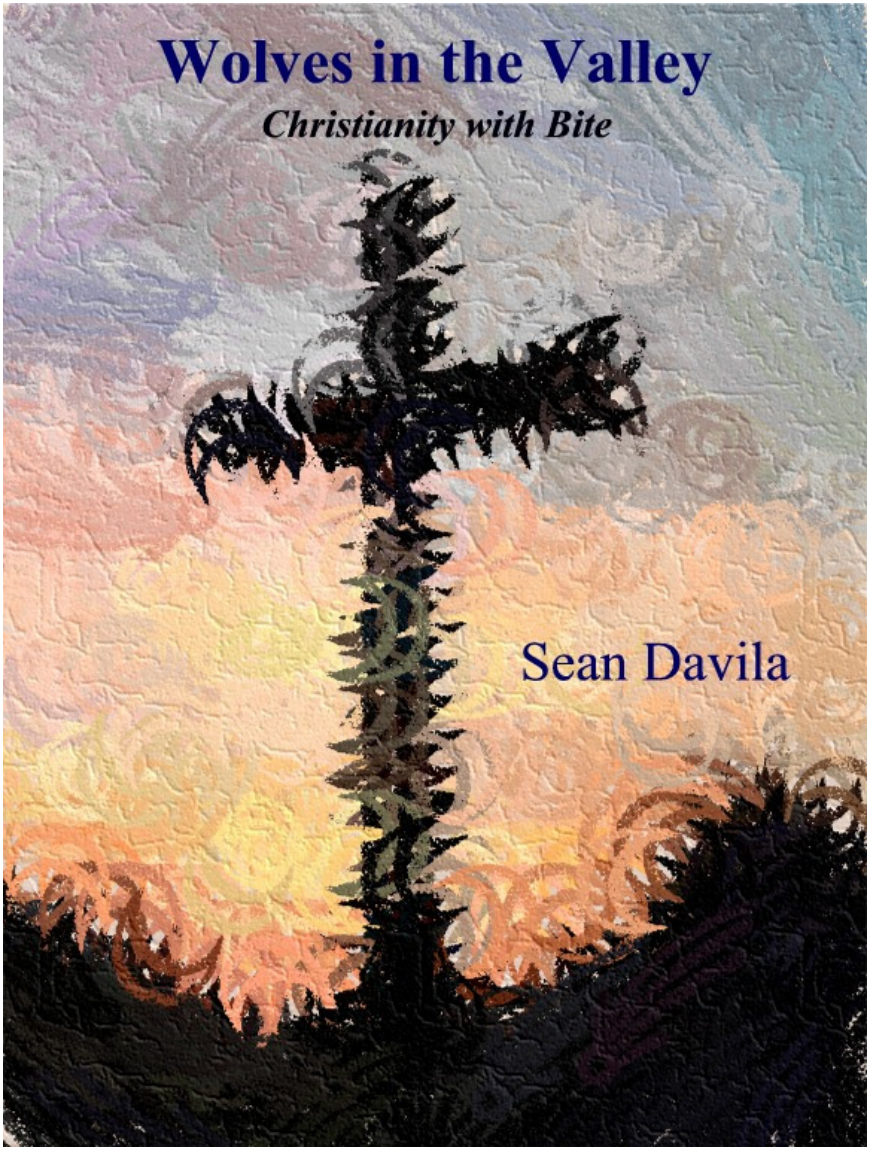
Wolves in the Valley

Christianity with Bite



Sean Davila

Wolves in The Valley
Christianity With Bite

A GroundFX Production

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This book is dedicated to Aunt Barbara, for giving me the courage to try; by reminding me that although Henry Nouwen was truly great, he wasn't – and shouldn't be the only one who has the courage to write about his true heart.

However, it is primarily dedicated to my wife, Shelly. I would be sleeping on the couch for the rest of my life if I dedicated it to another woman, without mentioning that she was the woman who told me to do this a year ago, and supported me through it all.

Acknowledgements

There are several people I want to thank.

My wife, Shelly for supporting me in all of this craziness.

My Mom for being honest

My Dad for teaching me how to stand tall

Mrs. Grice for impressing me with such love for the written word

My secret sponsor – God knows who you are

My foes , for giving me the battles to write about

Pastor Kevin – for all the horrible advice over the years (ha ha ha ha ha)

Pastor Ruben – for selflessly working so much with someone so different

Brooke – for inspiring me through his own personal mastery of his craft

My Readers – for reading this, and forgiving the typos. Isn't forgiveness the core of so many of the Gospel teachings?

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Introduction

So I was inspired after much prayer to write a book about my journey with God. I did, and the draft stunk worse than an infected foot. So I walked away. The inspiration came back. Like a bad rash, it always came back; worse and worse every time. Every time it stunk worse and worse!

Just like the book of Leviticus says to do, when in contact with something dead, I removed myself for a week, then I came back.

I finally listened to my wife, took her advice on several issues, and then it smelled pretty. Isn't that always the way? That alone proves what a sick sense of humor God has… Why, just one time in life, can that woman not be right? Annoying…

This book is inspired by very real events of my life. The story that carries the revelations, is a chronicle of several of my own success and failures around God's voice in my life. There are revelations and insights from prayer, as well as a collection of poetry from street kids I used to work with, and my mother. I found the mix to be a rather reflective mix of God's face.

This work is not intended as a literary masterpiece. It is not professionally edited, so if too many commas are offensive to you, I apologize for my transgression. It is meant as heartwrenchingly powerful account about the unmitigated power, of the baddest man who ever lived.

Our Main Site is www27Wishes.com

Who Needs Jesus?

January 11, 2011

Dear Sean,

This letter is to inform you and the Californian Karate Club of the decision of **Acme** Church Santa Monica not to renew the lease agreement. The current lease was until the 1st of January 2011 and is required to give 30 days notice, please consider this the 30 days of notice.

As per the current lease please supply proof of insurance to date. The outstanding balance of $1,900.00 for December and the current balance due at the end of the 30 days will be required prior to vacating the venue.

It has been a pleasure to be able to have been of assistance to the club with the venue and have enjoyed the relationship between both church and the club. We are excited to be advancing and growing not only **Acme** Christian Church, but the Kingdom of Christ. The venue will continue to be developed into a great center for the community and the ministries of **Acme** Church Santa Monica.

We will be praying for the club and your family to also enjoy growth and the provision of God.

Warm regards,

Suzie Eden
Per: **Pastor Ted Danson**

What? I just got back from an RV trip with the family and this is the e-mail that I open – an e-mail no less! Not even the dignity of certified mail!

Is this a precursor of the entirety of 2011? A blindside eviction! What about the students? What about the teachers? Why out of the blue? Something shady was going on here, but what?

If only there were some supernatural force that could help me, guide me, pull me through this. What if I had the baddest man that ever lived to fight this fight for me. Someone who made Sonny Barger look like a wimp, and Mother Theresa look like a sinner?

But who?

Chapter 1

Jesus Was One Bad Mother…

My Son, My Son

Gone away, gone far away

Nobody knows why he didn't stay

Sitting here, rocking the crib

Having my family go on like this I do forbid

Oh my heart

I have a broken heart

Because a piece of it

Is now apart

I know lots of people

Have gone through this

I feel like I'm the only one

My son I really miss

I don't care any more

I'm looking like trash and bones

I don't care anymore

Now that my son is gone

Sitting here rocking this crib

Now that my son is dead

- an anonymous lost soul

A Beginning Thought

Love is love reflected

A Revelation

Jesus Was One Bad Mother …….
He "Made Satan crucify him! That is all I can think about as I look up at a crucified image of Jesus. Most people probably are thinking about "Glory" "Majesty" and a million other clichés; yet all I can think of is just how "Bad" he is. I mean he actually gave his life in order to chase Satan down into his own backyard, and took the keys of death from him. That is some pretty heavy stuff.

The Context
I remember the day, February 3, 2008. I was thinking about this pretty clearly. I was in St. Gerard's Church in Los Angeles, CA – the church was empty except for the cross and me.

It was at the beginning of the recession of 2008 and although my business was surviving, it was still declining. We were at one time, the largest karate dojo in Santa Monica, but karate was one of the first expenses to go, as we found out!

I mean seriously, people can take this opening chapter the wrong way, but he was! One man took down the entire Roman Empire. One Man took down the empire that defined what military powerful government is to this very day. One man, I'm sorry, I just don't how else to describe him.

The truly amazing part, is that he is my best friend.

To this day, that thought is the core of what many people view as courage in my life. I am not courageous at all. I simply have seen too many miracles through him in life. I see my life in hindsight, and every wound that has ever been inflicted on me, was when I fought my battles, rather than his.

Think about it. As formidable an opponent as Satan may be to us, it shows his biggest weakness to me. He is predictable, as are all his minions. The funny thing is that he is also smart. He knew that Jesus would rise and destroy him, but the "Tempter" himself could not stop himself from the crucifixion! The reason the tempter taunts us so much, is that he himself is completely unable to resist temptation; even when it means certain defeat. His behavior is that fixed, and God knows all his patterns.

Over the course of the years, this insight led to a certain amount of fearlessness in my life, but only because I know the power at my back. It is amazing how going forward with his love, causes fear to disappear.

As the Pseudo-Samuari, I Slice and Dice my way through life – but I am only cutting myself in the end. Spiritual Ginsu is what I call it.

The Valley

The Boy - Spiritual Ginsu

They say time heals all wounds, but sometimes the scars that remain are so ugly, that you wish they had been fatal. The boy looked into the mirror of his soul, to see his true reflection; the one that only he and God could see.

He was tougher than most, and had seen many miracles in his lifetime, met actual angels and had felt the hand of God in his heart more than once. Most who knew him, considered him to be the luckiest guy they knew. But that was only because they saw the outside, the charismatic funny guy who seemed to have the "Midas Touch." They rarely saw the inner man, the spiritual John Merrick look alike.

But somehow they gave him strength, the scars. Peter-Pan like in his antics, Captain Hook constantly tried to slice him, but missed every time. Where did his scars come from then? They came from his own misgivings; that is the ironic part.

Not one of all the scars that littered his soul like hot dog wrappers in a fat girl's bathroom had come from Captain Hook. Each one had its own little story of life, love, and most all his mistrust in the Carpenter. No, the enemy had not once scarred him, but he had slipped and fallen a hundred times in his trust in the Carpenter. Each time produced a new scar to bear.

How could God view this as beautiful? The truly amazing part was the way each one gave birth to its own personal phoenix. Extinguished embers of hope (Financial tough times, deaths of children, of friends, relationship issues ,betrayals) turned into Supernovas by Yahweh himself.

Each one should have killed the boy, but when viewed through eyes that kept focus on the Carpenter – the "Bad Dude," they turned into lessons of love and hope. Each one represented a time that the Carpenter nearly lost a son, but did not. What could be more beautiful than that to a loving father?

Just as important was the girl he loved so much and gave him a reason to fight and bear his shar-pei-like badges of honor. We will speak more of her as well.

These are some of his scar's stories.

A Parting Thought…

First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter 2

All I Need is an Hour

You promised me
you'd never leave
No matter what,
you'd be there for me

You found out something
I tried to hide from you
When you asked me,
I told you the truth

Now you've moved away
and I'm no longer with you
You've disowned me
because I'm not like you

I love you still and miss you dearly
But MOM – I'm no different
I have your blood running through me
Please explain why you decided to leave me

I'm so sorry I let you down
My true self had to be found
This is who I am and I do love you
But Mom, I cannot hide my lesbianism anymore

You've been through hell
I was there when you were beat
I was there when you needed me
Where are you – you decided to flee

It hurts me because you were close once
Now we're like strangers on the street
I need you most now
But part of me must let you go – an anonymous lost soul

A Beginning Thought

If you want to change the world, begin with yourself - Gandhi

A Revelation

Spend an hour a day with me, and tell 10 people all I have done for you, and I will take care of the rest.

