

Road to Royalty

A Journey to Relationship

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References

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He had been, he thought back to the early days, like the unknown superhero. Unable to find his destiny among that of those he did not identify with, he waited endlessly for an unknown opportunity to present itself.

For what, he wondered, had his imagination pulled his heart away from the world of living into the world of fantasy? Was this invisible life really worth the sacrifice of the visible? Could the pleasure derived from the days and nights spent in hours of sleep between short periods of waking dreams actually be more satisfying than the other possibility?

In sleep only did he realize the potential locked away in his soul. Yet, something inside longed for a chance to experience the feeling of victory when the sun ruled the sky.

Hopelessly, he waited for the milky white of the moon to splash a pathway of light back to the world where he lived.

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| INTRODUCTION_____ | 9 |
| THE TALE OF ZORAH_____ | 15 |
| AN AGNOSTIC CHRISTIAN_____ | 49 |
| THE END OF ME_____ | 67 |
| HOPE _____ | 99 |
| LOVE_____ | 123 |
| PRAYER_____ | 135 |
| PAIN _____ | 169 |
| A NEW ROAD_____ | 201 |
| ROAD TO ROYALTY_____ | 223 |
| CONCLUSION _____ | 283 |
| POST SCRIPT_____ | 293 |

Introduction

For one whose only sense of existence comes from shutting out the world and resting in the arms of sleep, waking up can be a painful process. If there is no reason to wake up, the experience can be absolutely devastating. When I first heard the gentle call to wake up to the world where dreams become reality, I did not want to listen.

But the One who called does not lose patience or give up hope. His voice grew stronger though I didn't have the ears to hear it. All I knew was that my dream world no longer satisfied my deepest longings. I didn't know what, but I wanted more.

I tried to force the dream to change, but in the process I began to wake up. Then something unusual happened. Usually, a sleeping person does not remember much of what happened while he or she was asleep. But I have been given a special gift.

As I began to wake, I began to write. Through the haze of darkness, my pencil floated over page after page of loose-leaf paper describing things that I did not understand. I did not know that I was about to wake up, but I did know this hazy process was something I would want to remember someday.

Perhaps I could have awakened earlier, but for the first 20 years of my life I was comfortable being asleep and did not realize there was a life to wake up to. Even though one could say I felt a gentle shaking, I never roused myself beyond the point of wondering what it was. It took a lively splash of water to force me out of the dream world and show me something of the life I would some day live.

As my eyes became accustomed to the light that shone around me, I began to see objects that reflected the dream world I was leaving. Or, perhaps the objects in the dream world had been reflections of what I was now beginning to see. I was no longer home in either world.

Seeing neither the reality I knew while asleep nor the world around me as it would soon appear, I wandered about as if sleepwalking. Drifting through a year of broken dreams and deconstructed reality, I attempted to understand what had changed. I knew that I had been woken up, but I could not figure out why.

Then one day my dismal reverie was shattered by a flash of lightning. For a moment, I glimpsed the reality of a world in which

Chapter Eight

Pain

The Context (February 4, 2012)

Two Years! God, two wonderful years of joy. Going ever further into the depths of understanding God's love for me and the wonderful transformation that is taking place.

In 2010, I did not just experience a life-changing event, I began a life-long journey. Though at the time of decision I was flooded with peace and spent the next few days on the clouds telling everyone what a wonderful thing had happened, I was still clinging to the smoldering pile of my previous burnt up belief system.

Abandoning this meant giving up everything I had ever believed. It

also made working as a camp counselor rather complicated that following summer. The difficult part of being brought out of a religious system that based itself on the truth of what I now believed was identifying the lie. It took close to a year for me to finally understand what it was.

During that year I continued to read the Bible, talk with friends, pray, and avoid the church (I am still finding it difficult to go back to the church where I once was deceived). In all this, my attempt was not to learn through logic, but to provide God with the tools to teach me through life. Truth cannot be taught. It must be discovered. I still wanted to learn how to be a good Christian. Instead of theory, I was now focused on practice.

“...I did not just experience a life-changing event, I began a life-long journey.”

I spent a good part of my time overseas during that year and was involved in churches where people sought to experience God in charismatic ways. There was a lot of emphasis on emotion. Some was practical, but a lot was seeking a sensation. This realization that people emphasizing experiential truth began pursuing emotion the way people emphasizing objective truth began pursuing knowledge frustrated me. I knew neither of these was where I wanted to be, but the experience seemed more alive or real. “I am the way, the truth... (John 14:6)” kept coming to mind.

“...people emphasizing experiential truth began pursuing emotion the way people emphasizing objective truth began pursuing knowledge...”

John 14:6

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Probably the most interesting concept I encountered at the time was the idea of the Kingdom of God - this Kingdom that Jesus came to establish on earth and that my friend James believed tied back somehow to Israel. Israel was to be a people led by God to

be a blessing to the world, but it demanded a king. Jesus had come to be that king, but being rejected opened the Kingdom to all. I don’t remember what he said in our hours of conversation and Bible study, but he brought the Kingdom of God out of the world of fairy tales into real life for me.

Meanwhile Kevin, one of my mentors, demonstrated how it was lived. I began to see that faith is not an individual belief in the doctrines of a bullet-point list, but a lifestyle that demonstrates this Kingdom to

“...faith is not an individual belief in the doctrines of a bullet-point list, but a lifestyle that demonstrates this Kingdom to the world.”

the world. That is what Jesus did. That is not what Christians do.

Even with this in mind, I began to view Christianity as little more than a lifestyle of morality until one day in April.

I was walking near the community gardens by the River Thames after a Summit Oxford session when the warm sun hit my face and a sliver of truth appeared in my mind. I

realized that the biblical story was a record of the history of God's relationships with men. Though I didn't grasp it all then, I

eventually came to understand that the goal of Scripture is not to understand Scripture, but to

reveal the person behind the Scripture. Christianity was not about the Bible, or an experience, or a lifestyle, but about a relationship that included all this and more. Even in my simple faith mindset, I was seeking the right answer, but not the right relationship.

Thus, even in my discovery of the truth, I had accepted the lie of Christianity: that knowing about God and accepting certain principles as valid, or experiencing certain things, or acting in a certain way is enough. All of that is good, but only in the context of a relationship with God. That is what makes Christianity different from any other religion: knowing God.

My friend Zak continued to share what God was teaching him about how Christians were made to love other people. Our purpose in life is to

“That is what makes Christianity different from any other religion: knowing God.”

show others God's love. "To do that," he said, "we must first know God's love for us."

Like most people, I knew little of love growing up, and had shielded myself from feeling any emotion. After a year of doing and saying what I wanted in 2011, I learned to know my desires, but I still could not feel. I was a man without a heart.

At some point, I realized that emotions are a good part of human nature. They reflect a God who feels and displays emotion. Until I learned to feel my emotions, my enjoyment of God would be limited. I had known something of this since 2009 but was scared of what could happen as I began to feel again.

Though I am not yet emotionally mature, something happened and God has replace my heart with a little piece of His own. I feel love, joy, peace, and more toward God and others. These building blocks of relationships have made my life worth living.

Coming back after a Christmas break where I missed my friends for the first time and had a ton of fun with my family, God began to take our relationship to the next step. I have written extensively about the hours of prayer, the tears of prayer and broken heart for others, the sacrifice of my desires for wealth and fame, the struggle with fear of man, the days filled with knowledge of God, the moments of quiet peace, the fresh and refreshing Scripture, the joyful worship, the gratefulness for struggle, and the ever-growing knowledge of my role in God's Kingdom. The love I've been given for others, the trust in hard times, the excitement over God's