

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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January 2014

Dear Friends,

*Find Me.*

That's what Jesus said, when I asked him what we need in this new year.

*Find me.*

This is his instruction for us in 2014.

Think of it – how different would your current experience of life be if you had, say, twice as much Jesus than you normally do? How about three times as much?

Whatever our need may be, whatever trial we are currently living with, whatever challenges loom ahead, it would all be very different if we had a greater portion of God. Wouldn't it?! If your friends and family were experiencing God far more richly and deeply than they currently are, how much of the debris in their lives would go away – or stop coming *your* way?!

People chase all kinds of answers (thus the Internet.) A new fitness program will do it. The new budget app will settle things for us. If I can only get to that conference, get time with so-and-so, get our kids in that school, get pregnant, get a new job, get.... Well, you get the idea. We chase all sorts of answers; it makes us feel anxious and desperate. But what if we had a greater portion of God?

*Find Me.*

So – what will you do, what is your plan, to draw your life more deeply from God? It's not just going to happen; you will have to make room for it. May I suggest...

A) Create relational space. I confess – I used to think couples who had a standing “date night” each week were a little weird. (I am making my confession.) It just seemed a little un-romantic to me, like scheduling sex. I see now I was wrong. If you don't make relational space, relationship doesn't just happen. The same holds true for God. You have to create relational space in your week for God. You can't TiVo Jesus. Make room in your day.

B) Disentangle. (This goes with A.) Friends of mine were describing their family schedule, how it is dominated by youth sports; they eat dinner in the car. It is utter madness. You cannot run at the pace of the World and hope to have God. You just can't. The World has gone mad; people's lives have no margin for their own soul, let alone for God. You will have to make tough decisions. What goes in 2014? (Ask him!)

C) Detox. (This goes with B.) The poison of the World is not merely a matter of pace; it includes the media we allow into our lives. Over the past year a number of friends have recommended books or movies to us, and when we went to check them out we were shocked at what Christians allow into their lives. Vampires and zombies do not prepare your heart to receive the life of Jesus; watching someone else have sex does not fill you with the life of God. The desert fathers left civilization because they felt it was assaulting their souls...and they had no television, cell phones or Internet! My God – you live in a toxic culture. Shut every valve you can!

D) Pray for union; pray for oneness. This is what we are after – not a feeling, not a cool encounter. We cannot hope to live without the Life of God flowing in and through us. There is no other way. So Jesus prayed for us; he asked his Father that we would be one with him just as they are one with each other (John 17:20-23). This is the secret of his life; it must become the secret of ours.

*Jesus, I give myself to you today, body, soul and spirit. I pray for union, I pray for oneness. One life with you in everything.*

If you read one book this year, early in the year, read *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard. Why? Because the spiritual disciplines are the MEANS BY WHICH we receive the life of God. Silence, solitude, worship, scripture – saints through the ages have clung to these in “hard-pressing” times because they found in them new strength. Yet here in the last days most Christians don’t practice them at all. Then they get mad at God for being “distant.” Who is being unavailable?

O friends – we need more of God.

This is *especially* true for us – believers living in the last days. We *are* “hard-pressed on every side,” as Paul says. This is a very hard time for the person trying to live a holy life. And we feel guilty about it, as if we were only living “better” somehow we wouldn’t feel hard-pressed on every side. (We don’t know what that “better” is, we just feel that if we had it we wouldn’t be hard-pressed.) That is like blaming the tree for the thunderstorm. Jesus said this just goes with the times. Hard-pressed is *not* your fault. It comes with the territory. So let’s get the condemnation off us!

However, you *are* going to have to make some choices to send your roots deeper, so that you can receive more of God during such times as these. That would be a really good conversation with Jesus: *Lord, show me. How can I receive more of you?*

Create relational space. Disentangle from the insane World. Detox from the poison of the culture. Pray for union with Jesus. Practice the disciplines. You *will* find God – and he is what we need.

Love,



John

PS Our new *Becoming Myself* video series will bring you the life of God, alone or with a group! A great way to begin your new year finding him.