Context

The bike path in Marina Del Rey; halfway through the Balloona Creek area to the beach. I was riding and praying. My definition of "Prayer," was more or less, me trying to impress upon God, the magnitude and complexity of my problems in life. For the first time, after many many times of asking this question throughout my crazy life, the Lord answered me with clarity. He did not give me a theology to follow, but rather a direct command.

What, an hour a day? Surely this is not the God of Abraham I was hearing! It was for surely not the Catholic God, who demanded reward according to work level. The protestant God was so fond of unearned grace. That hour a day would be too much work on my part. But I felt peace with these words spoken to my heart – and I would follow it. Or would I?

Have you ever tried to spend an hour with God? Mercy me, is it hard! I had problems, but also had led a very storybook life; to tell just one person would take a lifetime! How can I tell 10 a day! This transpired on Ash Wednesday of 2008. I wondered what it would lead to.

Eventually it became a part of me. These days I get up at 5:55 and spend an hour with the ultimate creative power of the universe. Funny that in college, that would have been "PM," as opposed to "AM." Very few people know someone they consider to be more unshakable than I. However, ask my wife how cranky I am all day if I oversleep and miss that precious hour.

It has also taught me that, not just in spirituality, but also in business and relationships, the power of UNRIVALED consistency. Try this principle in business for one year and I guarantee you success.

Well, enough of that. Back then I thought it would cure everything, kind of like donning ruby red slippers and tapping my heels together three times. When in reality, it simply opened my eyes to a blizzard of my own shortcomings.

The Valley

The Boy and the Girl

Stumbling through the blizzard of his own stress, the scarred boy can no longer see through the white-out. Strange, he imagined that it would be black, this blinding fury of his own self-inflicted shortcomings. It really made no sense as he thought about it. But there he was again, "thinking" instead of "feeling."

He thought it should be black, but "Felt" why it was white. It was because of the Carpenter, who whitewashed his heart, mind and soul. The boy had to call the bank that day, because he was late with the mortgage, yet again, and was afraid. Fortunately, however, that fear was not as strong as it was before.

The more the boy learned that this life of his was not for him, but rather for others, the whiter his blindness became. The more that the boy learned that this life of his was about being a tool "for" forgiveness, rather than a tool "who" forgives (He had to chuckle at that one), the whiter his blindness became. The more the boy dedicated his life to fighting for the Carpenter who gave him "snow-vision," rather than fighting for himself, the whiter his blindness became.

He was in the Valley with the Girl, the Valley of Death that so many had come to view as life, and they were struggling through it together. For although the darkness in the raging storms of the valley was white, it was still blinding, and it was still very scary. Even more so, it was filled with lost sheep around them, who did not even know the Carpenter or his peace in the darkness.

But, it was time to call the bank so he took off his snow mittens and dialed.

A Parting thought

First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter 3

The Whole Package

As the cool night dims into light
So do my thoughts
My only hope
Upon a midnight sunrise
Crashed with the horizon of the ocean
The sun rises as does the moonrise
My tears shed without returning
My lips gathered what is left of those shattered
Glass crystals spread across my face
My mind gets wasted as does my heart
Torn by all the hatred in the world
People all the same being different
With a sign of fear from others
We all stay on earth together
Yet not as one
Why?

- an anonymous lost soul

An Opening Thought

Experience is the best teacher, but the tuition is very costly

A Revelation

Tying the Past, Present and Future Together
When we think of where we've been, we usually think of things based in relationship - even accomplishments are thought of in terms later on, of how they affected relationships. When we think of where we are, we think of areas of either lack or fullness, and often times the future is in terms of wants.

How do we look at all three based on our relationship with God? How do we tie all three together and use all three to fire in all areas of life at 100%. It is not possible. But it is for Christ. It can only be done through him, and when we do, the sense of peace, accomplishment and wonder is amazing.

Context
It was 4/5/2008 on the Marina Del Rey bike path in California, near the Culver Bridge. I was thinking about all we had been through and done together and how to win some of the battles in life at the time. I was thinking about everything being tied together in life. I had just read about either Book of Life, or the Tree of Life in tbe Bible that morning, and was wondering at how awesome it would be if there was something that could tie it all together. I realized, yes, Christ.

But more importantly, it was my fellow warrior at my side who was pulling me through this financially tough time, of late mortgages, loan modifications and a suddenly struggling business. How did I stay focused on actualizing things into my life, when I should have been in pure survival mode? How was I still intent of telling others about how amazing God was to me, when it could be so easy to overlook? Then I saw it was because of having my wife as my team.

Two and a half years later, I am amazed at just how big God is. Opportunity out of misfortune seems to be our shared middle name.

So many crises of the time, led to opportunities that are/ were so much better than that which was lost.

*** A funny side-note (At least to a lowbrow like myself) is an editing error that happened on this page. My mouse was malfunctioning and skipping the cursor around, so that letters kept on getting juxtaposition. As a result, the original version of the above paragraph read "Two and a half years later, I am amazed at just how big Gods unit is."*

The above happened only when I stayed focused on Christ's battles, rather than our own, and forgave people. Amazing, but not nearly as amazing as the soul-mate who taught me how to love and forgive.

The Tree of Life

Soul-mates from Dawn of Time, it was said they were by all who knew them, like no other two in all of history. Only a unison that reflective of God's love could possibly overcome the storms of the Valley once and for all.

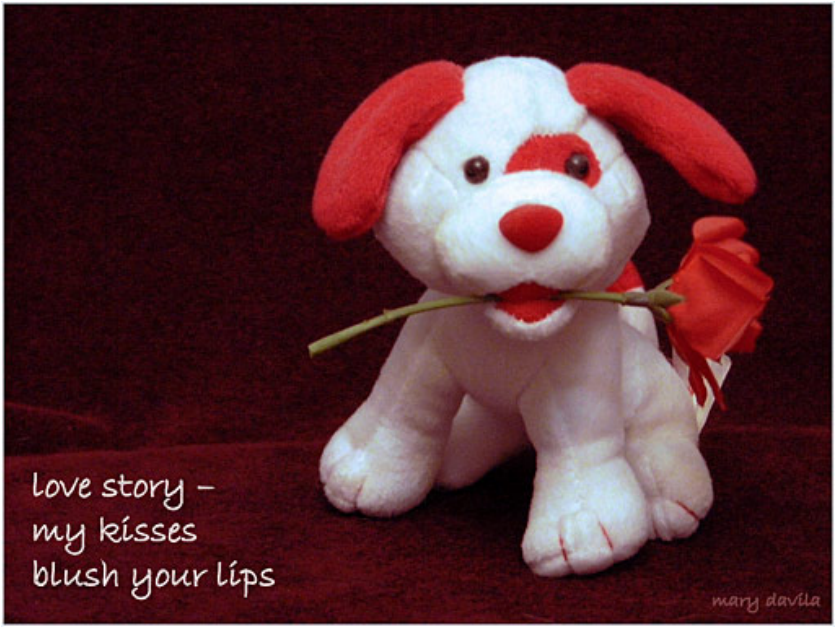
Both of them were in the raging blizzard of life together. They had come to learn that the only way out was to not only help themselves, but everyone around them as well. Not to be crabs crawling out of the barrel, and repeatedly knocking each other down, but rather to become the barrel itself. They would travel to the end of the Valley, a feat that no one had ever done before, and find the Tree of Life.

Both of them saw the Tree in their hearts, although they saw such different versions of it. His was reflective of his spiritual world. It was of a magnificent Palm Tree in full bloom with marvelous Golden Apples on it. Hers was more reflective of the physical world. It was withered and dry like a mocking remnant of the halcyon days of wine and roses before the fall.

They would find the Tree together, through all their tragedies and triumphs, then they would eat the fruit for all of mankind and restore us all to a state of grace. This would be their Quixote like quest. By solving the problems of others, they could solve their own. Maybe they were wrong. Maybe by solving the problems of others, they were only successful at ignoring their own.

But even more importantly, they would get to see who was right… They were a married couple after all.

A Parting Thought



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Chapter 4

Remember to Dream

7/25/99

Dear God;
Often times I ask myself how I could best serve you. Well, I think I have done about the ultimate service for you today. I'm giving you my dog. I think you'll like her a lot, I did anyway. I figure that being God and all, you deserved to have the best dog around. It is very hard for me to lose her, but I think she'll be happier up there with you.

There are several things you should know about her however.

She'll probably be kind of confused when she gets to you, so pay her a lot of extra special attention at first, she'll need it. She is used to being fed right after dinner, so try not to disrupt her schedule too much, as she'll usually expect a walk after eating. It is a pain sometimes, but it means so much to her.

Although she really loves to have her belly rubbed, her favorite place is right behind her tail, she also loves the throat area as well. When she starts to kick both legs, you know you're doing it right.

She is a very loving dog and will lick you until you're blue in the face if you let her. A good way to make her stop if this bothers you is to threaten to squirt her (But none of that Noah stuff, OK?).
She is old and has arthritis so she has trouble getting up the stairs sometimes. Since you are omnipotent, maybe you can design a door for her that doesn't make use of stairs.

It is not generally a good idea to feed her the same room as other dogs because she'll try to steal their food. Unless of course you have some martyr dogs who wouldn't mind. That would be an ideal situation I think.

DO NOT let her sleep with you, no matter what. She will lick and toss/turn all night long, driving you insane!

Well, I guess those are some of the major points. Please take good care of her and let her know that I love her and miss her very much. Please make sure to give her a little corner of her own as well with a nice fluffy cushion. Take good care of her God; she's a very special lady.

Thanks, - Sean

An Opening Thought

Seven days without prayers makes one weak

A Revelation

Remember to Dream
Remember to dream, and dream big! Small dreams are the devil's workshop. Big dreams give the Holy Spirit room to work within the crisis that life will present you. God can give you so much more than you can dream, but you have to give him something to beat.

Context
The Culver Blvd parking area overlooking the Pacific Ocean on March 11th 2008. There were a lot of things that came to me that day, but one stuck out more than anything else. Remember to dream Sean. Give me fuel to work with! Give me something to beat!

A few years later, a student and former employee of mine would actually quote the above "Revelation" from me on her Facebook page, but she was wrong, it was not ME! It was God! It was him "Begging" for my hope and faith, rather than my desperation and perspiration.

But more importantly, things were suddenly getting harder in life. For me personally, I was going though tough times that should have torn a man apart. Providing for my family, being there for my students, and keeping my sanity, despite the seemingly unbearable burdens on my back. Some nights were longer than others, that was for sure.

The story below takes place much later, but this was the foundation of my faith that got me through that day, as well as many other misfortunes in life. Years later, my actual dreams may be different, but the roots remain the same.

Thank God I held on to dreams. I have to wonder if I would still have a heart, had I not.

The Dark Night of the Soul

The Tempter was trying to steal the boy's dreams through the white blindness of the blizzard. If the over-idealistic boy would not stop believing in his dreams, then the tempter would blind him from seeing them, with a painful darkness. He would take the boy's unborn daughter from him and his wife. That pain would surely defeat them once and for all, and end their foolish quest.

His unborn child and precious hope was gone. It was his darkest hour, September 25, 2009. She no longer had a heartbeat, she was nothing more than a lifeless sac. People would say it is only a miscarriage, but it was so much more, so much more to the boy and the girl who loved her as if she were already born, in such dark times.

