



The Journey of Thomas

My Own Journey - Truth

By John J. Smid

Job 20:20-22

Surely our foes are destroyed, and fire devours their wealth. Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart

My wife and I have gone through a huge transition during the last year and a half. When we made the decision together that I should resign from Love in Action—a ministry position that we had both invested our hearts and souls in over the previous 22 years—it was a major change for both of us, and even more so for me.

My Internal Evaluation

In the process of leaving I had to do a lot of internal evaluating; this required a lot of personal honesty and authenticity. I had to dig deep into my heart regarding my motives, my weakness and my strengths. It was imperative that I left with my heart as honest as it could be and to feel clear about my real motives regardless of what the circumstances at the time looked like. It was easy for me to vacillate at a very emotional level. For all intents and purposes it could have looked like I was leaving a conflicting situation in hopes I would find relief and a new beginning but that was not the real truth.

Five years earlier God had truly begun to change my heart. He dug around in there to see if my involvement with the ministry I was in included an idolatrous place in my life. I was certainly deeply invested. I had received much affirmation for what I had been doing all through the years but as I searched my heart I did not believe it was an idol for me in that sense of the word.

Something much bigger was happening and it was quite a move of the Lord. After I began to seek him for changes that I knew could unearth me from 22 years of investment, I found a new excitement, a hope in something that was quite different for me. This was the true beginning of Grace Rivers and I had begun a new journey for myself. I didn't know what lay ahead but I began to wonder what it might look like. As I pondered these changes in my heart I tried to figure out a way to incorporate these new things where I was serving, but that didn't seem to gain any momentum.

The Tearing Began

This is where the trials began. Things surrounding my connection with this ministry seemed to be shaking loose. Much of the shaking looked like the man on the roof with the pronged

shovel tearing old shingles loose might look from the street. It was rough to go through and at times terrible to experience. But none the less, the ties began to break and I found myself losing my heart connection to the ministry.

After a couple of years of confusion, shock, misunderstandings, and personal and internal battles it became apparent that God was tearing me away literally one finger at a time while I struggled to hold on out of fear that I may not survive outside of where I was. After all, who would be interested in me? I didn't have a college education and certainly the ministry I was serving was quite narrow in focus and often controversial. So, what would I have to offer another ministry or corporation? How would I make a living?

I also looked back over twenty years earlier. I worked for the Union Pacific Railroad for 13 years. It was a secure job with great pay and benefits. Many I worked with often wondered if they could survive outside of their job since it paid so well and their qualifications might not get them a job like that. So, I wondered the same thing. Where could I go to get this kind of a job. Maybe I have to stay here forever because certainly I couldn't get this anywhere else. So, I felt trapped by my circumstances.

I realized that I had gotten to the same place in the ministry. Where would I go? Could I survive leaving this ministry position? I once again began to feel trapped by my circumstances thinking surely I couldn't get this kind of position anywhere else. The deception in my own heart was a stronghold. Thinking I had nothing to offer another ministry or corporation since I was so "under qualified". After all, I didn't have a college degree or a resume' that anyone would find useful outside of this narrow focused ministry I had been in for so long.

After another year of tearing away I got to the place where it appeared that I really had no option if I wanted to remain healthy personally and to leave before everything exploded internally. So, my heart had changed to the point where I began to ask the Lord to free me or I was going to go crazy. I got back to my roots in my faith where I prayed deeply and simply, "God, lead me out of here".

Ok, I'll Go Along With You God

Once the decision was made in my heart I did feel relief but at the same time the change had not occurred. In the meantime there was even more turmoil that was more challenging than anything I had gone through before. The last of the fingers had to come off.

When I walked through the decision I began to pray differently. "What do you have for me now God? Make it a surprise!" I didn't want to contrive my future and truly wanted it to be built by Him. I wanted His best. If I was going to leave this 22 year investment then my future had to be His best. I hadn't a clue what that might look like. I laugh now thinking that I might be able to contrive it anyway. With my history it wasn't like I had this wonderful

experience that would cause churches, ministries, or corporations to beg me to come to work for them!

Surprises? I want to know more.

