

# WALKING WITH GOD

HOW A SIMPLE, DAILY HABIT  
CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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## WALKING WITH GOD

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### GOD IS IN CONTROL



*“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

- Matthew 10:29-31

Walking in the early morning along a scenic route, before many people are out and about, watching the sun rise, watching the river rolling ever on, watching a lone bird perched on the top of a gazebo, seeing the fog settled in along the bluff and over the water, feeling the chill of the air – all these things make me cognizant of two

things – two realities that are a paradox. First, how small each of us is in relation to the magnitude and majesty of God’s creation. Second, that He uniquely created each of us, knows and loves us, watches over us, and wants us to fulfill our potential. So small, yet so great!

As I walk in this type of setting, and perceive this paradox of smallness and greatness, I am filled with a feeling of both insight and peace as in my mind I hear God telling me, “I am in control – I hear you.” I realize He knows me, my situation, my worries, my fears, my prayers, my aspirations, everything. I also realize He is watching to see if I listen to Him, if I am being still and quiet and listening for His voice, His direction, His guidance, His will.

Knowing God is in control and He hears us does amazing, positive things. It brings a sense of calm and peace in the midst of crisis, pain, and anxiety. It removes the overwhelming burden of having to deal with tough and tragic situations alone or solely on a human level. Our strength and limits of endurance are finite, but God’s are infinite.

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

- Matthew 11:28-30

We are all too often quick to anger at God when He doesn't snap to our command to intervene immediately and produce a miracle for us or give us things we ask for. We should instead be listening for His voice and His will, and submitting to it humbly, knowing He hears our requests and understands our pain.

We have a deeply personal story that illustrates God is in control, and He does hear us. I hope it will help and inspire you in a time of crisis.

It was 2004. Our oldest son, Joshua, was excited to be going off to college and playing football at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. He had an accomplished high-school career playing wide receiver and defensive back at Wimberley High School, in the Texas

Hill Country close to Austin. He was in top physical shape. That he would be fighting for his life a few weeks later was the last thing we could have imagined.

The third or fourth game of the season was a night game at a nearby college. I did not go, but got an update from my friend Darrell Franklin, who was there watching his son and the team. I recall the phone call like it was yesterday. He told me Josh caught a pass and had taken a really hard hit just after he caught the ball. As I recall, Darrell was surprised that Josh was able to get up.

When we were able to talk to Josh, he told us his hip hurt, he was bruised and sore. The next day he saw the team doctor. The diagnosis was muscle contusion or something similar. I recall Josh calling to tell us that night he had been in the library, and when he tried to get up from his chair, he fell.

*I'll let my wife, Nancy, tell the story from here.*

I was at a low point in my faith the night Josh got injured. I was hurting inside for my oldest daughter, who was being

bullied by other girls in school. Despite my efforts to do everything right by regularly attending church, keeping my daughter active in our church's youth group, and constantly praying for God to bless our family, things got worse for my daughter and better for the other girls.

I recall talking to God just hours before I found out about Josh. Honestly, it was more like lecturing God. I told Him, with bitter sarcasm, what I thought about how He gave out blessings and how well my prayers had worked. I ended that "conversation" by questioning His existence.

I left for Abilene to check on Josh. I didn't pray.

When I saw Josh that evening, I knew he was really sick, that something was really wrong. I took him to the emergency room of the hospital. The ER doctor dismissed Josh's condition as a "stomach bug." I pleaded desperately with the doctor to admit Josh to the hospital, telling him I knew something was seriously wrong. The doctor turned a deaf ear and dismissed Josh. I struggled all night to tend to Josh. His condition worsened.

Early the next morning James called the head football

coach and the team doctor. They got Josh into the hospital. James drove to Abilene with our other four children. The doctor started an IV and antibiotics. I had a thought that I should pray, but I stopped myself. I told myself, *I'm not going to pray, I don't do that anymore.*

We found out the nurse in charge of Josh had gotten sick and gone home, and she forgot to leave medicine instructions with anyone else. As a result, Josh did not receive his second and third doses of antibiotics. Our family doctor already suspected a serious staph infection. Strong antibiotics were the only hope of stopping it.

Our strapping, 190-pound athlete was withering away. Specialists were called in. The infectious-disease doctor confirmed Josh had a raging staph infection in his muscle—at the hip where he had been hit in the game. The muscle had been torn from the bone. He had an abrasion on his arm. The staph apparently gained entry there and immediately migrated to the spot of the injury, where the bacteria began a feeding frenzy. Josh's body was being flooded with the invading bacteria. The infection had

entered the bloodstream. Sepsis was setting in.

The doctors prescribed a potent mix of antibiotics, a cocktail so strong it had to be specially ordered. They flooded Josh's body with antibiotics to fight the rapidly-spreading infection. A war was raging within Josh's body. His immune system was being overwhelmed. His organs and vital systems were at risk of shutting down.

Since the infection was so strong and had been building and multiplying for several days before the first dose of antibiotics, the doctors could not provide any reassurance to us that Josh would be ok.

Josh was moved to the heart-patient floor after the mishap with the initial antibiotic doses. He began having trouble breathing. His oxygen level was dangerously declining. The doctors moved him into the ICU. Josh's condition continued to worsen.

I began praying unceasingly. I knew at that point God was the only one who would be able to help. Everything began to blur. All I recall is praying all the time and feeling like I was neglecting our two youngest children, not feeding

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or bathing them. My family was camped out in the waiting area, with little food or sleep.

I stayed in the chapel. I read scriptures, silently and out loud. I prayed on my knees. I felt like God was telling me to prepare for Josh's death. I prayed more.

Josh was getting worse.

Suddenly I felt nothing.

My heart became cold to God. I felt all alone.