Like a precious opiate, the tempter's darkness convinces him that the pain of his daughter can so easily die away if he only stop dreaming. The boy could only wonder, "Why was she dead, if evil was allowed to live?"

Maybe the whole journey through the Valley up till now, had been a dream, or a psychotic illusion of some sort? It does sound kinda crazy when you think about it. Maybe the Carpenter was not even real, a fairy-tale the girl wondered aloud next to him, kinda like the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus?

No longer in the valley, the girl at work, the boy was at home. He was alone, and stopped trying to open his eyes, because of the pain. The illusions were no longer fake. They were as concrete and real as anything else. He was looking around and wondered, why did he really consider them so bad. Were they really bad?

It was sad, but he was a survivor and they would adjust and move on, even without the spirit eyes that simply hurt too much to open. And it was in that moment that the tempter came to him, and offered him happiness; a solidification of the illusions. "All you have to do is give me your soul".

Maybe life is pain after all. Maybe the Carpenter did not exist. Maybe to finally accept that would end the pain. Give up your soul. Give up your dreams that make you special, and the pain of never achieving them will stop.

A Parting Thought

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First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter Five

Do Not Limit Yourself

Veiled in sullen darkness,
desperately seeking the light,
bleeding for so long,
smothering deep within wounds.

She must break free!
Clutching on so tight,
with a stone fist,
rigid and hard.

One finger at a time,
attempts to break that grip,
unleashing all those burdens,
emptying them from her being.

Tense fingers become limber once more;
a ray of sunshine warms an afflicted body.
Hemorrhaging finally contained,
intense wounds begin to heal.

The midnight hour is conquered,
a transformation envelopes,
the cocoon is finally shed.
Free at last; the light is found!

Intoxicated by the fresh air,
no longer bound,
spreads her wings and flies!
At last, she has found her way home!

- Mary Davila

An Opening Thought

The Gift Of Happiness Belongs To Those Who Unwrap It

A Revelation

Do not let the past rule the future
Do Not Let the Past Rule the Future. Don't make decisions based on "Your" past. It is too limited, even if it is good; it is the past of one person out of 6 billion. Trust your instincts and allow all things in the universe to work for God, through you. You cannot see the future I have for you, but you can feel it. Don't think! Your thought patterns are based on the past. Feel; because your heart is the key to me and my future for you.

Context
January 10, 2009 on the dining room stairs in our house. Wow, I still remember that day so well, the spiritual story and the revelation are so intertwined. My wife and I had a HUGE fight that day over finances, the worst we ever had and I was afraid of losing her; which I found out later was silly and unjustified (She would kill me if I did not add that). Oh I can just hear it now, ha ha ha.

A year prior, I had I received a call from a man who wanted me to sell him my school and join his organization. At this point, it made sense. Sell the dojo, the house, the cars; they were causing too much stress! Give up on the home we built, and start over. Then I realized that none of it mattered. I was worrying too much about my wife's comfort and not enough about her heart.

Call me crude, but I learned that day, that a wife needs you to grab her butt once a day and growl, a lot more than she needs a two-car garage. So I trusted I would be led the right way, and whatever happens would happen. Let the devil call with offers to sell out. I would not let go of our dreams… or her butt.

The Dark Night of the Soul/ Part II

"It is not nearly as nefarious
As the movies would say,
There is no deed to sign
Or ransom to pay

You don't have to
Meet me at midnight
Creeping along
And avoiding the light

We can do it right now
Actually right here
In this moment where you stand
On the dining room stairs

Now Sean boy
Here is what is amazing
You don't even
Have to endure any hazing

For breaking apart
From the Carpenter
And his other sheep
While they are grazing

It will be our little secret
Just you me and the girl
Your church will lift you up
And treat you like the Duke of Earl

All you have to do
Is get down on your knees
You can even still say to Jesus
You are my lord and my king

Because that weak man

Has no real power
At least not on this earth
Not at this hour

He will hold you
He will rock you
He will comfort you
He will love you

But why does he comfort
Why does he protect
Would not a real man
Give you success instead?

I know your one desire Sean
It is for the girl
You will choose her over anything,
Even if you do not yet know

Look at her pain, in this world you've created
You are such a selfish evil thing
I tell you that your love is abated.

She deserves so much more than this
And you know this journey will be rough
She will cry, scream and suffer from being at your side
Will she be tough?

You can save her the journey
Of your foolish quest
You can give her the best in this world,
The very very best….

Still serve your God
There is room for both of us
This is your crossroad
The world can be yours

Give up on your quest Sean
Give up on your dreams
All they have brought you
Is pain and misery.

It's time to grow up
Not to sell out.
Its time to provide for your family
And I'm here to show you how.

A man will call you today
He will offer a life
He will tell you the way
That you can make all this right.

So now I will leave you,
Don't be a fool Sean
Don't you love her so much
That you can finally grow up?"

A Parting Thought

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Chapter 6

Be Still and Know that I am God

Be Still And Know That I Am God

As I sit with You Jesus,
Your Marquis eyes
illuminate my soul
as Your House transforms into
into an open-air Sanctuary.

The ocean breeze
unwraps tension
and calms my panic.

Lavender butterflies
nestled on tulips
imbue the pews
with the epitome of gardens.

Lilac hummingbirds
soar with serenity
as they serenade transgressions away.

Free flowing grace
from Niagara Falls
mists my eyes
under a double rainbow
of comfort and tranquility.

Enmity dissolves
into a Chalice of Love.

Let peace begin with me.

- Mary Davila

An Opening Thought

Be Still and Know that I am God

A Revelation

Be Still and Know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God. What you can get done in 10 years, I can get done in 10 seconds, but you have to allow me to. Be still, don't "Do nothing", but allow me to calm the turbulent storms that rage within your mind. Allow me to be your rock, cling fast to me, rather than slide on the moss-covered surfaces of your anxieties.

Context
It was on the balcony to my bedroom on May 22, 2008. We have a two-story townhouse in Marina Del Rey. The master bedroom opens onto a balcony that overlooks the bike path that leads to the beach. Yeah, nice…

I was really stressed out about something that seemed urgent at the time, and probably really was in some regard. I am sure that someone wanted to sue me, the bank wanted to take the house or something. There were more things to do that day, running our own business than I possibly had to time to do. I was really stressing out.

But I always prayed first, and it always changed the way I saw things - *Or the way things saw me*. I once joked with my pastor about success with the mortgage company customer service is more about if the operator got "Lucky" the night before, than if you qualify on the computer screen in front of them. Sit back Sean, and allow God to massage the hearts around you. God can influence 100 million things in a split second, but only if you give the room to do so.

Two years later, can I "Still" calm my mind before I act? Ha ha ha - yeah, right, that is a good one! I can put a million comedians out of work with a line like that. I am aware of my failure however, and can ask God to do it for me. Strangely enough, he usually does.

Like the afore-mentioned operator, God often does it through people around me. It is what got me through the dark time, the storms that rocked me back and forth. God's presence stilled me through times of trial and temptation.

The Valley

The Dark Night of the Soul/ Part 3

After the tempter had come and sang to his soul, he realized that he was totally blind. But it was not the claws of the enemy that had sealed his eyes closed so tight, it was his love for the girl that had blinded him. The enemy was only helping him to stay blinded by that love. He was actually using love against him. A dangerous technique, but one that seemed to be working!

All he had to do was sell his soul; give up that which made him special. Simply stop being the dreamer that the girl fell in love with, in order to provide for her. The insidious nature of the deal is what made it so easy. For he believed that he could really do such a thing and still remain faithful to the Carpenter.

He would not do it. When a man called with the offer to buy his karate school, and provide a good life for him and the girl, he simply closed his physical eyes, and in a moment opened the spiritual eyes back up, and he screamed.

The tempters claws tore into those eyes and dreams like razors. They showed him every good thing he was giving up, for both he and the girl. He had turned down a one-way ticket out of the valley for both he and the girl without even asking her first. Now they were stuck, and the next few years would bring bankruptcy, death, betrayal and other forms of evil brought by the tempter as retribution for their faith in the Carpenter.

He opened his physical eyes once again, and they matched what his spirit saw. He was back in the Valley of Death. The tempter had offered him a way out, and he had denied it. Both sets of eyes wept tears, as he looked into the darkness ahead of him. He wanted to think he was stupid for this. He wanted to think that he was going to die. He wanted to think that there was someone else for the job, but he knew this was not true.

But in the end, he realized that the journey through the Valley would never be fair. But he was learning to love that it was so, because it gave him an arena in which to fight for the Carpenter.

But all he could do was hold fast and trust, trudge ahead and "Still" his mind.

A Parting Thought

First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter 7

The Best Day of Your Life

Cry, cry
I don't know why
I wish I was high, like a dove who can fly
When the air blows
Between my wings
Open and free once
Again what a great gift – to be able to fly
When I first begin to cry
I'm flying so I, so proud to fly in the sky
Like a dove who don't know how to cry
I'm up on the clouds
Just to say good bye

An anonymous lost soul

An Opening Thought

Love is the only natural resource

A Revelation

Make Today the Day
You will have many great days the rest of your life. But let's work together to "Make" today the best day ever. You have control over this; but only if your definition of success, is serving my Kingdom. Set aside what you are going to do, in the midst of everything all day that is not of me. We will have many other great days, and terrible things may even happen today. In 5 years however, when we look back together, how will we remember today as a day of service to my kingdom?

Context
So I am hoping to finish editing this book today. I am starting off with Chapter 7 (This one) and earlier this AM, my 4 year old son, Joshua, says the funniest thing to me. He says, "Dad, this is the best day of my life!"

Now, once I am past the heartbreaking fact that he now calls me "Dad" as opposed to "Daddy", I know that he is only saying that because his grandparents are taking him somewhere that morning. Still the coincidence is so funny to me. Signposts along the way I have come to call them. They keep one going in the right direction to make that day "The best day ever!"

Funny thing is that I cannot remember the original day this came to me, or even how that day turned out. But I do know how my life turned out, and that is something that I am pretty happy about. If whatever happened that day, led to the life I have now, then yes, it was the best day ever up until that point I guess.

What do I have now? Wealth, unbelievable and vast amounts of wealth. They say that knowledge is wealth, and I have the knowledge of what is important in life, and more importantly, I have peace with that.

The Valley

A Leap Into Hell

There was no mention of high ledges that dropped straight off into the heart of hell in the AAA travel guide to the Valley of Death. It simply said to watch out for wolves and things that may bite. Nothing about high ledges, and the boy was afraid of heights!

He had given up the chance to sell his soul. They did not give up the dreams that made him and the girl unique and now they were paying the price. The wolves chasing them were like a monster that grew a new head every time they beat it down. In ancient times, it was called a Hydra, in modern times it was known as compound interest rates.

One wanted his house, the other wanted his car, the other wanted his truck, another wanted his faith, another wanted his business. The wolves never stopped coming. It seemed that every one of them he had slain in the journey had given birth to a thousand more.

And they had seemingly grown in size as well, not waist high, like the ones in a typical forest valley, but twice as tall as he and the girl. They were visible as far as the eye could see as well. It felt as if they would eventually block out the sun, if the self-inflicted blizzard did not beat them to it.

How could the AAA Guide have failed to mention that there is a ledge that falls straight in the very heart of hell itself! Being backed towards it by the wolves their evil glowing eyes, dripping teeth, warm and sticky breath

He was hypnotized in his state. He looked up to see the closest beast with its jaw gaping a hair breadth from him like the Alien monster and Sigourney Weaver. He remembered the girl. She had been there for everything and he had to fight for her now.

