



crosscontact

MARCH 2009

Conversations with my Friend

Stephan Vosloo

A couple of months ago I spent a stormy night on the side of a mountain in a twenty year old tent with a friend of more than twenty years. It was an attempt to patch up the damage that was done to our friendship by more than a year of not seeing each other's faces. This is no ordinary friend. For many years we had struggled together to hear the voice of God and to see His face. We were given to one another to forge a collective vision of God in the heat of life.

We were there for one another when his two day old baby got meningitis and nearly died; when he had to get a heart bypass operation at the age of thirty eight and when his wife lost her fight against cancer shortly thereafter. When I suffered burn-out, nearly lost all I had and struggled with the pain of failure he heard God's voice for me. Many times we cried together, found God's voice together, rejoiced together. We made mistakes, were disobedient to the Voice, suffered immense loss through it but loved one another all the time. We were tempted to judge, to remain in unforgiveness and to walk away many times but we remained true to love and to friendship and in the end to the purposes of Jesus for our lives. But, silence and absence threatened our friendship and we had to get together.

Like our friendship, the week-end was not perfect. As if God wanted to show us a picture of our relationship. It was raining; the wind reached speeds that seriously threatened the integrity of the tent. And it was cold. But the fellowship was warm while we lay listening to the deafening wind and the groaning of the tent. We knew we had to do what we were doing. Our friendship always had two things that raised it above other friendships: we often laid

down our lives for each other and we were committed to honesty. The warm moments of "Do you remember?" in the rain and cold had elements of both these qualities.

This experience reminded me again about my other Friend who had to move far away and with whom I have communicated for the last thirty four years without seeing Him in person. Our lives and environments are so different that we just struggle to communicate. I heard Him speaking at times but mostly in the form of instruction or rebuke. Mostly to do with the work I had to do for Him or did not do. There were times when I really felt his presence although I could not see Him. I did hear His voice at crucial times and I can honestly say that when His voice broke through my noise induced hearing loss, it was always life changing and did a lot to keep our friendship alive. But, the experience with my earthly friend just again emphasized the importance of a real experience with Him.

A night together on the mountain is what I need more than anything else. I need to look into His eyes while He talks to me. I need to hear His voice. I used to want to hear His voice so that I can be protected or make the right choices. I was listening for instructions to build His kingdom. Now I just want to hear His voice. I have learnt that He speaks about trivial things. That He tells me how much He loves me. That He tells me how much He loves my enemy. That He has an opinion about most things I do and that His wisdom often makes the difference between a hard day at the office, the struggle of failure and the peculiar experience of rest that I have come to love so much.

We did not spend that night in the tent

speaking about ministry and what we should have done or should have accomplished. We did speak about deep things but we laughed a lot and spoke about the things of life. We made a fire in the rain, prayed for the rain to stop and were heard. We ate together and tripped into the past. There was little instruction, no rebuke and whenever I wanted to put on my teacher's hat, the grace just left.

It is like that with Jesus. We have to spend time together *in life*. Not to “get advice” or to “get revelation” or be brought onto the right path again. We do spend time with Him “quiet time”, or “bible study”, or “church” but then we often listen for the instructions or the rebukes or the revelations.

Mostly He just wants to have a cup of tea with us while we discuss our children, or friends, or reminisce about the past. He sometimes talks about the future and then we want to make it a prophecy and write in our blog about our experience or lay hands on whoever is near while He just wanted to share some revelation with a friend.

Friendship and conversation go together like cake and candles. They can exist separately but when they come together they represent something unseen that causes us to smile and feel a peculiar satisfaction. The friendship with Jesus is the same. The cake of salvation becomes a celebration when we light the candles of conversation and friendship. We often find that He is the one with the birthday hat who wants to make small talk at the party while we are trying to “bring depth to the conversation”. He is the one with the presents while we are trying to get the latest updates on how to live life. He loves parties and giving presents and He loves to talk. You see, He is motivated by love for so God loved the world not by mission. That is why He is first relational and then functional. It is difficult for our Western minds to understand that, but it is true.