I thought, *God's not with me, He's turned away from me because of the things I've said and thought about Him.*

It was Sunday morning. I remember walking out of the chapel into the waiting room. I was empty inside. My son was dying.

I dragged myself to a chair. My head was down, but not in prayer. But I did speak to God.

This is what I said:

*God, you don't hear me. You've left me. I don't feel your presence. I don't feel like you're going to be in my life anymore. Have you just shut me off?*

I had never felt so alone and helpless.

I glanced up and noticed a pretty, well-dressed woman approaching. I immediately thought she was with Child Protective Services – someone must have told her we've had our young children up here for days.

The woman walked over to me. I tried to avoid eye contact. She asked me if I was the mother of the boy in the ICU, the football player. I told her I was.

This is what she said:

*I don't know if this is going to make any sense to you, and I've never done anything like this before, but I was sitting in Sunday School, and God put it on my heart that I needed to come see you and give you a message. Everyone told me not to go, not to give you false hope and not to say anything.*

She hesitated a moment, and then said:

*God hears your prayers. He is listening.*

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Tears streamed down my face. I was unable to speak.

I knew at that moment, the moment I heard her message, God was real, and He wanted me to surrender all to Him.

I immediately thought, *This woman had answered the exact question I had asked God! And it was God's message to me . . . to me, personally!*

I walked with this woman, this messenger of God's, into the chapel. I kneeled at the alter and prayed with my three girls. The woman began playing a beautiful song on the piano, and singing.

I continued to pray at the altar, my tears still flowing.

This is what I prayed:

*God, you know my heart . . . you know my heart. Josh is yours. He's always been yours. You've allowed me to parent him. You know best. I surrender all to you, God. Your will be done.*

Surrendering my son to God was the hardest thing I've ever done. I might never see my son again until I was in Heaven. I

knew now Josh may not live, but that God knew best.

When the woman finished the song, we hugged, and I thanked her for coming to see me and deliver God's message. A profound sense of peace came over me. I was filled with gratitude that God loved me so much that He would send a personal message to me.

The woman who delivered God's message told me she was the wife of Josh's nurse (Josh's main nurse was a man). I have no recollection of her name. [If she reads this story some day . . . thank you for what you did!] She said her husband had told her about Josh and his family. She also said she had never visited any patient of her husband's, in 16 years of his caring for patients at the hospital. But God's voice was so strong and undeniable, she said she could not ignore it.

I left the chapel. I wanted to see Josh. I needed to say goodbye, if that was God's will. Josh was unconscious in the ICU. I had to wait to get in to see him because access was strictly limited. I had been waiting about 30 minutes to go back when the nurses came hurrying out, telling us:

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*Josh is awake. His vital signs are improving. He's taken a turn for the better.*

A miracle was occurring before our very eyes! The doctors could not explain Josh's dramatic turnaround. One of them said he'd never seen anything like it. But we knew. God was healing Josh!

The next day Josh was moved out of the ICU. He continued to strengthen. The infection was receding. He stayed in the hospital another week. He had dropped from 190 pounds to 140 and was in a wheel chair. But he was alive! He continued to get better and gain weight over the balance of the year.

Looking back, I see I was going through the motions with God regarding my daughter and her troubles from other girls in school. We were going to church, doing bible studies. I had my daughters in the church youth group. I had the boxes checked. But I was still doing what I wanted to do. I still got angry and envious. I wasn't close to God, in my heart.

It took a crisis with our son for me to see how real God is and understand that He does hear us, He is listening – and that we need to simply stop and realize how greatly He has blessed us. He gave me an incredible family. We had our health. When Josh lost his health and nearly died, I realized God gives us just what we need at the time. He is in control. I know God listens and loves us. I know I need to listen to Him and submit to His will. God’s blessings are amazing!

*Back to James:*

Nancy’s final prayer, just before Josh’s dramatic recovery, was in essence the same one Jesus prayed to God in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus didn’t want to die, but He submitted to the Father’s will.

*He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”*

- Matthew 26:42

Josh recovered fully. He got married in 2009. He and Erin welcomed a healthy baby boy, Major Murphy Wallace, into the world on January 2, 2015. We just found out Major will be a big brother next year.

Josh's life reminds us, every day, of God's blessings. His life is a testament, for us, of the power of prayer, and a guidepost for how God wants us to pray.

This story is the most powerful one I have to show you God hears our prayers. Nancy and I have a hard time telling this story without choking up, even over a decade later. We are in awe of God's power, grace, mercy, and love. We know Josh is alive only because God healed him. He heard Nancy's prayers and told her so through a wonderful messenger!

*God is listening.* What are you telling Him? Are you angry, as Nancy was? Are you insisting on giving Him the instructions, insisting He show He is a good and merciful God by doing what you want, right now? Or are you going to God humbly, submitting wholly to His will, acknowledging He is in control, giving Him the glory, whatever the outcome?

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.*

- 1 John 5:14-15

Please read those two verses again, slowly. Now read them once more, pausing to absorb the incredible message. Write the verses on a piece of paper and keep them in your purse or wallet or on your refrigerator or laptop.

Here's the key to walking with God in prayer: "if we ask anything *according to his will*, he hears us."

Think about this when you're walking. Your mindset of gratitude, your open channel of communication, your stillness, introspection, and reflection – all these will have helped you be in a place that can help you release any anger, stop telling God what to do, and deeply and humbly ask for His mercy, forgiveness, and grace, while acknowledging only He is in control . . . and you fully and unconditionally accept His will and His divine power.

However God handles your crisis, you will know He

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does hear you, He knows your heart, and all things work for good according to His plan. That's amazing. That's a miracle!

I hope knowing the miracle God bestowed on my family will encourage you to keep the faith and give you comfort in times of pain.

*God hears you. Keep praying. He is in control.*