Jumping into the heart of hell itself; and taking a chance of losing everything that he had once and for all. But he was determined to keep his house, and had the strangest gut instinct that this was the way

It made no sense, to leap into hell in order to escape from it he thought, but he had learned to trust. He and the girl should have been devoured long ago, yet they were still alive. Bruised and battered, but still alive.

He and the girl looked at each other, laughed at their own absurdity and jumped. They held hands and fell together, for 12 months they fell, with only each other to hold on to.

Upon landing they opened their eyes and were amazed at what they saw.

A Parting Thought

First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter 8

Focus or Failure

Executive Privilege

Crushed by a vile tongue
into fragments of shattered fear
buried in vicious rebuke

self respect chiseled away
with demeaning humiliation
producing a wilted stone sculpture

bulldozed into a harsh wedge
lodged between rage and insanity
flattened into submissiveness

poison spurts out cruelty
as I shrivel in a venomous ocean
vomiting malignant malice

and how was your day?

- Mary Davila

A Beginning Thought

The biggest difference between determination and desperation is honesty with oneself

A Revelation

Take Your Focus off the Failures
Don't focus on the financial failures or hardships right now, but rather on the relationship successes in your life. You have more than nearly anyone you know, with your huge networks. You are a lot richer than you can ever realize, if you stop looking to the wrong areas for success.

Context
This was something that came to me on February 19,2008. It was on my upstairs balcony. It was relatively early into my Lenten journey and spoken at a good time. Ironically enough (Yes, I am aware this is hard to swallow, but so is my life in general I think) three years to the day later, on February 19, 2011, one of my black belts, Joel Perez, would throw a great line at me.

"Your net worth is your network."

Three years to the day, what are the odds? Sounds like God was trying to tell me something – just like Joshua's line in chapter 7.

I remember telling my Pastor that he is going to see a miracle with everything going on with our tough times in life. And he did. He got his "Jimmy Stewart" as I call it. The Pacific Ocean did not part, nor did fire come down from heaven. Over the years I have come to know so many people who cared about my wife and me, that when others would have fallen one thousand times over, we barely stumbled.

Our marriage should have been destroyed, but it grew even stronger. It grew stronger, not because of us, but those who believed in us, and gave so much of themselves to see us not just survive in hard times,

but prosper as well. Well, that and the fact that we kept God at the center of it all.

But what will always haunt me more than anything is being in court, seeing the countless immigrant couples without the networks that I have, losing everything once and for all. I always knew I would bounce back. I made a million before. I'll do it again. But those poor lost souls without my resources; what would they do, other than die?

The Valley

The Fall

Too many people had died in his journey, too many people he had loved, and loved him back. He and the girl could not give up belief in the journey now. They were falling forever it seemed. His daughter had died. His business had gone. He was to lose his castle. His chariots had been taken by the repo men. And he was afraid for the girl's heart. He feared that it could not take the stress of life anymore.

Prior to the jump, the boy had been praying in a local temple of the land, and asked if he was meant to keep the house and if so, how. A voice spoke to his heart to declare the bankruptcy for his business. So they did. They lept into hell and were amazed at what happened.

Their journey through the Valley over the next two years would be riddled with court cases, moves of their business and more. But in the end, they would keep their home, the people that mattered, and their love would grow stronger as they fought through the Valley together.

They fell for 12 months wrapped in a cocoon woven by the Carpenter, changing into butterflies as they fell. They should have died of oxygen deprivation on the way down, or hit a bird or something, but they did not! Wolves lept off the ledge after them, and died on the way down.

Every time they were about to hit rock bottom from the ledge, something happened. A miracle would stop it. Then one day, their fall stopped, and not where they expected.

A Parting thought

First published in Simply Haiku, Spring 2009, vol 7 no 1

Chapter 9

Omni-Everything

Field of Torment

In the field of suffering, people bandage,
quietly enduring their eternal prison.
no hope for a spring blossom,
or a ravishing rose garden.
only foliage piled deep,
with wretched weeds,
tormenting thorns,
miserable mildew,
painful pebbles,
troubled twigs,
anguish!
sting!

- Mary Davila

A Beginning Thought

Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it - Churchill

A Revelation

Omni-Everything
Why do people call me omnipotent? It is such a limiting term for my power, Billy-goats are omnivorous, do you make me sound like a Billy-goat that I created? I am beyond omnipotent, I am omni-everything. It is not just all "Powerful" it is beyond that. I can do anything you allow me to, but can you really allow me to? Are you that open, trusting, believing? Or do you liken me more to a Billy-goat, eating tin cans, than the creator of creation itself?

Context
God is "Omni" not us. Wow, this one. I believe very strongly that miracles occur around us every day in the form of mistakes and timing. I can write forever about how we almost lost our house; but the summary will do.

I had to send in loan modification papers nearly 15 times. Every time I fasted. Every time it was lost, every single time. I am not saying that it was because I fasted, but how can a bank lose the same paperwork 15 times! Keep in mind that you don't pay while in modification, so their mistakes were our miracles.

Then on June 4, 2011 our company's bankruptcy cleared, we were no longer protected against foreclosure from the bank. On June 3,2011 they messed up and foreclosed on our house, which is illegal, while our bankruptcy is still in court.

One day saved our house, just one day. I always go back to that day in prayer when it was in my heart to declare than "BK" to save the house. It made no sense at the time, and I am not naïve enough to believe this was some sort of master plan. It was however, a part of something much greater than myself.

I think that what it is, is that God's grace is simply so powerful, he does not need a plan as we do. When he holds you, and you allow him to; it is simply impossible for amazing miracles not to happen.

In God's Grasp

It was warmer than he thought it would be, that is the first thing he thought, and it surprised him. Sitting here in God's loving hands, it was not what he expected when he and the girl had jumped off the ledge.

But here they were. Caught up in the fire of the moment, he had jumped straight away into hell, but God caught him before he had gotten there. Hell was a place that God was going to protect him from for the rest of the journey. A journey that he now knew was nearly over.

When the hands put them down, it was still dark and they were still in the valley. The screams were still around then, but it was different now, because there was a new type of trail, and it was narrower. They had reached the end, and on the other side of the pass, would be that which they had come for… The Tree of Life. They could save the world. They could restore humanity back to its original and unfallen state.

The wolves were still there, but they had lost their power. They were only shadowy illusions that were transparent in nature. They never even had a real ability to devour, but rather the ability to make one devour one's self. They were not even fed by human flesh the boy had learned, but by fear, our own personal demons. They were not so much a reflection of hell, as a reflection of one's self.

But terror although it can kill, does have its limits. He had learned that the power of God knows no limits. Unfortunately, so many others still did not see this. All about them they could see people running in fear, screaming at the wolves as they once did.

Suddenly the Tree seemed more important than ever. So many sheep devoured by the wolves, because they did not even know the Tree or the Carpenter existed. They had been saved from their own terror and finally given a chance to rest; but they could not.

They had come to understand that this was another source of the wolves' power… human greed. I saved myself, to hell with everyone else. My shame at being devoured by the wolves is too great, so I will not help others. But the boy and the girl knew they had to help others, because who else can? They had to save the sheep from their own terror.

A Parting thought

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Chapter 10

I Created Time

They Shut The Road

They shut the road through the woods
and opened the gates to hell.

Lost in turmoil,
the direction home
was obscured by lethal choices.

Verbally engineered limbs
strewn in all directions
steal the truth.

Roots,
ripped from their foundation
wither in exploitation.

Sharp stones rupture
the solid path.

Mutilated saplings
hemorrhage,
mangled in deception.

Trembling,
pain bleeding down my cheeks,
I cry out for assistance,
arms extended upwards;
a gale wind comes to my rescue
and leads me towards the Eternal Word.

Mary Davila

A Beginning Thought

Failure is not defeat until you stop trying

A Revelation

I Created Time
Always going on and on about how busy life is, are you? You still have no idea of my power, compared to what you can achieve. Squeeze time into me and I will multiply it, do not squeeze me into time.

Context
Once again – busy busy busy. This was early on into the Valley, and how can I ever forget this day more than any other. I was riding my bike to work that day, it was in November, 2008 and of course I was "Stressed" about the lease, mortgage, etc… What else is new?

So I literally threw it all on the Lord that day, as I rode my bike along the Ocean through Venice Beach. Somewhere between the street performers and the bike ramp, I asked God if I am really going to serve his kingdom in all of this, that he take care of the bills for me. Let me focus on my job!

But I was sick of spending time in his glorious presence and thinking about other things. I was going to spend some time on my bike, on the beach, only focusing on his awesome magnificence, whether he liked it or not. I still think that was the best bike ride of my life.

It is like cable TV. When I was a kid 13 channels and HBO was the "Super-package," and I could always find something easily. Now that I have 1000 channels, I can never find anything. I simply cannot make one thing my priority when I have so much choice.

I guess that where the loaves and fishes miracle of "time multiplication" takes place in my life. It is when I prioritize one thing. When I "Truly" put my spirit first, everything else seems to fall into place in some magical "Behind the scenes" way. The "Need" for more "Time" disappears.

Notice the use of the word "When." I actually do in leap years, and even then I miss a few.

They Find the Apple

He held the apple in his hand. He should not have been surprised at the color of the Golden Apple, but he was. He thought it would be gold, but it was blood red, literally. It was made of actual blood, that somehow took shape as an apple.

"Eat it," the tempter said, who had followed them into the garden. Eating just one bite could end every single one of the calamities that the tempter had brought upon man. Why did the tempter suddenly want success, when he had tried to foil them every step of the way? Why was he so willing to commit spiritual suicide, and put an end to himself?

Because in doing so, he would finally kill the Carpenter. After 2000 years, he would finally have his revenge. No price was too high to pay for that.

The boy and girl understood now, why the tempter was willing to die, because…

They could end greed; but in doing so, they would kill generosity.

They could kill envy; but in doing so would end goodwill.

They could end sloth; but in doing so would end effort.

They could end lust; but in doing so, would end chastity.

They could end pride; but in doing so would end humility.

They could end gluttony; but in doing so would end self-control.

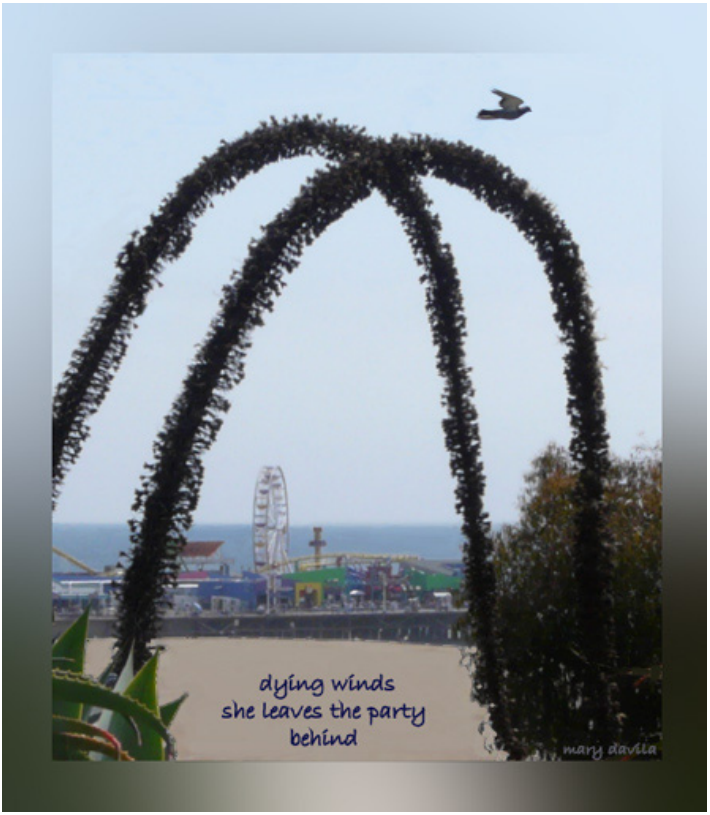
They could end anger; but in doing so would end the need for love….

