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You Aren't Alone

I can remember years ago, when I was just starting to live for God. I was about eighteen years old, and our youth group was going to be the help for a tent meeting. Our job was to usher and help out during the day, and watch the equipment during the night. A few of us guys volunteered to sleep in the preaching tent to make sure no one could steal any of the sound equipment. It was right about midnight when we got restless and decided to get into a little bit of trouble, just for the fun of it. Trent, a very large football player, had a great idea. He was going to harass Harvey, one of the youth leaders.

Harvey wasn't sleeping on the ground in a sleeping bag; he brought a very small travel trailer and was sound asleep in his cushy bed. Quietly, Trent snuck up to this itty bitty trailer, and grabbed it by the hitch. With one grunt and a footballer dead lift, he picked the front end of the trailer off the ground and began pushing it towards a building. Half way there, we heard a muffled noise from inside. Trent picked up the pace. By the time we reached the building, Harvey was mad, and was going to find out who dared interrupt his beauty sleep in his nice little trailer. It was too late though (so we thought). Trent already had the trailer pushed right up against the building, so that the side door could not be opened. Harvey was trapped.

As we started to leave, and head back to bed, the trailer started to shake. We had underestimated the strength of a very upset, embarrassed youth leader. In the dark of the night as we turned to look, Harvey was squeezing himself through a two inch opening, between the wall and the trailer. Trent and I began to speed up when we heard footsteps running towards us. He was really ticked off, and coming towards us at full speed. Harvey had obviously realized that I, being a skinny runt compared to Trent, was not at fault. So the chase was on, as Harvey ran right past me with Trent in his sights. Trent ran off half laughing with Harvey at his heels. What was Harvey going to do if he caught the super large football player anyway? It reminded me of a poodle chasing a station wagon.

Then, a moment of fun trouble turned into a moment of big trouble (which seemed to always happen at that age). Harvey, at full speed, still angry and with poor eyesight at night, stepped into a small hole and broke his leg. After we had stopped laughing and realized how serious the situation was I went to get help. Another leader came running with me and found Trent trying to console a very upset and pained Harvey. That leader looked at Harvey, agonizing and in incredible pain, bent over and said something that I, myself would come to believe for a number of years. He said "Harvey, for this to happen to you, there must be sin in your life. God has done this to punish you for sinning." At eighteen, and knowing very little about God, I actually believed this blindly for a while. You have to be careful who you listen to. Some well meaning people can say things that do not line up with the truth of who your Father really is. You also have to be careful what you say to others. Your words can have an impact on their beliefs. Thank God for praying in tongues, and for solid leadership years later that helped me get my thinking straight.

So, let's talk about test and trials. We also must know that tests are not from God, but He is the one who helps us to get through them. James 1:2-4 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." When we overcome tests and trials, we will find in us a character and

trust that God is who He says He is. That's right, to follow God, means that you and I are going to have to change. He will guide us through every challenge and what the devil intended for evil, He will turn to good. The patience that is produced in us as we overcome will make us fearless to every challenge that will come ahead. We know that God is for us and not against us.

Too many times, we want to separate God into a bunch of little gods. We want to serve part of Him at a time based on our current need. We cry out for Jehovah-Jireh -- The Lord our Provider, and Jehovah-Ropheka -- The Lord our Healer, but he is also Jehovah-Mekaddishkem -- The Lord our Sanctifier and Jehovah-Rohi -- The Lord our Shepherd. You must have all of God, not just part of Him. In fact, He will constantly be drawing you towards becoming like Him. We can't expect Him to be our provider while hating your brother, or while living in sin.. He is interested in all of you because He loves you and desires the best life ever for you, and your family. Becoming a whole and complete person is the first step to the blessings of God.

God's desire for us is to make us whole. We are to be enjoying life, and having it more abundantly. It's sad to see so many Christians trying to find peace in all the wrong places. Some people only feel at peace when they feel that they have control over every aspect of their life. Their main focus then becomes to avoid all problems in life. They try to develop a relationship with God based on avoiding all struggles. Thank goodness we have a Father to help us become unmanageable to the devil. We don't have to do this on our own! Everything around us can be in an upheaval, but our peace is strong because it is based in our relationship with God, and not in any circumstance. That type of peace is only found in one place.

When we allow God to put us through a process of His test, we will become whole and more like Christ. Following God means that you will constantly be pulled towards Him, and will be drawn to deal with insecurities and selfishness. 1 Corinthians 11:1 makes a powerful statement, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." It is a choice to walk into all that God has for you. He is waiting anxiously for us to let him take us into every wonderful part of our future. He never said that it will be easy to choose Him; it'll actually cost you everything to truly pursue Him. His Word tells us even though it may be difficult, it'll be worth it. Romans 8:18 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The main step into victory is to get tough, and through this He will prove to you that you are not alone. You can choose to have an amazing adventurous life that is ultimately fulfilling! God has all this and more waiting for you. It'll cost you laying down all of your life to gain all of the life that He has for you. But oh, how great it will be! Paul, a man of true adventure, who gave God all, said in Phillipians 3:7-8, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." It may feel like you are giving up everything at first and you may feel like its impossible. But I promise you that as time passes, you will look back and see that all those things were just rubbish compared to the fruit of the future your Father has given you. And He will smile because He is proud.

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