Adam and Eve were His friends and He walked with them and talked with them. Enoch was walking with Him and disappeared they spoke. Abraham saw Him and they talked about many things he was called a friend of God. He spoke to Moses face to face and Moses was called His friend. Every time when He really wanted a faith response, God spoke. All these faith heroes were

only heroes because they heard God. And for them to hear, He had to speak. He speaks to His friends.

One thing we can not say about God is that He is silent. It would be so unfair for Him to be silent when His goal for us is to live from every word that proceeds from His mouth. He wants us to be able to say with Jesus, I can't do anything unless I see Him doing it or hear from Him what to do. It is only because hearing His voice has become such an occasion that some of us have opted to seek for Him only in the Scriptures. Some believe that He stopped speaking because He had said all He wanted to say and that was written down. Not that there is anything wrong with seeking God in the Bible that is His word and it testifies of Jesus. But, Jesus did say to the Pharisees, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life”. (Joh 5:39-40)

Jesus called us friends. He said, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (Joh 15:15) Friendship and conversation go together.

Maybe we should give up some time out of our busy schedule and find Him in a tent on the northern face of a rainy mountain so that we can learn how precious His voice is. So that we can look into His eyes and find nothing but love. So that our friendship can be restored. It may be the best investment you have made in a while. Or better even, maybe we have to start looking for his face in those around us or in the spreadsheet on the computer or in the boardroom or behind the stove. Maybe we should listen for His voice while others speak or when we are alone for a second between appointments. Maybe we should hear what He wants to say when we watch the news on CNN or hear Him pray for those who irritate us so much on the road.

Maybe it is time for us to claim our birthright the right to hear the voice of our Friend.

Prayer journey

Johan Boot

In the beginning of my journey prayer was about asking something from Him... Yet, slowly I realised that although this was good, through prayer He was also asking something from me...

Things changed radically when He showed me that prayer was a process through which I was pulled inwardly towards Him. During this process I pursued Him for an answer, while He was pulling me to get a hold of something in my heart.

I realised that prayer was a transactional process of surrendering to His will, which ultimately concludes in a union of will, mind and heart. It is a process of 'giving my heart away bit by bit'.

In this place prayer becomes almost silent. For prayer is now a state of being one with the Lord in will, desire and heart. At this point I believe that faith is complete.

From this point prayer is more a conversation. It is a conversation about His will on the one hand, and a trust that He will take care of all 'my issues' on the other hand.

Yet, this kind of prayer is fully dependent upon a surrendered heart. A heart that is fully convinced that the Lord is in all, with all and sustains all.

Oh how we long to live fully surrendered, in order for prayer to become a place of union and a place of united action with the Lord.

Most of our struggle in prayer is against or about His will versus our own. And it is painfully true that although we long to be one with Him, our own self battles this process of union.

To pray is to ultimately seek a surrendered heart. Once the heart is surrendered, prayer exists in the union with His purpose.

Let Christians vote as though they were not voting

John Piper

Voting is like marrying and crying and laughing and buying. We should do it, but only as if we were not doing it. That's because "the present form of this world is passing away" and, in God's eyes, "the time has grown very short." Here's the way Paul puts it: The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Let's take these one at a time and compare them to voting.

1. "Let those who have wives live as though they had none."

This doesn't mean move out of the house, don't have sex, and don't call her Honey.

Earlier in this chapter Paul says, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights" (1 Corinthians 7:3). He also says to love her the way Christ loved the church, leading and providing and protecting (Ephesians 5:25-30). It means this: Marriage is momentary. It's over at death, and there is no marriage in the resurrection. Wives and husbands are second priorities, not first. Christ is first. Marriage is for making much of him. It means: If she is exquisitely desirable, beware of desiring her more than Christ. And if she is deeply disappointing, beware of being hurt too much.

This is temporary only a brief lifetime. Then comes the never-disappointing life which is life indeed.

So it is with voting. We should do it. But only as if we were not doing it.

Its outcomes do not give us the greatest joy when they go our way, and they do not demoralize us when they don't.

Political life is for making much of Christ

whether the world falls apart or holds together.

2. "Let those who mourn [do so] as though they were not mourning."

