

## Week 6 – The Adventure

### Read

Several years ago I was thumbing through the introduction of a book when I ran across a sentence that changed my life.

God is intimately personal with us and he speaks in ways that are peculiar to our own quirky hearts—not just through the Bible, but through the whole of creation. To Stasi he speaks through movies. To Craig he speaks through rock and roll (he called me the other day after listening to “Running Through the Jungle” to say he was fired up to go study the Bible). God’s word to me comes in many ways—through sunsets and friends and films and music and wilderness and books. But he’s got an especially humorous thing going with me and books. I’ll be browsing through a secondhand bookshop when out of a thousand volumes one will say, “Pick me up”—just like Augustine in his *Confessions*. *Tolle legge*—take up and read. Like a master fly fisherman, God cast his fly to this cruising trout. In the introduction to the book that I rose to this day, the author, Gil Bailie, shares a piece of advice given to him some years back by a spiritual mentor, Howard Thurman:

*Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.*

I was struck dumb. It could have been Balaam’s donkey, for all I was concerned. Suddenly my life up till that point made sense in a sickening sort of way; I realized I was living a script written for me by someone else. All my life I had been asking the world to tell me what to do with myself. This is different from seeking counsel or advice; what I wanted was freedom from responsibility and especially freedom from risk. I wanted someone else to tell me who to be. Thank God it didn’t work. The scripts they handed me I simply could not bring myself to play for very long. Like Saul’s armor, they never fit. Can a world of posers tell you to do anything but pose yourself? As Buechner said, we are in constant danger of being not actors in the drama of our lives but reactors, “to go where the world takes us, to drift with whatever current happens to be running the strongest.” Reading the counsel Thurman gave to Bailie I knew it was God speaking to me. It was an invitation to come out of Ur.

I set the volume down without turning another page and walked out of that bookstore to find a life worth living.

I applied to graduate school to become a therapist, and got accepted. That program would turn out to be far more than a career move; out of the transformation that took place there I became a writer, counselor, and speaker. The whole trajectory of my life changed and with it the lives of

many, many other people. But I almost didn't go. You see, when I applied to school I hadn't a nickel to pay for it. I was married with three children and a mortgage, and that's the season when most men completely abandon their dreams and back down from jumping off anything. The risk just seems too great. On top of it all, I received a call about that time from a firm back in Washington, DC, offering me a plum job at an incredible salary. I would be in a prestigious company, flying in some very powerful circles, making great money. God was thickening the plot, testing my resolve. Down one road was my dream and desire, which I had no means to pay for, and an absolutely uncertain future after that; down the other was a comfortable step up the ladder of success, a very obvious next career move and the total loss of my soul.

I went to the mountains for the weekend to sort things out. Life makes more sense standing alone by a lake at high elevation with a fly rod in hand. The tentacles of the world and my false self seemed to give way as I climbed up into the Holy Cross Wilderness. On the second day God began to speak. *John, you can take that job if you want to. It's not a sin. But it'll kill you and you know it.* He was right; it had False Self written all over it. *If you want to follow Me,* he continued, *I'm heading that way.* I knew exactly what he meant— "That way" headed into wilderness, frontier. The following week three phone calls came in amazing succession. The first was from the Washington firm; I told them I was not their man, to call somebody else. As I hung up the phone my false self was screaming, *What are you doing?!* The next day the phone rang again; it was my wife, telling me that the university had called wanting to know where my first tuition installment was. On the third day a call came from a longtime friend who had been praying for me and my decision. "We think you ought to go to school," he said. "And we want to pay your way."

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

## Reflect

1. What casual adventures are you pursuing?
2. What is your current crucial adventure? Why is this important to you?
3. How would you describe your critical adventure—where is God calling you to join him in changing the world?

## Scripture

Psalm 37:4

4 Take delight in the Lord,

and he will give you the desires of your heart.