They could solve every problem the world ever had, with just one bite. Although in doing so would eliminate the solution. It would be the tempter's ultimate victory.

Love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; like anything else, could not exist, if there were no need for them.

Suddenly the Golden apple looked like that which it really was… Gold. You cannot serve both God and Gold. The tree no longer even remotely appealing to them, they turned around and went back to the Valley.

A Parting thought



First published in the 63rd World Haiku Association (WHA) Haiga Contest, January 2009

Chapter 11

The Big Bad Wolf

A Natural Phenomenon

Take my hand,
lavish me with conversation
as we stroll along
on this soulful evening.

Listen to the whispering leaves
falling in love.

Inhale the passion of
fragrant flowers, drunk with beauty,
sober with contentment.

Sustain me with your strength,
as motionless rocks,
sleeping for years,
roar with spirit.

Catch the mesmerizing flight
of the peacock butterfly
absorbed in an orange blossom.

Our psyche's,
parted from reality,
eavesdrop on nature.

- Mary Davila

A Beginning Thought

I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened
– Mark Twain

A Revelation

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf
Why do you always fret over money? How is it, that a tool has such ownership over you? How is it that rather than using the tool, you constantly live in fear of it, a tool? I made everything you can sense and feel, including the people who manufacture that tool. Stop fearing the tool and start trusting the maker more.

Context
OK, why even bother at this point the setting is everywhere I go- 24/7… Worried about the bills and things of this world.

Don't even think of judging me – in truth, we are most likely the same.

The Valley Becomes the Real World

5:55 already…. The boy got out of the bed and went downstairs to the fancy coffeemaker that glowed a scarier other-worldly light in the pre-dawn darkness, as its timed brewer seeped out the ambrosia of the early morning Gods.

He had been getting up at the crack of dawn for over a year now – and he liked it. At the age of 38, he wondered if the 18 year old version of himself would kick him right between the legs for getting up pre-noon of his own volition.

In an hour, it would be time to get the kids up for school, but first it was time for his prayer walk, for his hour with God. Although still facing trials in life, getting up at dawn and spending an hour with the ultimate creative force of the universe, made it all seem easy.

He was Clark Kent again, but for that hour with the Carpenter, he was Superman, not because of who he was, but because he was connected with the Carpenter's presence. He would put on the cape, and merge the two worlds together, if only for that hour.

He had discovered the key to being a hero; enjoying the Clark Kent moments, just as much as the Superman moments.

He and the girl stood ready to return through the Valley. They saw that it was not going to be as easy as they had thought. They finished one journey, but see that there will be many others. Having been through the Valley once, they see that now the attainment of their destiny is to help others through it as well. This will be hard, much harder even so, than the initial journey was.

For their own demons they knew by name. Their demons had been with them since God formed them as an infant in their mother's womb, waiting like carrion to strike at them in life. Others' demons however, they did not know, but they had surely heard of the boy and the girl by now, and would be ready for them.

So they'll take more journeys, many more, and become guides to others through the Valley of Death. They, along with the "Carpenter" will have one heck of a great time doing it as well!

No, it was never up to them to save the world, but the journey taught them how to help a few small pieces of it, to save itself. They would show a few precious sheep that the big bad wolf, does not deserve the same attention of the Grandmother of whom it masquerades.

A Parting thought

First published in the 65th World Haiku Association (WHA) Haiga Contest, March 2009

Chapter 12

Just Plum Tired?

EVERY DAY BLUES
Will I live another day
Or will my life just fade away
Like so many things have done
Enter darkness, exit sun

Oh sometimes I wonder what I'm gonna do
Cause it ain't no cure for the every day blues

Will I see tomorrow come
And when all is said and done
Will I leave my mark behind
Or a bloated body and a rotted mind
Oh sometimes I wonder what I'm gonna do
Casue there ain't no cure for the everyday blues

And if I leave a legacy
Will it be one of misery
Or of happy thoughts and happy deeds of a man who did succeed

Oh and sometimes I wonder
What I'm gonna do
Cause there just ain't no cure
For the everyday blues

- an anonymous lost soul

A Beginning Thought

Excuses are like behinds, everybody has one

A Revelation

He Will Attack You Then
The Devil will attack you most when you are tired.

Context
I was on the patio of our house, the one that had somehow been saved, both despite and because of everything we had been though in the Valley. I was just "Plum tired" that day. Not for any stressful reason, I simply did not get enough sleep the day before. It was amazing the thing that bothered me that day.

It is not coincidence that he attacked Jesus after 40 days in the desert. I wanted to spend more time in prayer recently, but realized that the best thing I could do that day, was to get some rest. We tend to ask God to heal our wounds, but we never rest enough for him to do that.

I was worried about people from my past, whom I had not seen in a decade. I was worried about things that not only did not happen, but could not happen. I was worried about being worried.

So I took a nap.

I woke up 20 minutes later, and strangely enough, I was still worried. However, I wasn't worried as much, and only about my lack of faith that day.

What the Future Holds

They say that the truly great ones in life learn from the past, as history is the mother of all learning. The boy and the girl had not just made it through the Valley, but learned to embrace it, and even become the Valley itself. As they had realized in the beginning of the tale, that they had to not be the crabs crawling out of the barrel, but rather become the barrel itself, so they had become the Valley, in order to defeat it.

Even though they had learned to change their mindset, rather than the Valley; the tempter would always have new challenges for them. The loss of their unborn Micaela, and two other miscarriages; once healed, had resulted in the call to adoption two years later. A little girl, all wrapped up in a spiritual bow from God. It was a present to both the child and the child's new family.

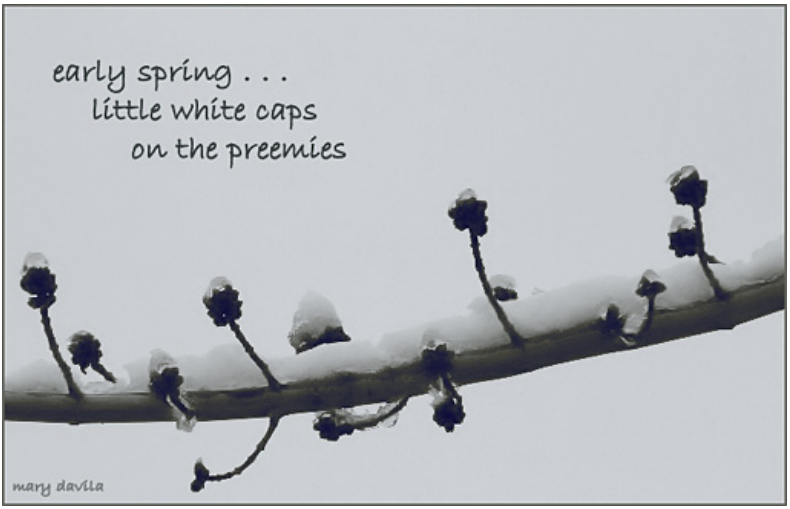
One day a stray wolf would surely threaten that girl in the Valley. But her parents were guides in that Valley, and the Carpenter surely would pull her through it. They would be OK.

Her brothers would undoubtedly be attacked my the wolves that attack young men in the Valley, but even more so, for the tempter would surely want their parents' faith, even many years later. But her parents were guides in that Valley, and the Carpenter surely would pull them through it. They would be OK.

The tempter learned that he could not even break their union with the Carpenter with the Tree of Life itself. He knew however that they were human, and he would always attempt to destroy the valley around them. The Carpenter however, had shown them time and time again, that he would keep them safe.

They had come to view the Valley as a beautiful place, but would always remember how dangerous it can be.

A Parting thought



First published in the 64th World Haiku Association (WHA) Haiga Contest, February 2009

Chapter 13

What, Me Worry?

A Natural Phenomenon

Take my hand,
lavish me with conversation
as we stroll along
on this soulful evening.

Listen to the whispering leaves
falling in love.

Inhale the passion of
fragrant flowers, drunk with beauty,
sober with contentment.

Sustain me with your strength,
as motionless rocks,
sleeping for years,
roar with spirit.

Catch the mesmerizing flight
of the peacock butterfly
absorbed in an orange blossom.

Our psyche's,
parted from reality,
eavesdrop on nature.

- Mary Davila

A Beginning Thought

If you want to know the end – look at the beginning

A Revelation

What – Me Worry?
Stop making your Problems Bigger than me. I am the force that created the universe that can solve your troubles. As long as you continue to worship misery and pain, you cannot worship me! Stop making your problems bigger than me!

Context
OK, can't take any credit for the closing "Revelation" in this book being some amazing occurrence that ran through my own personal pipeline to God. It is from TD Jakes. I was folding the laundry one day, while watching my favorite TV Preacher. The line he used in conjunction with Stop making your problems bigger than me was – You are not the CEO of the Universe!

Don't' worry, God is so much bigger and can turn anything into something amazing, if you give him your whole heart and mind. But as long as we worry, we are holding shut the door that lets him in to do his thing.

He will always attack us. He is on autopilot, and his systems make McDonalds and GM look like total amateurs! I like what Jack Hayford, another TV preacher I like a lot calls it "Potshots from Hell."

The Valley

A Potshot from Hell

Hello! This is Sean, or, as you have come to know me, "The Boy." Allow me to close this trite nonsense you have suffered so patiently through, with a change to the first person story-telling format. This is actually something from the past month of our life. The tempter gave us a "Potshot" that the "Carpenter" gave us the ability to turn around. Through the power of prayer and forgiveness we turned it into a blessing. It was a flaming arrow of immense proportions launched right when things seemed to be going so well.

When I saw the arrow coming, I chose to stand in one place with no armor and accept the arrow straight into my own heart, for that is where the Carpenter lived. I knew that he would take the arrow for me. Furthermore, like a sleeping dragon aroused by foolish knights, so would an attack on his son (Or so I foolishly believe) awaken his power and majesty within my life.

But even more importantly, it would bring him into the life of those attacking me, that rather than defeat them as I would have so foolishly done two years ago; the Carpenter could transform them into beings of selfless love, as opposed to fear. Yeah, I know, and maybe he would make pigs fly, but ya gotta try!

It all comes back to the letter that prefaced this whole book. The manager of our dojo that was saved in the Valley decided to play the Lead Singer who decides the band is holding him back and go out on his own. Then we "Mysteriously" get evicted after a few clandestine meetings between he and the landlord.

Then a few days later the following letter goes out, which I find out was co-authored by the two of them (Can they be any more shameless!!!) to my client base. He is opening in the same location we just got "Mysteriously" evicted from!

****

Dear Friends,

I have some sad news and exciting news…the sad news is that I will no longer be instructing with the California Karate Club. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the California Karate Club students and parents for their support over the years. It has been an absolute pleasure to teach and build relationships with each and every one of you. I also want to thank Sensei Sean and Shelly for their support and encouragement.

The exciting news is that for many years I have had a dream to start a school of my own, and it is a pleasure to share with you that this dream is now becoming a reality. ***Lack of Faith Karate*** will open its doors February 2011. The location will be (**omitted for legal reasons)**, Santa Monica. CA 90404.

Again, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the parents, students and both Sensei Sean and Shelly for the wonderful years of friendship.

Warmest regards,

The Goat

****

I guess they never heard of the legal principle of "Intentionally Creating an Unfair Economic Advantage." Two years in Bankruptcy and Eviction and Mortgage courts taught me a thing or two about the law.

