

RANSOMED
HEART
ministries

March 2008

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your overwhelming response to my last letter! I'm humbled. Blown-away. And very glad. Okay, I'll keep these letters coming. I'm so profoundly grateful to know they have been a source of nourishment, encouragement, and guidance.

If I was asked to name the "theme" of my life for the past year or so, without a doubt it has been "walking with God." By that I mean listening for his voice. Developing a conversational intimacy with God. Letting Jesus lead in the details of my life. The experience has been absolutely life-changing, utterly refreshing, and so simple I don't know how I ever lived without it. One of the most profound surprises that has come about through walking with God has been with regards to people.

People make up a very large part of our lives. We're surrounded by people. We deal with others every day, from the driver in front of you, to the waitress in the café, to the gal in the office next to yours, to those who share your home. And they are nearly always, one way or another, in some sort of need. Or crisis. Or self-inflicted drama. Now, one of the great dangers is that we simply let our conscience be our guide in relating to others. We tend to jump in, as opposed to walking with God. Either we give too much, or too little, or we offer what is needed, but at the wrong time.

It would be a revealing study to look at the way Jesus relates to people in the stories we have in the Gospels. Sometimes he stops mid-stride to offer a word or a kindness to what seems to me to be a pretty minor character, someone I think I would have ignored. Other times he ducks for cover, dodges an encounter completely. He possesses a freedom towards others I find myself longing for.

What would happen if you began to *ask* Jesus what *he* is saying when it comes to the people in your life?

Jason needs a place to stay. Some of us would simply offer that, without first asking Christ. Some of us would not even consider offering it. But did you ask Christ? Nancy is in need of prayer. My inclination is to jump in. But I stop, and ask God, *What would you have me pray?* Sometimes he will then direct my prayers, and I know I am praying far more effectively because I am praying his will, rather than simply praying my thoughts or desires for the person. Or even their requests. Other times he will say, *It's covered. No need to pray here.* And so I am able to let it go. Ben is asking for some time with me. I stop and ask God, *Should I offer?* Sometimes he will say *Yes*, and sometimes *No*, and sometimes *Not now*.

But more often than any other guidance what I hear God saying to me when I ask about a person is, *Give them to me.*

This has been consistently counterintuitive, and utterly refreshing.

I know I'm not alone in this bent I have to carry people. I'll worry about them in the night. *Do my folks have enough money?* I'll get paranoid about what they think of me. *Maybe I shouldn't have said that to Gary, maybe he's mad at me.* I'll find myself having conversations with them even though they are not there. *You know, your daughter wouldn't be so lost if you'd just spend more time with her.* I'll feel as though I am not offering enough. *You ought to call Jim.* At times I think I see what is needed and assume I'm supposed to offer it. *I think I'd better get together with Kyle.* How do we navigate all our relationships?

What *is* it that currently guides you when it comes to relating to the people in your life?

Our tendency is to go with whatever it is we're feeling. It is not a reliable guide. We run with the speculation, or the worry, or the guilt, or the sense of obligation. Or, we give way to the irritation or the malaise or the desire to write them off. We find ourselves overcommitted or entangled in their drama. Then we resent people as a category because we're spent. And the reason?

We never asked God about it.

So again today, my battle was to worry about somebody. *Did I blow it? Maybe I didn't say enough.* I caught myself obsessing, stopped, and asked Jesus, *Lord – what are you saying?* And he said, *Give them to me.* Just as he often says. Right. Okay. Let it go. Accepting this is an act of humility – I am not as indispensable as I thought. They need God more than they need me. It is an act of faith – that God will come through for them. He'll take care of it.

And what I find is that when I give people to God, it opens up an amazing amount of space in my life. For him.

I have an announcement I am SO excited about I could pop. My new book, *Walking With God*, has just been released!

If you've enjoyed my recent letters, you're going to love this book. Nearly all the letters of the past year have been drawn from *Walking with God*. They are a taste of the feast this book offers. It may be the most important book I've ever written, because if we can learn to hear God's voice, and develop a conversational intimacy with him, it will revolutionize our lives!

You can find out more about *Walking with God*, read or listen to excerpts, watch some video, learn about our upcoming tour, ask questions, and follow along with my blog at walkingwithgod.net. (“*.net*” not “*.com*”). It is a really beautiful and interactive website about a really beautiful and interactive book. Drop everything you're doing and come by! Tell your friends! Shout it from the rooftops!

For your walk with God,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' in a cursive, flowing script.

John