

The Beginning of the Beginning



Once upon a time, in a land that may seem far, far away, you were a child. Not just a little adult. You were a child.

And as hard to believe as it might be for you, you heard “Love You!” so much each day that it may have been one of the first sentences you spoke. You listened to your life with your heart.

And not only did you listen to life with your heart, you listened to life for God. Every time you reached up, there was a hand for you to hold. And each time you held a hand, it was like holding the hand of God.

So with a heart full of love and a hand held by God, you found it relatively easy to be good and to use your hands to be good to others. You treated others like you wanted to be treated and were somewhat mystified when some kids didn’t.

Well, as a good child, rooted by your heart full of love and guided by God’s hand, your attitude was positive and realistic. You learned that cars run over even good boys and girls when they walk out in the street without looking both ways. So you decided it was best to look both ways not just at intersections of streets, but at crossroads in life. Other children were different from you, but that was okay because they were kids, too. You looked both ways, not just your way.

So with your attitude looking both ways, your heart over-

flowing with love, and God's hand holding and guiding you down the good paths of life, your spirit jumped for joy when it was playtime. You knew that to enjoy playtime, you had to play nice. So you did and shared your love, and held the other kids' hands, and treated them the way you wanted to be treated, and always looked both ways before crossing the street.

Then something happened. You grew up. And you decided that you couldn't be a child anymore. That you had to act grown up. And so you left behind your lessons learned and sat at the feet of a new teacher. This new teacher taught you that revenge is stronger than love, and only the weak hold hands. You learned that good is relative so get all the goods from your relatives and friends that you can. You bought the lie that attitude is supposed to strike fear in the hearts of your competition and since life is a competition, playing nice is for sissies. So you bottled up your spirit and said, "Lead or get out of the way, because I'm coming through."

But now something else has happened to you. The new teacher's lessons have left you joyless, restless, and heartless; distressed, dissatisfied, and despairing; unhappy, uncomfortable, and uncaring. You don't enjoy playing by the new teacher's lesson anymore, just making a living. You know there's more, but where? You want to make a life, but how?

Please know that you're not alone.

Your story is my story. That's how I know your story so well.

And that's why I wrote this book. I found myself in a critical, spiritual condition that affected me physically, mentally,

emotionally, and socially. I chose not to just make a living, but to make a life. My pathway of healing and wholeness was to become a child again.

Now don't think for a second I just sat down and thought of this one day. I wish I were that smart, but I'm not. I learned it from our daughters. I observed that listening to life like a child was the road to making a life, not just a living when my wife and I had our two daughters, Rebekah and Elizabeth. At first, I saw them as projects, little adults to be shaped and molded into mirror images of my wife and me. Pretty soon though, I figured out these two incredible girls are their own persons with indomitable spirits and that I could learn a great deal from them. The roles were reversed. The students became the teachers. And I discovered the joy of listening to life and making a life, not just a living.

My journey took a decided turn down, all the way down to becoming a child again. Not to being childish, even though I am sometimes, but child-like. There's a huge difference and you'll discover it through these strategies and stories.

Each section of this book represents a mile marker for me, a set of lessons or strategies that keep me moving forward each day toward listening to my life like a child and making a life, not just a living. I want to share them with you because, well, that's what children do when something good happens to them—they share the goodness, knowing in some innate way that by sharing it, the goodness multiplies.

And that's my prayer for you: that your goodness multiplies.

That you become once again the incredible, beautiful, marvelous, wonderful child that God created you to be. That you listen to your life like a child and make a life, not just a living.

So have fun reading this book! Don't get in a big hurry with it, either. Each strategy/story is short enough for you to read pretty quickly, but the goal here isn't to finish the book. Your mission is to allow yourself to be transformed by God. That's why there are three "Listen to Your Life" reflection items after each one. Some are questions. Some are activities. All of them are oases for your journey, places where you can sit down, think, feel, discern your spirit and God's Spirit, and discover what God is up to with you. But transformation of your life—learning to listen to life like a child and make a life, not just a living—is the destination.

You'll probably ask more than a few times, "Are we there yet?" That's okay. You've traveled far, far away from the land of once upon a time when you were a child. Getting back takes a while. Moving forward isn't all that easy. But, man, is it worth the trip!

So be kind to yourself. Don't expect too much. Just enjoy the journey. And you might want to take along a companion. Get a friend or two a copy of this book and share the journey. Having someone to travel with helps the time pass and it keeps you accountable for reading, reflection, and rewards.

And thank you so much for letting me journey with you. You bless me by inviting me along.

Have fun!