Shelly and I became the Shadow of the Valley of Death for three years. In that time we overcame many of the illusions that the world tricked us into thinking were important. Don't misunderstand, the loss and the pain in this time was very real and can never be totally minimized. However, it made us into such a formidable team, when

we allow ourselves to be coached by the Carpenter. I don't think there is a force on Earth that can stop us.

I fasted and went in search of a new place, a better one. That day, I ran into a Karate Master whom I liked, but had not seen in a few years. I ran into him twice actually (While in prayer both times), on separate end of town. I took that as my sign. A week later, we had a deal to move the club into his place. Everyone loved it even more than where we were.

I informed the Bishop who presided over **Acme Church** of the illegal actions in his church and he "Assured" me that the letter was in error. Currently the Goat is teaching out of some park somewhere, it has been raining the past two weeks as well. Poor guy, we actually feel sorry for him! No one is left in the old building. The new one we have is nicer and costs WAY less. Shelly is in charge and teaching with a fire that the club has not seen in several years. Amazing, absolutely amazing how things turn out when you hand them over to the "Carpenter", and his purposes, rather than your own.

The Valley never ends as we found out, but it changes, and in the end, once you learn to stop seeing though filters of fear, it is a beautiful place. It is filled with people who appear to be enemies, but are really opportunities to forgive and grow closer to God, to bring his Kingdom closer to us on Earth.

I hope you enjoy the valley as much as I do these days. It is a truly wonderful place. All you have to do is stop trying to change the scenery and start trying to change your eyes.

A Parting thought

First published in LYNX, XXIV:1 February 2009

Epilogue

Christianity With Bite was written as a trilogy. Each volume having a different face.

Attached is a Chapter from the prequel “Wolves in the Valley” as well as the third installment of the series; “Interview With a Vampire Slayer.”

Book 1 - “Wolves in the Valley” is a “Dark, yet fanciful” journey through a valley of both terror and hope. It is centered around 13 revelations from prayer, poetry and misgiving.

Book 2 – “Conversations with Dog” is a “sometimes funny but always ironic” collection of conversations focused on the author as God's talking dog. Rather than painfully intense metaphors, it is filled with funny cartoons and Facebook laughs, and the dog constantly misunderstanding its owners instructions.

Book 3 – “Conversations with a Vampire Slayer “" is the darkest and most socially relevant of the three. The author's personal favorite of the trilogy, it is one of social satire, that attacks the vampires (apathetic politicians) who exemplify evil in our present culture. It is also the first of other forthcoming works of the same series.

Following are sample chapters from the other two books of the trilogy.

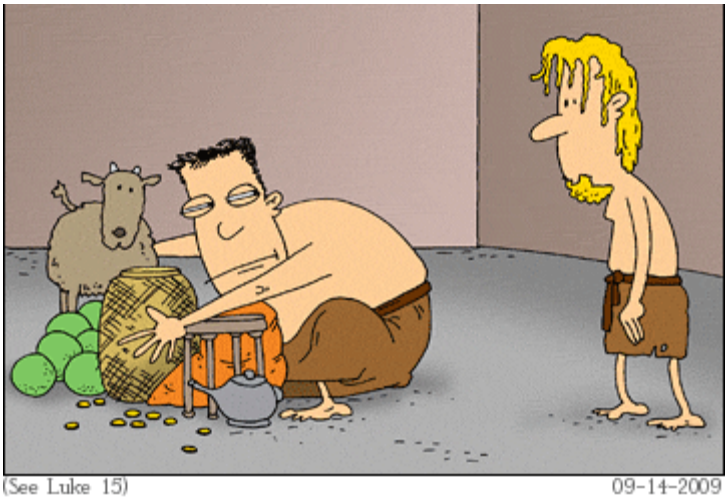
A portion of from Book and Website proceeds go towards helping Foster Children in the County of Los Angeles.

For more books, Free Digests, and countless archives go to our main site: www.27Wishes.com

A Chapter from “Conversations With Dog”

Chapter 19

Knock Louder, I Can’t Hear Me



(See Luke 15) 09-14-2009

CONFUSED BY THE SUDDEN RETURN, THE PRODIGAL SON'S BROTHER ASSUMES A DEFENSIVE HOARDING MANEUVER

A Beginning Thought

You cannot sit on the road to success, unless you want to get run over

A Revelation

Knock on the Door
Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened. Knock, but how you ask? With faith and determination my son. Knock, and doors of opportunity will be opened that you never dreamed possible. But only if you knock! Not loud enough for me to hear either, I hear everything. It has to be loud enough for you to hear...

Context
Upstairs folding laundry sometime in May, watching my man – T.D. Jakes. Damn, do I love that guy! If I were a large black man, I would want to be TD Jakes! Forget Shaquel O Neal or that guy Michael Clarke Duncan, from the Green Mile; I want to be TD Jakes.

But alas, I am not a large black man… I am a little white guy who looks more like Dudley Moore, but one can dream!

He is talking today about going back for more blessings. When God gives you something, he does not run out of supplies! He wants you to be BOLD enough to ask for more! I was inspired that day to ask for more. It was kinda funny, because I was unsure of what to ask for. I would like to be a saint and simply ask for grace, but what is that really, and is my faith strong enough for that?

So I asked for just that, more.

More of what, I did not know, so I asked for everything, as crazy as that sounds. I just stopped, put the laundry down, and felt an amazing oneness with God, and asked for all of it. The Good, the

Bad and the Ugly. Because you can't have one without the other, so I asked for it all.

The way I figured it was that if something "Seemingly" ugly was not from him, then he wouldn't give it to me from that prayer. If it was from him, then it would lead to something amazing.

To this day (3 years later) I still cannot tell if that was the smartest thing I ever did, or the dumbest. Ha, it was probably both!

Conversation with Dog

Stick to the Plan

It was getting late, and the dog was really missing his master at this point. Although it was fun to talk about him, the nicest part about being God's talking dog, was just that! It was being HIS dog. This was the last time he ever wandered out to tell stories again. He was never going to get home, people kept asking him to tell more and more stories!

So he obliged them. He continued on.

"You are a creative genius, unlike few the world has ever known. Produce as much as you can, as fast as you can and get it to as many people as you can. The one who is meant to see it, will the see the spark in it, and that is how you will pay for this place."

OK, that was a big one from my human days. I remember riding a bike one day and stressing out about how to pay the bills at our business. And that was spoken to my heart. We never did pay the lease that month, and we eventually did have to leave. I produced what I could. I really did try. Why did things go the way they did? I "Did" so much, but not what I was told.

Now that I am a dog and can smell rats a mile away, there is a huge rat there. That was one where I really screwed up on God's directions in hindsight. I had someone help me with it, did a sample montage of a bunch of video clips that an employee of mine did with really neat effects and stuff. Then I even started a FaceBook group to get it out to people.

I never did what God said. I had an employee who was better versed at compilations do it for me. That business eventually went under, and I cannot help but wonder sometimes, did I really try my best and maybe God did not fulfill his end of the bargain? Or did I add a cup to the recipe that God had given to me, and cause it to turn out wrong?

I think it was the latter.

So the next time that God tells you that you're a genius, and to do something, don't be such a genius that you change the recipe that he gives you. You may be a genius, but he is still smarter than you. You only show how dumb your are, when you try to add to the plan.

Thank God that life is so much easier now. I sit around lick myself and sniff butts all day long. Who can ask for anything more?

A Way to Pray

Fasting

Jesus himself said in the Gospels that fasting is one of the most powerful forms of prayer there was. He prayed and fasted, prayed and fasted. But not only him however, people have fasted since the earliest ages. Bottom line is that it works.

I have written about this elsewhere, but something that has always fascinated me, is that few people are aware that many of the Drug Cartel leaders are actual Satan worshippers! It stuns me that high level law enforcement keeps this from the common people.

In Florida, people actually fast and pray over drugs coming into the nation… freaky!

I do know that when you fast, it changes the way you think. It is about you focusing more on the spiritual for comfort, than the physical. There are many different forms of fasting, So for this, just keep in mind that one key fact. You are focusing more the spirit for comfort as opposed to the physical.

Try to skip lunch one day this week as a start. You will be amazed! If you skip it because you are busy, you don't even notice. But watch when you do it to augment the spiritual over the carnal! You'll be hungry enough at 1:00 to eat a cow!

A Parting thought

Shelly Davila so we are at soup plantation and the tables around us are packed. Sean sits down and his chair makes a fart noise (or so he claims) and real loud joshua says "Daddy why did you fart?" The people around us started laughing and sean tried to explain it was the chair. I don't think anyone bought it. Lol

A Chapter from “Interview With a Vampire Slayer”

Chapter 27

Go There

stand in my way
stop me from wrongdoing

but only if you love me

A Beginning Thought

Each Day is a gift to you from God, make it blossom and grow it into a thing of beauty

A Revelation

Go to St. Gerards
"Pull…" is what my gut was doing. Pulling me towards St Gerards that morning. Weird, but I have learned to go with it in life.

Context
I was torn in the morning about several things, about where I should go, about what I should do, how I would do this for my family, how I, I, I, I, I.

The funny thing is that I really believed that I was working for the Lord, what I was doing was really for him, but I was working so hard at it, that I had unwittingly fallen in the "I-Trap"

It was 6:45 AM and there were 10 people there praying.

They were 10 people whom God cared about and died for just as much as he did for me. My desperate search to serve God, to please God over the past week had caused me to lose sight of the reason we serve him. Even if our agenda is the same as his, once it becomes about just that, and not his people, the true meaning is lost.

I was pulled there that morning because God wanted to remind me, to open my eyes to the fact that it is not about "Me" , even if "Me" is all about serving him. Because that takes serving him, and puts him into a "Me" box.

As soon as I decided to stop looking for answers, and pray for those people there … that those 10 people would find the answers they were looking for that day, I had peace. Funny how that works.

Interview With a Vampire Slayer

Better Than Cheetos

They were better than Cheetos in a snowstorm. The way the warm yellow powder lined your teeth, in case you got too lost, so that way the helicopters can spot you. It was definitely a much more efficient rescue method than St Bernards, those big giant dogs that slobbered all over you upon the rescue. Freezing to death would be almost preferable.

Yeah, Cheetos were the way to go alright, Ishmael thought as he lie back against the cave wall, where he had found shelter from the raging storm. It was brutal out there, and the vampires were after him.

He had angered them, and the pack was in full pursuit. All of them had joined forces against the boy who was determined to bring their antics to public light. Many told him that he was foolish, but they missed the point. At least he was doing something, while everyone else just sat back and did nothing.

It did not matter if it would work. It was not about success, it was about his soul not atrophying to the point of spiritual appendicitis from not being used. Most of the people who ignored the vampires did not even know where their soul was any more. A friend of his thought that he had found it behind the couch once, but it had only turned out to be a piece of old popcorn. Bummer.

The boy had "Cried Vampire" to many people sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States and they ignored him.