Christians mourn with real, deep, painful mourning, especially over losses—loss of those we love, loss of health, loss of a dream. These losses hurt. We cry when we are hurt. But we cry as though not crying. We mourn knowing we have not lost something so valuable we cannot rejoice in our mourning. Our losses do not incapacitate us. They do not blind us to the possibility of a fruitful future serving Christ. The Lord gives and takes away. But he remains blessed. And we remain hopeful in our mourning.

So it is with voting. There are losses. We mourn. But not as those who have no hope. We vote and we lose, or we vote and we win. In either case, we win or lose as if we were not winning or losing. Our expectations and frustrations are modest. The best this world can offer is short and small.

The worst it can offer has been predicted in the book of Revelation. And no vote will hold it back. In the short run, Christians lose (Revelation 13:7).

In the long run, we win (Revelation 21:4).

3. "Let those who rejoice [do so] as though they were not rejoicing."

Christians rejoice in health (James 5:13) and in sickness (James 1:2). There are a thousand good and perfect things that come down from God that call forth the feeling of happiness. Beautiful weather. Good friends who want to spend time with us. Delicious food and someone to share it with. A successful plan. A person helped by our efforts. But none of these good and beautiful things can satisfy our soul. Even the best cannot replace what we were made for, namely, the full experience of the risen Christ (John 17:24). Even fellowship with him here is not the final and best gift. There is more of him to have after we die (Philippians 1:21-23) and even more after the resurrection. The best experiences here are foretastes. The best sights of glory are through a mirror dimly. The joy that rises from these previews does not and should not rise to the level of the hope of glory. These pleasures will one day be as though they were not. So we rejoice remembering this joy is a foretaste, and will be

replaced by a vastly better joy.

So it is with voting. There are joys. The very act of voting is a joyful statement that we are not under a tyrant. And there may be happy victories.

But the best government we get is a foreshadowing. Peace and justice are approximated now. They will be perfect when Christ comes. So our joy is modest. Our triumphs are short-lived and shot through with imperfection. So we vote as though not voting.

4. "Let those who buy [do so] as though they had no goods."

Let Christians keep on buying while this age lasts. Christianity is not withdrawal from business. We are involved, but as though not involved.

Business simply does not have the weight in our hearts that it has for many.

All our getting and all our having in this world is getting and having things that are not ultimately important. Our car, our house, our books, our computers, our heirlooms we possess them with a loose grip. If they are taken away, we say that in a sense we did not have them. We are not here to possess. We are here to lay up treasures in heaven. This world matters. But it is not ultimate. It is the stage for living in such a way to show that this world is not our God, but that Christ is our God. It is the stage for using the world to show that Christ is more precious than the world.

So it is with voting. We do not withdraw. We are involved but as if not involved. Politics does not have ultimate weight for us. It is one more stage for acting out the truth that Christ, and not politics, is supreme.

5. "Let those who deal with the world [do so] as though they had no dealings with it." Christians should deal with the world. This world is here to be used. Dealt with. There is no avoiding it. Not to deal with it is to deal

with it that way. Not to weed your garden is to cultivate a weedy garden. Not to wear a coat in Minnesota is to freeze to deal with the cold that way. Not to stop when the light is red is to spend your money on fines or hospital bills and deal with the world that way. We must deal with the world.

But as we deal with it, we don't give it our fullest attention. We don't ascribe to the world the greatest status. There are unseen things that are vastly more precious than the world. We use the world without offering it our whole soul. We may work with all our might when dealing with the world, but the full passions of our heart will be attached to something higher Godward purposes. We use the world, but not as an end in itself. It is a means. We deal with the world in

order to make much of Christ.

So it is with voting. We deal with the system. We deal with the news. We deal with the candidates. We deal with the issues. But we deal with it all as if not dealing with it. It does not have our fullest attention. It is not the great thing in our lives. Christ is. And Christ will be ruling over his people with perfect supremacy no matter who is elected and no matter what government stands or falls. So we vote as though not voting.

By all means vote. But remember: "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

Voting with you, as though not voting,

Why has the Church at large failed to see this?

