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He Desires to Walk with You

I recently read a news article about how wildfires were engulfing entire sections of a country. These unrelenting fires were destroying everything in their wake, homes, animals, people, with whole towns being destroyed. One of the people interviewed said, "It was the scariest moment in my life; I thought I was going to die! I am an atheist, and I still prayed for God to rescue my family and me!"

I thought about this statement for some time and pondered on how a person can think they don't believe in God, but in the midst of great struggle or fear, they find themselves reaching out to Him for answers. This isn't just for atheists because I could recognize how in my early life, I believed the same way as this person, and yet I was a believer. As long as things were going well, I happily walked along in life serving God, but when things seemed out of my control and became difficult, in those times, I prayed like never before for God's hand to rescue me.

With that type of lifestyle, I realized that I had limited God in my life. His purpose was to be there for me and to keep me happy. It was as if I had taken the creator of the Universe in all of His greatness and squeezed Him into a tiny little box with a sticker that said: "Open in Case of Emergency." Sadly, not only can I see this in my younger years, but I can see this same attitude in the culture of many churches today.

Many messages preached around the world can be summed up with a title that would say something like: "How to serve God, be a better person, find a purpose, see happiness and success." While these are all important subjects for all of us and can help us to grow in our standards, these subjects can never be the core of our relationship with Him.

The very foundation of our life with God must always be intimacy with Him. I can recall the most beautiful experiences that I've had with God as moments that changed me. I remember being an unworthy teenager looking for direction and hope. I would take long walks and simply talk to Him about everything. These were not times of effort and work, but of love, I was bonding my heart to His, and it brought comfort, healing, and direction into my life. There was no excitement from a service or glory cloud from heaven or a minister laying hands on me and activating my call. God help us as the church if we continue to substitute spiritual experiences with knowing Him personally. Let's run into His arms and never replace our first love with activities or experiences.

Just take a look at David's heart towards God in Psalm 63:1-5 "*O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.*"

David was not a perfect man, and yet he had a heart after God. He is not describing a forced commitment to service, nor is it a man seeking a reward for being good and obedient, but it is a man who longs and thirsts for that connection with His Father. Keeping a thriving, beautiful relationship with our Heavenly Father is the most important thing we can do, and yet it's very easy for each of us to lose this focus. Life can become busy and hard; with the many obstacles and struggles that we face, we can find ourselves distracted. As in any relationship, it takes work and focus to keep our hearts close to our Father. It can be easy to drift into merely walking with Him and seeking our needs being met.

Which brings me to a question for us to consider: how do we stay in love with God? Why is it so easy to find myself pulled into a mechanical type of walk with Him when I really only press into Him when there's a battle or need? I believe I found the answer in a poem from David. It's in Psalm 16:5-9, *"You, Lord, are all I have, and you give me all I need; my future is in your hands. How wonderful are your gifts to me; how good they are! I praise the Lord, because he guides me, and in the night my conscience warns me. I am always aware of the Lord's presence; he is near, and nothing can shake me. And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure."* (Good News Translation)

There it is, the proof of real love for God, "You, Lord, are all I have." What a statement. What a place to live. It's like a love song written between a romantic husband and wife. "You are all I have and all that I am; my very breath is because of you, and my life is empty without you." These are the words from a heart that has found no other replacement for God's peace, love, or joy. The secret to being in love with God is only found in accepting that there is absolutely no substitute and that there is no place in this world that I can find what I have found in Him! He is truly all that I have, and I need Him every moment of every day. Let's never lose our first love!

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