On December 16th, a house was to be sold that was illegally foreclosed on. The "Exact words of "T.Maggic" on behalf of the CA Attorney General, Ed Brown were:

" We appreciate being informed of your perspective in this important area. Many difficult challenges lie ahead, and the attorney general believes that the individual citizens will play an

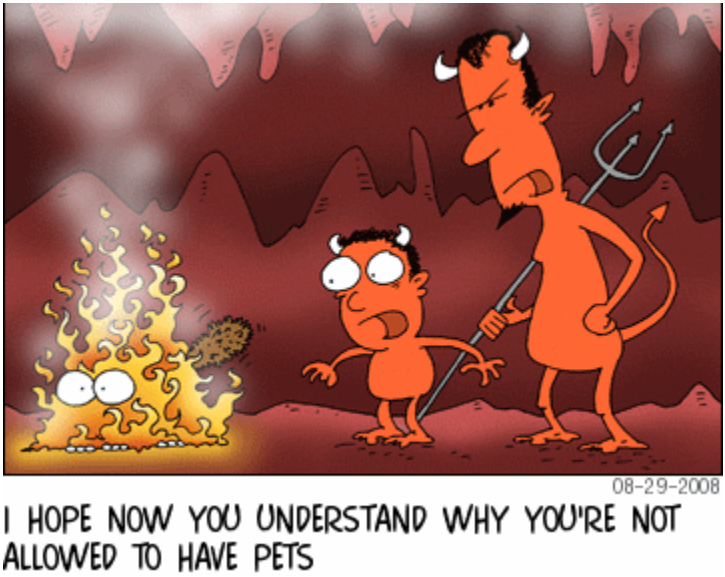
invaluable role in guiding his office's efforts to meet those challenges."

"Again, thank you for sharing your comments and views expressed in your correspondence. We always appreciate hearing from citizens on matters of public concern."

What? Imagine that, he had just been given a figurative middle finger by a vampire.

Shortly after, Mr. Brown went on to become the governor elect of the great state of California. Congratulations Mr. Brown!

A Parting thought



APPENDIX A

Real Questions

Appendix A is a series of questions, that I have come across over the years, that I thought – not to answer so much, as give room for thought on.

Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?

I would imagine a combination of our own apathy, until the event occurs, and just a certain random order to nature, that is not only there, but necessary as well. It is ruthless and heartless to an extent, but it is because God gave us the gift of free will. This gift opens us up to so many amazing things happening in our lives, and they do. But if this world is ours to enjoy, then there is always a balance, and as amazing the journey that occurs as we sweep across this world, the balance must come. Just as many terrible things can and must happen, this is the price of our free will.

I personally believe that it is all connected – no man is an Island, as Thomas Merton once said. We are a community, and yes Cain, we are our brother's keeper. We are community and what occurs in some village in Sri Lanka, has just as much bearing on life here in America, as does anything else, through the cosmic behind-the-scenes battle, between light and darkness.

Why are people starving – because we hoard all the food to ourselves in nationalistic attempts at making the individual nations number one, instead of coming together.

Why did little Zabrina die such a terrible death 4 years ago? My 4 year old student who died of a very rare and sudden intestinal condition? Because as much as I hate the random factor in my life, she had to. If there is going to be a possibility that she can be the first female president of the United States, then there has to be an equal possibility that she can die a terrible death before her time.

The odds of me knowing the first female president are just as outlandish, as me knowing a beautiful young girl who would die so terribly. We as the masters of nature that God created, often times forget that although we are the "Zenith of the circle of life" here on earth, we are a still a part of it.

It is why we need to be a community – because life does suck at times – and no matter how hard we try, we cannot fix it. BUT, we

can be there for one another. We can show love and support through terrible times. We can share our food with starving nations, rather than throw away our left over Happy Meals.

But there-in lies the beauty of God, he does not take away the random nature of our existence and the possibility of all the bad that can happen, thereby maintaining free will. When it does happen, he gives us ways to deal with the pain, even more importantly, he gives us ways to turn some small part of that into something amazing for other people.

Our pain at the random nature of existence can never be totally assuaged when the storms come, but it rains on both the just and the unjust. Just as the same sun rises on both as well. When it rains on the just, they can use that rain to build something. You can take your loss, and use it to make the lives of 20 other people better somehow. Does that really justify the loss? Of course not. But we are at least given the ability to pretend. We can use that pain to become great.

Is Homosexuality A Sin?

OK, this is a tough one, not because of the morality of the issue, but the definition of "Sin." There is no doubt whatsoever that the bible says in several places that it is a sin – but it also says that eating non-kosher foods is a sin, and I do that every day. We must keep in mind that the bible was written in a time long ago – and it was filled with rules that were meant to build up the lowest of all the nations, into God's people. They were going to have MUCH tougher laws than other nations, if they were to become the best. And keep in mind that at the time, they were very primitive.

Sociologically speaking; did homosexual practices at the time build the community into what God envisioned for it, or pull it away? The answer is obviously pulled it away – so at the time, YES, it did go against God and it was a sin. Not because the urges made you a child of Satan, but because it was highly individualistic and self-serving in nature, and went against the master plan that God had for his people.

In Pagan religions of the time, homosexual acts were practiced hand in hand with worship of temples prostitutes and acts of child sacrifice. We are not talking about a healthy professional couple living in West Hollywood, that goes to church every Sunday.

What about today however? Does it build or tear the fabric of society? Who can say? But what is the definition of a "Sin."

If someone is gay, and that pulls them and others away from God, well, 2+2 still seems to equal 4, does it not? But what about situations when this does not pull them and others away from God's love? Who knows, we can only see what is in front of our eyes.

I do not believe that any loving healthy relationship in the context of modern society is wrong. Are some people born gay, probably; do some turn gay for other reasons, probably. In either case, if a straight person is leading a promiscuous lifestyle that is centered around them and their immediate carnal needs, over spiritual needs, then of course that is wrong. So of course it is the same for a gay person, give me a

break! But if a relationship is one that puts the spiritual before the carnal, the love before the hate, then how can you fault it?

Really, it is rare enough in any couple, so why hate on it when you see it. Now – sex shops that smell like bleach and have guys in leather studs, greeting you at the door, well obviously. Relationships that cheapen sex – well obviously…

But even more important in the end – why does it bother some so deeply? An example is the preacher Fred Phelps in Kansas. He is the one who pickets the Military funerals and has entire church whose cornerstone is hatred of homosexuals.

Many do not know that his son is gay. While many view him as a terrible man, I think of how much pain he must live in. How much pain must a main be in, to do to such lengths to cause that much pain to others, in order to soothe his own. It is just so sad.

Why Did Micaela Die?

I can talk a lot of stuff, but what about my own dear sweet baby girl. This is a letter I wrote to her a year ago. No, she was not born, she was in my wife still, but she was so real to me, so real indeed, and I will never forget that day, as long as I live.

I have to be clear on this one – my wife is not fond of this piece. We had more than one miscarriage and we go back and forth as to whether this takes away from our two kids who are here, as well as two prior miscarriages. But these are supposed to be "Real" questions, and this was one of the hardest ones I ever asked in my life. To not include it would be cowardly on our parts.

****

My Dear Sweet baby Girl,

It is strange, but now I think that no one will ever understand your loss to me quite fully, not even your mother. Insane as it may be – I think you pain me, more than her. They say there is no pain like the loss of a child, and I can understand what they mean by that now. You see, I have learned through you, that life begins at love. You have been as alive to me, as any of my real children could have been.

I know I will never hold you, be a good parent at times, a bad parent at times. But that does not mean I will never hold all those things for my Micaela in my heart, and cherish their memories as if they actually happened.

You see my sweet girl – there was a time in my life that was scarier than a person should ever see, and like a little angel you came and gave me hope in that time. So many will say you never even existed, but you were more real to me, by the hope that you gave me for a time, than anyone will ever understand. You gave me more hope for a brief glimmer in my life, when I needed it most, than any "Live" human being I have ever known.

No my little girl – you were 100% real to me, and I will always miss you like you were born. I love you so much – I could never have made it through this time without you. I believe that somewhere up there in Heaven you are real too, no one could be loved as much as you – (Even if you technically did not exist for half of that time), and not be real.

Thank you for the hope that you gave your Daddy when he needed it most. I will always love you, always cherish you, and this will always be your day to me. You never had a birthday, and we don't know the day you died, but I know today is the day that I found out you had left us, and this will always be your special day to me.

I am just so thankful for the short time that you stayed with me through my fears. So thank you little baby-doll. A year from now, we will probably be holding another little girl, not you, but I promise you, that I will always hold you in my heart.

Love,

Your Daddy…

****

Why did it happen? Was it random - can I say – and even if I did know "Why" – would that give me peace, probably not. But what does give me peace is God's loving embrace, through the pain. My Grandfather-in-law, once said about his son (My wife's deceased father, who died when she was seven) – that you never stop crying, it simply gets longer between the cries.

I'll never not be sad when I think of Micaela, and what could have been – but, the sad is not as often, and when it is, it does help me to embrace the light that I see so much more. Micaela did not go away, so that I can become a better man, full of love and light for those around me – but it did result in that.

So when I think of "Me" I can never really say how her departure made the world a better place. But when I think of those around me, those affected my love, life, light and radiance that I hold on to with such dogged determination since her leaving – I can honestly say, that my little girl affected more people in an amazing way, than most people who ever lived. I guess that is how I was able to pay her back for all she did for me.

Do Dogs Go To Heaven?

Heck, why would they need to, they live their entire lives in heaven, in the moment, not a care in the world – and of course, just like us they never appreciate it. Dogs know what heaven is – relationship. It is the only animal that prefers the company of man to its own species, how interesting is that? Kinda makes me think of God a bit, someone who would give his only son, to man.

I cannot really see them going to heaven, that is kinda silly in the end. But just like any loved one, even though they are no longer here, don't we carry them around with us forever. I joke around about my first dog, Charr, being up there, driving God crazy, but I don't really believe that. But I loved that big dog so much, that she will always be a part of me.

Maybe that is what it is about in the end. An animal is not a complete soul, as created by God, but they add something so special to ours, when we love them. Although they don't have the ability to become the spirit that we are, what amount of love and spirit that they have, is added to us in our lives; so that even when they are gone, they stay with us. They are not capable of staying on after death alone, but they can stay on as a piece of us.

So yes, I do think that dogs do go to heaven, just not in the same way as us.

Why Does God Want Us To Glorify Him, If He Does Not Have An Ego Problem?

Is God a person like us – or is he more? Is he constrained by bodies, space, and time like us, or is he more? Is he constrained by an identity that is messed up like us – or is he bigger than all that. Look at the ways in which we best glorify God – do they only glorify him, or do they make us the types of people who glorify each other?

In the end, does glorifying God, really just bolster his self-image, or does it actually raise ours. Is he a crazy Mommy Dearest parent, or is he a slick parent, who tricks us into bettering ourselves?

I still remember my catechism as a kid – man was created to glorify God. But why?

What is it to glorify God? Is it to follow the blueprint that Jesus laid out for us in the gospel? Is it to love each other and do goodwill towards man? Is it to be good and decent – and let our physical journey match our spiritual journey as well?

When I hear that question, it makes me think that we don't give God enough credit for being smarter than ourselves. Why were we created – to become like God. Wow, that just kinda rocks my world.

No, it isn't God who has the ego problem, it is us. Ha- but is he the one who gave it to us – is it a part of our beings from the beginning? Theologians much more intelligent than I are split on that one, so I'll just leave it alone. However, look at the first three commandments.

The initial commandments are totally based around honoring God and that which is God above all else. 1) I am the Lord your God 2) You shall have no other god's before me 3) Do not make idols 4) Do not take my name in vain 5) Keep the Sabbath Holy

They are there first for a reason, and people lose sight of that. God does not want us to honor him for himself – but for OUR benefit. The other 7 commandments are impossible to keep, if you do not do

those three first! But put those three first – make sure to follow those three as much as possible, throughout your daily existence – and the rest flows so easily.

But how much easier said than done is that? To put God first at all times, means stripping yourself of your vanity. I don't know about you, but that is still a daily battle for me.

Why do our prayers not work to heal sick people all the time? Why does God pick and choose who he heals?

My Mom once said that God answers all prayers with "Slow" "Grow" or "No."