God did in fact begin to surprise me. Week after week I saw this process like I was opening Christmas packages one at a time. I knew that whatever was in them would be good but until they were opened I didn't know the content. One surprise after the other felt like dropping breadcrumbs that were leading me down this mysterious path of discovery. Day by day I released more and more of the past I had lived in, because I saw such wonder in the new challenges that were present and that lay ahead.

Today

John Smid will be selling cars. Talk about surprises! Who would have known 18 months ago that I would be working at a Toyota dealership? I didn't ask for this. I never would have set my sights on this as an income stream.

As I adjust to the idea I am getting somewhat excited about it. There are many things about this job that fit my interests. The hours will allow some scheduling that coincides with continuing to build Grace Rivers and work on The Journey of Thomas. I look forward to working with some people again since I have been primarily alone in my office all year. I like the managers I have met so far.

Surprising to me, they saw my resume' as a positive thing. "John, you completely fit the profile that we are looking for. We believe you will do very well with this job." You mean my history and resume doesn't disqualify me? You mean it is a positive? Well, there goes another lie I believed. It was cancelled right before my very eyes.

Honesty

The Journey of Thomas began in my life before I ever even thought of the idea. I had been building the concepts of Honesty and Authenticity on a very personal level. What am I feeling? What is really going on in my heart of hearts? If I had not been more personally honest I might have slammed a few people along the way from the deception if it had set in. During the process of the earthquake in my vocational life, I had to continually evaluate the circumstances and filter them through what I knew was really happening, rather than to blame my circumstances and expect the people around me to be what they were not.

Authenticity

If I had not focused on whom God created me to be I could not have trusted Him as much as I did through the process. As I rocked and rolled through the changes I had to keep coming back to who I was rather than what I had done. What makes up John Smid? What do I really want to do with my life? During this time I found that I had discovered a personal mission statement that really wasn't new but had led me all through the years. While I was working in a narrowly focused ministry, a much more widely applicable mission was moving

in my heart. This personal evaluation of my own authenticity saved me and others from a lot of grief for sure.

Transparency

Then, the idea of Transparency became a reality. Am I willing to say “Whatever Lord” upon my new life choices? Am I really willing to allow Him to surprise me? Is the element of surprise a positive thing? Actually it has been. Being willing to move wherever He wanted me to, added a wonderful journey to this last couple of years of my life. I learned that when I was flexible in my heart I could then ponder the mysteries of my future.

When my wife and I were on a cruise and had landed in Turks and Caicos in the Caribbean I had just begun to open up my heart to the Lord’s changes. I thought, “What would it be like to come here and start a brand new mission to reach the spiritual needs of this virtually bankrupt island?” My wife wasn’t so keen on the discussion but I was becoming free to begin a brand new life, walking in the freedom of the Lord using me, as I am, however He chooses to. Transparency had a brand new meaning for me and I was finally open to a new adventure.

The Truth!

Yes, I want to learn more each day to live in the truth because that is where I have found some of the answers to the question, “Where are you going Lord, and how do I get there.” It is a great place to be.

My Journey continues..... Come along with me.

Application Principles

Having a more honest perspective on our life, our motives, and our potential can and will help to prevent relationship struggles and consequences. It will also help in our connection with the Lord. Seeing His perspective allows us to trust Him more fully.

I have often heard some refer to the added “beatitude” Blessed are the Flexible. Actually, “Blessed are the Meek” fits this quite well. Meek in this passage really means in its original language accepting God’s dealings with us as being good.

Being honest can help us to accept God’s dealings with us more fully and with less stress and outward manifestations of sinful responses. Honesty is good “preventive” medicine!

Prayer

Oh, father, I am so thankful for Your working in my spirit today. As I look back over the last five years I can truly be thankful that You saw a bigger picture than I could have imagined. In Your love and care for me You saw into the future something that I would truly enjoy and embrace even when it wasn’t on my radar screen. Help me to continue following You more deeply into the close and distant future.

Write three feeling statements regarding the subject of Honor:

"I feel _____

About trusting God with a future that I can't see

Because _____"

"I feel _____

About letting go of things that are so close to me I can't imagine living life without them

Because _____"

"I feel _____

About finding more of who I really am so I can move more freely into God's hands

Because _____"

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