

To Walk Again With Jesus

“Professional Christians” can easily be convinced they are maintaining a relationship with Christ when, in fact, they are doing just the opposite. Bible studies, seminary classes, prayer breakfasts—they consume a great deal of time, but often leave the busy Christian depleted and ill-prepared for life’s real hardships. The dissonance between working every day in the Lord’s service and truly knowing the Lord is a prevalent enigma in the evangelical community—one with which Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, is well acquainted.

She remembers vividly a time in her recent past when the stress of life crowded Jesus out. She didn’t mean to let it happen; it just did. Within a two-year period, Anne’s three children all married, her son was diagnosed with cancer, her aging mother was hospitalized five times, her husband’s dental office burned to the ground, and two hurricanes devastated her property. Despite the tempest of pressure in her life, she maintained a rigorous speaking schedule and wrote a book. The stress eventually drove her to her knees. “I think for a lot of people it would be burnout,” she says, with authentic sympathy. “It would be burnout big time. That’s what pushed me over the brink until my heart’s cry was, ‘Just give me Jesus. I just want Him back in my life.’”



She felt like Mary Magdalene, who wailed at the empty tomb, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him” ([John 20:13](#)). Anne, too, cried out to God, “Jesus used to be in my life. I used to know Him, but I can’t find Him now.” Looking back, she realizes that were it not for a fresh encounter with almighty God, she would either have withdrawn from ministry completely or resorted to medication for help. Instead, she gritted her teeth and wrestled God for a blessing. She remembers her desperate prayers: “I can’t get through this; I can’t manage;

I can’t keep my head above water. I’m going to burn out and go down in smoke. I just need a fresh touch from heaven.”

“I didn’t want to escape and quit ministry,” she recalls. “I wasn’t looking for a vacation. I wasn’t even asking God for a miracle. The cry of my heart was, ‘Just give me Jesus.’ And I felt like if my questions didn’t have answers, if my problems weren’t solved, but if God would just give me a fresh touch from heaven—if He would just give me a fresh encounter with Jesus—it would be enough.

“When you have Jesus, He is the answer. I went to the pages of my Bible. If we want to know more of Jesus, that’s where we have to begin. Jesus is revealed to us through the pages of God’s Word. So I went to the gospel of John.” An intense study and meditation in that book deepened Anne’s love for Jesus and her awareness of Him. He opened her eyes and helped her see that

there are a lot of people like her, born and raised in Christian homes and in the church—people who call themselves Christians but come up short.

“I think we even do Bible studies in a professional way,” she says. “We can go to the Greek and Hebrew and make all these little symbols or fill in the blanks, or we can do Corinthians because last year we did Acts and then next year we’re going to do Romans. And we’re just proud because we’ve studied every book in the Bible. That can be wonderful—I’m not putting that down—but if what you’re doing is piling up information and knowledge, you’re missing the whole point.

“The point of Bible study is that we might know God. If I’m not growing, if I can’t hear Him speak to me so that I know what He thinks about my day and how He would counsel me on my decisions, then I’m missing the whole point.”

Anne’s meditations in John so profoundly changed her life that she put the study into a book for others to read. Her latest release, *My Heart’s Cry*, is a journal of that study. She begins by telling of how the disciples, toward the end of Jesus’ earthly life, hungered for more of Him. They longed for Jesus in the same way that many of us do today.

More of His voice in my ear.

“... he calls his own sheep by name . . . and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:3-4). “I want to hear Him speaking to me,” Anne says. “How many people today are listening to other voices? I’m talking about your professional Christians or the people within the church. We’ve just gotten away from the simplicity of the basic Christian disciplines: daily prayer, daily Bible reading, obedience, and sharing our faith. We’ve made all these things programs. Maybe you’re a “pray-er”, or maybe you’re a Bible student, or maybe you’re a “witness-er”, but they’re like programs. I’m convinced that we’ve weakened the church through all of that; the programs have not strengthened us.”

More of His tears on my face.

“Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:3). Mary’s offering to Christ speaks to Anne of her own longing for Jesus: “She broke that alabaster jar—which basically was her dowry or her savings for the future. She just smashed it and poured it all out on Jesus. Then she was mocked and criticized. But Jesus’ response to her is so tender that when I read that chapter, I weep. He said, ‘She’s done this for my burial.’ Somehow Mary, with her woman’s intuition, sensed He was going to die, and she wanted to share in that suffering with Him.”

More of His praise on my lips.

“... when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, [they] took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord . . .’” (John 12:12-13). Anne insists that “genuine praise and worship is not something you work up in a meeting where you have drums and a band and you wave your hands and you get emotional. Worship happens when you are praising Him and nothing is going right, but you praise Him for who He is, not just because of what He has done for you. And it’s a reality of praise that I think we’ve lost. We’ve substituted emotions for real worship and praise.”

More of His dirt on my hands.

“Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet . . .” (John 13:5). Telling the story of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet, Anne draws a parallel to the Christian life. “We have to be willing, as Christians, to get down and dirty,” she says. “There’s not anything we can say that is beneath us or below us. You know, that has no place in the Christian life. The night before Jesus was crucified, He was in the upper room with his disciples. He washed their feet—even the feet of Judas, who that night would betray Him. Jesus humbled Himself and served one who would betray Him.”

More of His courage in my convictions.

“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . .” (John 15:20). Jesus warns His disciples that they will be persecuted. “I think it’s a warning today that in our politically correct society we have to stand up and be counted for His name,” she says. “And we’re going to be persecuted. We think that if we’re persecuted or criticized, it’s because we’ve been intolerant and unloving—that is what our society tells us. And we’re intimidated. We’ve just got to cut that out. We must be willing to stand up for His name when the whole society is saying, ‘How divisive and intolerant!’”

More of His glory on my knees.

“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You’” (John 17:1). Anne closes the book with Christ’s own longing for more of His heavenly Father. “Jesus was saying, ‘Father, I’ve had the glory of the Son of God since before the foundation of the world. Now I want you to add to it the glory that I’ve earned as a Son of Man.’ And so He was asking for more glory. And I felt like His heart’s cry was for more. And so we just came back full circle at the end of John’s gospel—that our heart’s cry for more of Jesus was even His heart’s cry that God would give Him more.”

When she finally finished the book, Anne realized that she would never be completely satisfied until she sees Jesus face to face. But she steadfastly proclaims that He is the answer to shortcomings in the lives of believers. “We desperately need revival or a fresh touch from heaven,” she says. “We need to refocus on the person of Christ. I think we need to come back to the simplicity of those spiritual disciplines. And we just need to go deeper in our personal walk, because when we love Him more, then we’re going to love people around us more; we’re going to serve Him more wholeheartedly and consistently. Everything else will fall into place.”

Perhaps professional Christians have begun to rely on formulas, programs, and agendas more than on Christ Himself. Maybe our hearts have become dry deserts, weary from lack of holy precipitation. Jesus once said to the church at Sardis, **“You have a reputation for being alive, but you’re dead” (Revelation 3:1).** If this is the case in your life, you are not alone. Thankfully, He offers a way back to Him. The Bible tells us that if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. **(James 4:8)** God has drawn near to us in the person of Jesus, and His Word is the revelation of Himself in Christ.