Is that really the case? Does God pick and choose who he heals? I often wonder, do we pick and choose? I once knew a preacher who had the gift of healing, until one day, he believed it was actually "Himself" who did the healing – that day, he lost the gift, for it to never return.

Often times, whenever I hear stories of people being healed, especially in the Bible, it is not the result of a prayer for that person. Even today, it is rarely that. It usually is the result of both the sick person, and those praying for them to glorify God– not to ease their suffering. It is when the prayer is for the building up of the Kingdom of God, not an individual or particular group/ family unit.

One prayer, for the individual however, that I have NEVER heard of going unanswered – when prayed from BOTH sides, is one of comfort. A gift of joy, peace and acceptance.

Does this suck – yeah, I would say so. Who wants to have peace and joy, with a tumor growing inside of their abdominal cavity – I want to be healed! Of course, this is only what I have seen, so are the points I make. I know my Uncle Jim had a miraculous healing of his bladder cancer, that the doctors could not explain – other than his wife's prayers (And herbal meds). So, who can really know – I can only tell you what I've seen.
Is God a person like us – or is he more? Is he constrained by bodies, space, time like us, or is he more? Is he constrained by an identity that is messed up like us – or is he bigger than that?

I do know that God will always get his purpose achieved. I know that often times, that glorifying him has gotten people healed in the process. You know, I am happy for that alone.

Do Miracles Happen Anymore?

Why do people say that miracles no longer happen? I think that is the most absurd thing that I ever heard in my life. We live in a time where there is both more good and bad in the world than ever before. Miracles in the Old Testament always resulted in a change of heart. People look too much at the event, and not enough at the context of it. WHY did the miracle happen? Why don't more happen since Christ "Supposedly" gave us the keys to the kingdom?

Maybe they do – maybe it is exactly because of that gift – that they are just so streamlined, so efficient, that they are hard to see. Maybe the biggest and most amazing miracles of all, are the hardest and most impossible to see.

EG: MY pastor's Prius (As much as I hate to admit this) is probably faster and than my first car, an old Chevy Caprice with a 305 v8 engine. It is simply more efficient. However, does it "Feel" more powerful? Does it have that same 8MPG gurgle as the old style carburetor? Does it "Sound" like the monster mine did, when the muffler was broken?

No, so who would assume it is faster, only an idiot –or someone who can see the forest through the trees.

Miracles resulted in a change of heart when they occurred. *However - Miracles these days usually are a change of heart.* They are a Prius – they skip everything else and go right to the heart of the matter. The theologian, CS Lewis (And I could not agree more) said that the devil's greatest victory is that he has convinced the world that he does not exist. I wonder if that can be added to – that he has convinced the world that the miracles, that are so much more abundant than they ever were, simply don't even happen anymore. Because they have a quiet engine, that gets 50MPG, rather than an Ozone killing monstrosity that gets 8MPG?

Is Christianity better than Buddhism? Is Buddhism wrong, or a sin?

I am not a wimp, but I am not stupid either. I am not touching the subject of Islam in this book for one reason – it would be contrary to the point of the book. Too many people from both religions have heated mental views on both sides of the spectrum, due to international politics. Both religions worship the same God (Ironic). Buddhism however – now that I can have a field day with.

I am not saying Buddhism is right or wrong, after all, I am not saying anything, only asking…. But I would ask if Buddhism is weak? Does anyone know anything about Buddha – other than made up stories? I mean – with Jesus, his stuff (Even if you think it is made up) was at least chronicled right away. There is not a single written document of Buddha, until at least 500 years after his death. But hey, one can say the same thing about the stories of Genesis as well.

But all I can say is something that I believe was spoken to my heart one day, when in a spiritual experience.

"Buddha is only an illusion of power" I am real power. I not only defeated Satan, but I chased him down to his own backyard to do it. He trembles at my name –and ONLY at my name.'

I don't know – what do you think? Maybe nothing really is wrong with Buddhism, but I think I'll stick with the guy who said that to me, instead of the one whom the vast majority of its Gods don't even like humanity.

Are there other Gods?

Well, duh? What do you think? I mean, nearly every culture has recorded histories that have accounts of miracles, and unexplainable events that are not related to Yahweh. The Old Testament has myriad stories about them. Does anyone out there "Really" believe that whole BS line about when God says created in "Our" image, that he is using something called the "Royal" case? Come on, isn't that just a little too Mary-Lou Retton like? Those type of mental gymnastics are insulting to the simple power of Yahweh. God is simple in all he does – what would we have to do to come up with what the word "We" means?

Many Buddhist clerics have had very real spiritual experiences, communications with the other side, just as some Christians, Jews and Muslims are privileged to have as well. The difference is who you are talking to.

Are they talking to lesser Gods? Who knows? Are the Buddhist God's fallen angels? Who knows?

In the end – does it matter? In the end, whether Yahweh is some Don Corlenoe' of the God's who is at the top, because he is the ultimate and one true God, amongst many pretenders, or he is simply the only one, who knows.

But once again, why does it really matter? He gave us the blueprint to accessing all his glorious power at any given time – yet we spend all day thinking about how he got that power, instead of using it. Kinda stupid when you think about it….

Is it a lack of faith when you take meds like Prozac and Xanex?

I don't know. Is it a sin to die on a cross for the sake of humanity? Did Jesus commit suicide, sounds goofy doesn't it?

Maybe drugs like Prozac and Xanex – while admittedly manufactured by the devil himself, are systemic of a bigger problem. Why are people on them – usually for one of three reasons – 1) Events in their lives that are completely beyond control and have nothing to do with their spiritual abilities, are crushing them like a ton of bricks. 2) They tend to think of their own happiness first, and therefore can never find peace, because they are totally removed them any source of joy. 3.) They are types who think too much of others. When you think too much of others, how can you not be depressed or anxious? Most people are not happy in this world these days.

So is it wrong to rely on medicine to find joy, over God? I don't know. I think that what I would ask instead is how to change my focus in life so that one day, you no longer need them.

It is ironic – it would seem to me, that just as many people need meds because they are saints, as those who take them because they are sinners. Ironic.

I think it is a huge victory of the devil that he has gotten so entrenched into the world, that good people have to go to him for help, because the leaders of the church cannot offer same comfort as the devil.

Are psychotropic drugs around because of weak people, or weak leaders? That guy on TV, can get old ladies to give $50 without a second thought. But why can't he use that same ability to convince them how much Jesus loves them.

It is because so many of our spiritual leaders are not in love with Jesus. If they "Love" him, but are not "In love" with him – how can they truly convince us that he is "In love" with us? We believe in him, but he is more of a mistress than a spiritual spouse.

It breaks my heart to see it. We need drugs these days, but not because we are messed up, but because it has become so impossible for us to believe that he loves us, so we have to ease the pain, which comes from the void caused by that.

But who has that much courage, to ignore the example of number-hungry leaders and admit to God, that that is all they really want to know. Does he love them, as much as they want to love him? What if he says no? What if he is not there? No, it is way safer to fill the void in other ways, and I can neither blame nor judge for that.

When Will God Give Me A Direction In Life? Just Give Me A Sign!

All day long I cry out to you Lord, show me what to do, how to do it? I'll do it. This is exactly why I am not here to answer any questions. Because I have to ask – why are we even asking what to do? He already told us what to do; most of us just don't like it. It is too simple, not in our comfort zones, and not always socially acceptable.

I know the times in my life, when I had peace; relationship and joy have always been when I have followed the plan. When I am making new plans, improving on it –that is when I am 10 shades of messed up!

What is the plan – let's back up a bit first. I am still reeling at how messed up my world can be, when I use the plan he gave me to improve my own plans (Which I tend to do on a daily basis) as opposed to using my plans to fulfill his. The ironic thing is that on the outside, they are nearly identical courses of action. But one will be blessed, and one will be cursed from the inception.

It is like Cain and Abel – They both did the same thing, but one went up and one went down!

What is his plan? Why does he hide it from us?

Does he hide it from us? Or do we just refuse to open our Bibles? He even gives it in four totally different contexts, so depending on who I am really screwing things up on that day –I can always manage to get it, if I am attempting to be open. The four different blueprints are labeled Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

WHAT DO I DO TODAY GOD – HOW! Oh – right there on Page one. Love the Lord your God above all else. Love your neighbor as yourself. But I did all that, why are things not working out the way "I want"?

Oh yeah, Love your enemy – why would you even say that God? - THEY ARE MY ENEMY! Oh, even the devil loves his friends. What – you died just as much for that evil jerk as you did for me?

Don't you realize what he did to me? Don't you realize how evil he is? Don't you, don't you, don't you? What – by exacting my own revenge on him, I take away yours? Are you trying to tell me that being a vigilante is an even greater crime than the one it is retribution for? - "Justice is mine" says the Lord.

Oh, feed the poor, well, maybe tomorrow. What, take care of aliens and widows, yeah, but I am too busy with MY PLANS!

OK, I get the point God, I'll just shut up now, do something nice for someone and open my heart to forgive that person who you died for, just as much as me.

Are We in the Final Days?

I was invited to a men's conference that was about being a man in the final days. It was pretty amazing how it made me think of all my inadequacies. The funny thing is how much I can learn from my wife on this. She is way more neurotic than I am, worries about EVERYTHING and then makes stuff up, that I cannot even fathom. Whereas, I am never terribly worried, God will provide, bla bla bla. I am the Alferd E Newman of Christ – "What, me worry?"

But you know what – Shelly does not care about going to Heaven. She does not do what she does right in the world, so that she can sit back and sip communion wine by the Pearly Gates, with cute wings and a halo. She does it because it is right. I have been told by many people that I have a strong faith. My faith is nothing compared to my wife's, even if she does worry like a mouse dipped in catnip!

But that is why I question the final days. Why does it matter? I am not saying if we are or if we aren't. I am asking why we should care so much. If I think about stuff like that, I find myself in a very self-centered place, one where I am in "I" mode, as opposed to "i" mode.

If we are truly following the instructions of Christ, should we not be living every day, as if it is both the beginning of a lifelong journey, and at the same time – the very last day we had? When I am "Gold," when I am really on my "A-Game" are those days. Those days in which I am not thinking about if Christ is coming tomorrow, or in 10,000 years; but acting and thinking as if he is already here. Because he is.

How Old is the Earth?

Once again – you got it – why does it matter? Is this an issue of the mind, or is it an issue of the spirit? The funny thing is that I personally doubt it is either one. Carbon dating has been proven unreliable time and time again for things of this magnitude – and the lineages given in the Old Testament that give the 10,000 years mark, are questionable for many reasons.

But in the end who cares? Does knowing how old the Earth is feed some poor starving kid in China? Does it take away time from feeding that poor starving kid in China? In the blueprint that Jesus gave us in the Gospel, did he say to feed the poor, or to carbon date fossils?

I personally love the story of creation – and I love the fact that it shows just how amazing and diverse Christianity is and can be! Think about it – you have people who will lock on to the "Fact" that Adam and Eve were two individual people created by God – period. You also have people who will lock on the "Fact" that Adam and Eve were the dawn of humanity, the natural process created by God that has been going on for several of "God's Days" which are eons.

Isn't that so totally amazing – how can you deny the power of Christ when you read that? That two sets of people with such TOTALLY different right and left wing mindsets, can both agree that Christ loves them!

Once again – when I falter in life, is when I forget that my agenda is only in place to fulfill God's – and start to think that his is in place to fulfill mine. It is wrong for me to think about how old the Earth is – I don't think so. But what amazes me most, is when I see how different people see it – and how God can bring such different people together under one roof.

Of course there are "Fake Christians" who will malign each other, but I ignore them, they are not Christians – they are satanic manifestations, wolves in the fold, best to be ignored.