Johan Boot

One of the most fundamental structural weaknesses of the institutional church is its insistence to function organizationally in the same manner as the world's organizations. Yet, when we fully grasp that being the church is wherever two or more gather in His name, under the headship of Christ, and with the belief that the Spirit leads and builds His church, we can truly live free from the need for humanistic structures in church life. We have become a building of His making and have returned to the Lord's original design of family and community.

Once we have come to this point we also realize that we are perfectly positioned to proclaim and demonstrate both the love and rule of Christ. Because we carry no banners, wear no robes, and do not have to conform to religious constitutions or constituencies, we are free to 'become all things to all men, that we might by all means save some.' (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Jesus prayed that we might be one with Him and the Father in the same manner that They are one. Yet, in the same prayer He also prayed that those who are so united with the Lord, not be removed from this world. Jesus knows that those who have lost their lives in Him as save from the world for they are no longer of the same world they were born into. They are therefore positioned as the light to the world,

shining as stars and witnesses to the world and the principalities and power of the air.

Jesus' strategy to save the world was exactly the same and He left us with the perfect example for bringing salvation to a people. Jesus became a man, lived a normal life amongst sinners, rejected the religious order of the day and by the time He was crucified by the powers to be it was too late. He came as yeast and when His work was done the whole lump was affected. Persecution of His followers only worked to strengthen the faith and resolve of those who believed in Him.

Why have the church at large failed to see this? Because the church is simply neither mature nor strong enough in their faith to trust Him in the day of battle. Most Christians are self-focused instead of Christ-focused. Therefore their gatherings, prayers, faith and works are also self-focused. Instead of engaging in the real battles of the Spirit, they pick fights with the devil which were actually triggered by their own carnal desires. Yet, when we turn our eyes fully upon the Lord as Joshua and Caleb did in their day of opportunity, we will also see the hand and power of God work in the same way. I trust that we might all have the faith to look pass our own fears to simply follow Jesus wherever He may lead us.

Live Where Love Leads You

Wayne Jacobsen

So, I ended up with a publishing company. I'm not sure how it happened. I was helping a friend with a book he had written. I helped rewrite some of it with another friend, then represented it to the publishing industry. I wasn't a very good agent. I couldn't find anyone in the industry who thought it was worth publishing. So the author, another friend, and I decided to publish it on our own.

And we did. Then The Shack started climbing the best-seller lists and other companies wanted to buy it from us. To our surprise one of the largest publishers in the world approached us to enter a partnership with them, not only to help us get The Shack to a larger audience but also help with my books and others we think are worthy of publishing in years ahead. They bought into the vision of what we were doing and thought there was a significant space in the reading public for that vision.

So we formed a partnership with the Hachette Book Group, where we maintain our unique identity as Windblown Media. We can do just as much publishing with them as we want to, and yet are not obligated to put everything we do through the Hachette machine. They made it clear all along that they wanted to help us not hinder us. And while we were working things out with them, The Shack rose to the very top of the New York Times Best Seller List.

How did all this happen? Believe me, we have had some amazing laughter about it all. No one saw this coming and yet simply responding to him each day has brought us into a place we could not have conceived or conspired to get to.

But that's true about everything I'm involved in at the moment. Nothing I'm doing today, I set out purposely to accomplish. My plans for my life were very different than how things have turned out. Funny how that is! As a twenty-two year-old, freshly graduated from college, and newly married I had so many dreams and visions of the things I thought God wanted me to accomplish. I had confused my ego with his calling, my dreams for his and had assumed I knew what outcomes God had in mind. My first twenty years on that course proved horribly

frustrating as I could not convince God to honor my agenda. The last 14 years have been filled with ever increasing joy and gratefulness as God's purposes have overrun my own. And in every way he did something immeasurably beyond anything I could have asked or imagined.

BridgeBuilders began because God asked us to go love people at my children's public school. That one decision started a chain of events that has allowed me to sit in rooms at the most incredible gatherings of deeply conflicted people and help bring about peace. Lifestream started as a way to encourage people to experience a closer walk with Jesus and more relational engagements with others. That led to books, travel and website resources. Windblown Media resulted from simply helping a friend to tell a story God had put on his heart.

