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Whatever It Takes

Ready:

“I long and yearn for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cry out for the Living God.”
-Psalm 84:2

Set

A close friend who has known me for 20 years recently approached me with a comment and question that surprised me. He said, “I’ve been watching you closely for the past year, and you have changed. I see transformation in your life. What are you doing?” I was totally humbled and deeply thankful that someone saw a change. But I also quickly reminded myself that the positive change was not the result of anything I had done, but of what God had done in me. It was a tribute to the power of His transforming work. After explaining to my friend about a serious daily commitment to the morning disciplines of reading, studying and praying the Word of God, he asked for more details. He said, “Whatever it takes, I want to do it in order to experience God’s transformation in my life, too.” I encouraged him that the key was becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ, not just learning more about Him.

As this friend and I continued talking over a period of several months, he developed his own spiritual disciplines, and, sure enough, the Lord began transforming him. It wasn’t just a schedule he copied, but a spiritual commitment he made not to drift along in his faith. There was no more just trying to squeeze God in sometime during the day, but, instead, carving out prime time for the Lord. It became a rhythm, not a routine and moved from duty to desire. And just last week he said that he’d been a Christian for more than 23 years and had never experienced God’s presence, power and transformation like he is now. I am so fired up for him!

As we were recently celebrating his journey, he asked me another defining question: “When did this change begin in you, and what was the catalyst?” I didn’t answer his question right away on the phone, but took some time to think about it. The next day, the Lord revealed to me that my transformation had started on our FCA trip to South Korea in the summer of 2007. We’d taken a team of 21 FCA staff and coaches to do a sports camp for 175 campers in South Korea. And, it was during that trip that God opened my eyes to a deeper walk with Him.

In South Korea, we spent almost three hours at each camp meeting with the kids. We would worship, pray, worship again, have a sermon, worship more and then pray for an extended period of time at the end. It was intense! And it was there that I realized how much extended times before God soften the heart and prepare us to hear from Him. God desires for us to get into His presence and be aligned with Him, not every once in awhile, but daily. There is so much that battles against us to keep us from a posture of worship: the flesh, the world and the Devil. Our flesh thinks in minutes, not hours; the world tells us to do something productive with

our time and get stuff done; and the Devil whispers in our ear, “You are busy, and you don’t have that kind of time.”

But in Korea, I saw people (young and old) position themselves to hear from the Lord. I saw a 10-year-old boy cry out to God on his knees and lay prostrate for over an hour in prayer. Adults prayed over and laid hands on youth for hours. It was life-changing and convicting. To see others posture themselves in such a way to see, hear and experience God showed me clearly that it I needed extended times of worship and prayer. My life needed to change. My understanding of how to worship needed to change. As a result, my own commitment to prayer and worship was transformed.
As a committed competitor, I can work out physically for an hour and not even think about it. That comes easily and naturally. We do that because we love sports. We don’t measure the time because it is about the love of the game. But when was the last time your spiritual training felt the same way?

Have you ever considered that you have a natural desire to spend time with the Almighty? Within all of us, there is a joy and a deep desire to strengthen your relationship with Him. How are you responding to that? I know, for me, I want my spiritual life to be fiery, not feeble—powerful, not pathetic. Oswald Chambers once wrote, “Faith is the heroic effort of your life. You fling yourself in reckless confidence on God.” Are you willing to do whatever it takes to press in and pursue the Almighty so that you can have the best possible relationship with your Savior? It will be the single-most important thing you do to change your life!

Go

1. If a friend asked you what you are currently doing to develop spiritually, how would you answer? Would it be something he could emulate in order to bring transformation to his live?
2. When you read about the Korean camp and the extended worship times, how did it make you feel? Excited, intimidated, motivated? Why?
3. Read Psalm 84. How should we approach and pursue the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. What prevents you from getting to that level? Consider how the flesh, the world and Satan work in your life to keep you from experiencing the Almighty.
5. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to bring spiritual change to your life?

Workout

Psalm 15
Psalm 42:1-4
Psalm 84
Psalm 115:1-8
Matthew 5:6

Overtime

“Lord, I long and desire to be in Your presence, to experience Your touch, to hear Your voice. My entire being cries out to You, the Almighty. Living God, take me deeper in my walk. Reveal to me the depths of transformation that are possible in my own life. Help me to fall more in love with You so that my time with You will be natural and automatic—an overflow of my relationship with You. I realize that life-change begins at the foot of the cross. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.”

Bible Reference:

Matthew 5

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