last month of summer to give everyone a break. They had just completed that month and told me that it is always their best month of community and growth. More fellowship, outreach, and interaction took place in that one month than the other eleven. They wanted to know how they could capture the spirit of that month in their meetings.

"Why try?" I asked. "If that's your best month, maybe what you're looking for is down that road?" I could tell the thought had never crossed their minds. They were having trouble grasping it now. How could they be "a church" without their meeting?

But the choice was so clearly before them and what they'd learn down that

road would transform them in ways the status quo never would. That's why Jesus encouraged us to look past how everyone else is doing things, and find out what he is asking of us.

Perhaps the most effective form of discipleship is not teaching a curriculum, but simply being alongside others when they are at a fork in the road and being a cheerleader for the road less traveled. We don't have to manipulate or pressure them, but simply through a question or observation give them an opportunity to make a choice that matters. And if they make it, lend them our support and encouragement. That's how people find their way onto a journey that will be full of his life.

The only reason why his way may seem difficult is because we're so busy following the crowd that we miss his invitation to a narrower road. But once we learn to believe him, it becomes far easier than most think possible.

And though you'll find yourself on a road most others can't understand, it will change the way you think, live, and how you treat others. You'll find yourself on a transformative journey that you will never regret.



## **Sharing the Journey**

### **Shelly in Colorado**

Thank you for stunning the religion out of me and speaking in a tone of absolute love that gave me the freedom to leave employment at a church and find real community with the body of Christ. Last week a friend of mine was asked to leave children's ministry because her husband did not come to church. It destroyed her. Then I read in the final chapter of *So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* where a group of angry church-goers are equally hurt by church leaders. I realized that what happened to my friend is just a chance for her to encounter real

intimacy with Jesus. In the last three years, I have fallen so deeply in love with Father. I have found him in every hurt and blessing. I count my trouble as waters gone by. What I love most about you both is your biographies. They weren't filled with degrees and accolades but just a journey sharing the love of God with others. I want my bio to be the same. I have put so much attention on my career when my job is loving as Christ loves.

### **Ingaill in Sweden**

*He loves Me...* Well, here is one more I am reading