Perhaps being fruitful isn't a matter of starting something, following a five-year plan, and achieving it. Perhaps it is a matter of simply being able to respond to the people and situations around us with his love in our heart and his voice in our ear. For most of my life I have drawn too direct a line between what I think God wants and what I must do to get it. It seems Jesus warned us about that: If you try to save your life you'll lose it. If you try to be first you'll end up last.

He only asked us to love, one day at a time, whoever is before us in whatever circumstance we meet them. Everything else he wants to do will flow from that simple reality.

We have filled the world with ministries people have started to accomplish some great thing for God. Many of them never go anywhere. There are a lot of people who come to Hollywood to be a chaplain to the stars. They set up a ministry, beg for money to fund it, and then try to find a way to

connect with those people. We do the same with missions and youth ministries. Start a program, fund it, then try and try to get people to take advantage of it.

What if we just started loving the people God puts before us each day, can you imagine what would spill out of that in terms of opportunity, ministry and even growing fellowship?

I think we have it all backwards. Jesus didn't ask us to start ministries. He didn't ask us to accomplish great things. He simply asked us to love others the same way we are loved by him and that will be enough for the whole world to know that we belong to him and that they can too.

People ask me all the time how they can start a house church or connect with other brothers and sisters on a similar journey in their region. Many are frustrated at past attempts that haven't worked out. While I think we can take advantage of Internet forums, email lists and directories to see if we can find people in our area growing in the same realities, that may not be the best way. I now

encourage people just to listen to Father every day and live in love toward the people right in front of you. This has worked for Sara and me in our two recent moves and has brought a wealth of relationships locally that have just grown out of taking an interest in the people around us and discovering others who are passionate for the God we love. We don't have to start or join anything for that, unless of course he asks us to.

I am more convinced than ever that everything God wants to do in the world will flow from us learning to live in his love and listening to him as we walk through life. This allows the opportunities in our lives to grow organically, rather than through the artificial means of organizing, promoting, and manipulating others. That may be why he told us his new command would simply be to love like we've been loved.

WE ARE MEETING THIS COMING SUNDAY 5 APRIL 09

**At the Green's farm in Bergville district,
11h00 for fellowship and afterwards for
a bring-and-share lunch.**

**If you need directions, please phone us on 036 6311612
or e-mail me at svosloo@telkomsa.net**

**Colin and Joyce Langran from Ireland and Kevin and Val
Smith from Australia will be our guests for the
week-end and will attend the meeting.**

**Don't miss out on the opportunity to fellowship with and
listen to folks who have traveled the journey outside the
Institutional Church as leaders for 25 years**

CAMP AT DRAKENSVILLE

23-25 OCTOBER 09

Theme: Living loved - discover the love of the Father

Guest speaker: Wayne Jacobsen,
author of
He loves me,
So you don't want to go to church anymore and
co-author of The Shack

Further information will follow - just book the dates

BILL BOOTH

Has been diagnosed with cancer of the spinal chord and is getting radiation therapy right now. Please pray for him, Cathy and the children

DAWN KORCK

Is still recovering after her back operation. Please keep on praying.

EDNA FIRMAN

Is much better after her near death experience and recovering with her family. Please keep on praying for her

JARED COETZEE

Is much better but still extremely tired and dealing with the disappointment of not being able to continue his studies in the first term. He wants to return to Varsity for the second term, so please keep on praying

JOHAN BOOT

Is actively involved with COPE political party and experiencing much pressure before the elections. He was placed there by the Lord and needs all of our prayers for him, Jana and the children

PHIL AND JAQUI CUNNINGHAM

Have been put in the front lines of the entertainment industry to be a witness for Jesus and the pressure in the battle is great. Please pray for them.

HARVEST HIGH

The staff and teachers need ongoing prayer. The situation in SA education is not good and not improving year on year. They find themselves in the mission field and need your prayers please.

SHARYN BARLOW

Is fitting out a home for elderly people and at the point of opening her doors. This is crunch time and she and Lance need our prayers.