



- October 2003 Newsletter -

Friends,

Well...how goes the Journey? And the Battle? Yep...me, too. So, in the spirit of keeping the conversation going, I wanted to pick up on something David said in Psalm 16:11:

You have made known to me the path of life.

Read it again, more slowly: "You have made known to me the path of life." Isn't it what we want? To find the path of life? I don't just mean to get to heaven someday (though we yearn for that). I mean to find our way through the ins and outs of our days here, to the life God has for us *now*.

My son Sam turned fourteen this year and...holy smokes. I had no idea what adolescence would bring. Where is the sweet, compliant boy who loved to cuddle? Who is this young man, taller than me, hurtling through a whole circus of emotions and issues, finding all of my buttons and pushing them? The other night we had a "misunderstanding." He goes downstairs, slams his door and turns his music up really loud. (Good grief – this is textbook). I'm steaming, wanting to "set things straight."

On my way downstairs, I haven't a clue what to do. I ask Jesus, "What should I do?" *Preserve the lines of communication.* "That's it?" *That's it. Just keep the lines of communication open.* I felt rescued. I know I could have really tanked things; I mean, I wanted to make it a "life lesson" or some lame thing like that. And it would have shut Sam down. Instead, we hung onto our relationship.

Now – this isn't a letter on parenting. It's an example of God making known to us the path of life. Back to Psalm 16:11 – notice first, that over the years what David experienced (what we would call "the Christian life") was God making the path of life known to him. That's how he describes it. How refreshing – it frees us from programs and techniques into something more alive. How hopeful – we don't have to "figure it out." How intimate – something conversational is going on there. How...wild.

The early Celtic Christians called the Holy Spirit "the Wild Goose." They knew that God could never be tamed, that following his haunting cry would be adventure, risk, danger...and life. We've got a phrase we use nowadays that shows our contempt for such a radical life. We call certain adventures "wild goose chases." I have no idea if there's any direct historical connection, but the contrast is pretty revealing. It shows how much we hate to surrender control of things, step into the unknown. We want a plan.

Just the other day a successful man in ministry asked me, "So – what are your ministry goals?" He had just outlined for me their plans to conduct more than a hundred

conferences this year, train a hundred thousand people, circulate a million books. Why did I feel foolish when I said, “Well...ummm...we just want to walk with God?” How has that come to sound...naïve, inefficient, over-spiritual? For heaven’s sake – that is what Bible is full of: Stories of people who walked with God.

Notice also that finding the path of life is something that must be *revealed* to us. The way is narrow, as Jesus said, and hard to find. This we know very well. But when we can’t find it we usually feel like we’re blowing it. Nope, Jesus said, that’s the nature of it: It’s hard to find. Let me reveal it to you. This requires humility, and faith. Humility, to live in a posture moment to moment where we are looking for his help. And faith, because to hear the voice of Jesus you have to trust that he *does* speak and you *do* hear.

During a radio show awhile back, the interviewer asked me about what to do in a certain counseling situation with a difficult client. “Ask God,” I said. “When you’re right there, in the moment, ask God.” There was a long, awkward silence...like he didn’t know what to say in reply, or like he was disappointed with the answer. Again – how has that come to sound so strange? So unprofessional?

I share this because the world in which we live doesn’t encourage following the Wild Goose, and it might be good to remember that it’s what we really need and it’s what the Bible offers. “At once they left their nets and followed him” (Matt 4:20).

Jesus continues to do the most beautiful things as we follow him. Our women’s retreat was just amazing.

*It's phenomenal. The person I just spoke with today cannot be my sister. Where is the frightened little girl? She has returned a warrior. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. It is truly a miracle of God what I have witnessed with my sister. She encountered the living God in the most amazing way.*

And a report from a man who came to our last Wild at Heart boot camp:

*God met me in the area of my deepest need. During the prayer Saturday night to heal the young and fractured places in our hearts, I was healed and set free of the wounds of deep physical abuse during my early childhood. God did in 20 minutes what 7 years and thousands of dollars of counseling could not/did not do.*

In those moments, Jesus made known to us and to them the path of life.

Thank you, dear ones, for your love and support. Together, we will walk with God. And so keep us in your prayers and offerings. We do need you!

John