

Moral Code or Treasure Map? Part 2 *Mid-conversation discussion with Wayne Jacobsen and Courtney from Austin, TX*

W: We're having conversations about the Bible and how to journey in Jesus and what this journey becomes as we learn to trust Him, follow Him and enjoy the wisdom He puts into our lives. So, here's picking up my conversation with Courtney.

C: ... and when I come to this place - I'm not sure how to move forward - this is where other Christians don't know how to operate in this relationship. So, this is the place where I will go and look in the Scriptures to help me figure it out and then we're back to this loop that started this conversation – this is what I've been doing for like 8 years.

W: Yeah, and maybe the problem is – is that I'm going to the Scriptures to try to figure it out and then the Scripture leads me to deeper level of confusion.

C: Yeah – ding, ding, ding – that's it! That's exactly what happens!

W: Yeah, because the trust doesn't derive from the Scriptures – it helps, I'm not saying it won't help – it does help, but Scripture says that Jesus (Heb 12), HE is the author and finisher of our faith - which is our trust. Faith and trust... In fact, I like trust better than faith. Faith is like a religious word to us now. It's like faith is a work.

C: Can you talk about that? Whether they're different or not.

W: We've taken faith out of relationship. We have faith in the Scriptures, we have faith in the doctrines, the dogma's that we follow – But faith is a word of trust.

What people will say, and this is one thing that God caught me – I used to say it all the time - we'd be praying for somebody and we say, "God we're just believing you to give Courtney the job she needs. We're believing you for that." And it's like – okay now we're believing God for an end that we want – are we really trusting God with Courtney?

If we just say, "God, lead Courtney where you want her. Provide all that she needs today to know you, to trust you, to follow you." That to me is a much better prayer. It's a much better way to think inside how trust happens. Faith is not something I give to God - trust is something God stirs in me.

And I always say to people – "You should trust someone to the degree that you know they would lay down their life for you." Which is a pretty big ask

So, if a guy on the street says, "Hey, Courtney, I'll give you a ride – trust me." Are you going to trust that? Of course not! You have no relationship with the guy. And to me that's where people get stuck with God – they have no relationship with Him.

So, when you say to "trust God" - they're saying, "What do you mean trust God?" I don't know – He's done me bad, if they think things in their life God caused, or they think God didn't answer a prayer they thought was important - and now they have no trust, and they have no knowing of God to let that trust grow.

To me, trust grows out of love – to the degree that I.... You know, Sara and I have 45 years of marriage - so, I trust that girl with just about anything. I can't even think what I wouldn't trust Sara with because she has demonstrated to me over and over again that she will lay down her life for me - she just will. She's not a selfish person, she doesn't fight for her rights in our marriage – and I hope that I'm that way with her. I'm learning to be that way with her.

So, I say the same thing about God. Jesus wants to teach us how loved we are and the more we know we're loved the more we'll trust. So, to go out and try to trust more is just silly because we can't trust more.

But the more I know He's with me and loves me and there's nothing happening to me that He's not bigger than and He doesn't have a way through – and He may not do it the way I want to do it, but He has a way. And when I see Him do that a few times my trust in Him grows. And when I see Him give me wisdom about something and then I'm in that situation and that wisdom does something that's fruitful for someone else – my trust grows.

So, it's **not** trust that we have to work on – it's, “Jesus, show Your love to me.” It's learning to live in His love, learning to recognize it, learning to see how He's loving me.

And if you go to the Scriptures to go – “Man, where can I learn about God's love in here – how's Jesus loving the woman at the well? How am I like the woman at the well? How's He loving Zacchaeus? How am I like Zacchaeus? How is God loving me in my brokenness and wanting to come and have fellowship with me?”

And that breaks the bondage. Not – “I've got to break the bondage so Jesus will spend time with me.” That's backwards! That's religious talk, right? He already loves you whether you know it or not – whether you're in tune with it or not.

And so, I would start at this part of your journey – I would be asking God – “Jesus, I want You to show me Your love today.” And when I read the Scriptures – I wouldn't be looking for answers – I'd be looking for “How is God's love revealed in this Book?” Even in the OT when God's doing really kind of nasty things to keep the story on track of redemption – they're saying – “His loving kindness is better than life.” That's OT language! They were seeing the severe God that scared them to death – but they were also seeing this loving God who is patient – His love endures forever. So, when I'm reading the Scriptures – I'm looking for love. That will help you.

And then in my life, I'm looking for love – I'm looking for – “God, how are You loving me today?” In whatever you're going through at work or whatever – you're thinking about “how is God's love making itself known?” When you lean into that space it grows. Your perception of it grows.

C: And then the result of that is more trust. So, trust is like a side effect.

W: *Trust* is the fruit. You water the Tree of Love and the fruit will be born. You'll grow in trust – you just will. That's how it's worked for me. I've tried to do faith for 42 years and it failed me. And then when I got convinced of God's love for me back when I was 42 years old, and my trajectory began to change and now I'm *growing in trust*.

Now there's lots of things that I don't trust Him about. I'm not perfect in this, but when I get in that space where, “God I don't trust you here” - and I know that because I'm not sleeping, because I'm thinking about stuff that I'm worried about or have anxiety in my gut - I just go, “Okay God, I don't trust You here. So, what is it about Your love I don't know that if I knew it, I would trust You here?”

And I find that over 8, 9, 10, 12 months of something - that all of a sudden, I'm not anxious about that anymore. That anxieties gone. Not because I fixed the anxiety, not because I quoted a bunch of Scriptures saying, “God's bigger than my worries, or God's got this” – it's not quoting Scripture – it's somehow my perception of His love grows enough that it encompasses the situation I'm in and now I'm no longer anxious because I trust Him with it and I trust Him with me. And I trust Him.

See religion taught me I couldn't trust God when I was making mistakes. Relationship trusts me as I especially can trust God when I'm making mistakes. God's bigger than my mistakes. God's bigger than my ignorance. If He's not bigger than that than I have no hope. But over 25 years, God keeps showing me - “I'm bigger than that. I'm bigger than what you misunderstand. I'm bigger than what you don't know and I'll nudge you into My reality.”

So, how do I lean more into that side of it - which is “I'm loved” - and less into this side of “I'm alone, I'm scared – oh God, I don't know what to do?” Less that – more of this.

And so, God help me lean into – and even if I don't know it yet in my heart of hearts – I can begin to say, and the self-talk can begin to change, “God I don't know how You are loving me today, but I know that You are because Your very nature is love. So, I want to see it as best as You'll let me see it today - as best as my eyes can see.” But I'm going to keep leaning into that space instead of - “No, it doesn't work, I'm not doing enough, I need to do more.....” All that religious-works-stuff will **not** feed the relationship.

C: Well, that's all you hear all day, every day...

W: So, stop those things – wherever you hear those things - stop listening to those things.

C: ... the only place because - I have a real problem trying to find community. So, you know I have to listen to a podcast, watch some sermons somewhere on YouTube – that kind of thing just to get any type of influx of Christian ideas at all. And it seems like that's all there is which is discouraging. And that's what makes me wonder whether I was wrong to leave church and all these things – now I wonder that and then I go sit in a sermon and just cannot do it... so then I say, "Nope, I have to ..."

W: Here's what you ought to know. The stuff that's easiest to find like podcasts and TV sermons - you know, people with the biggest books and the biggest sales often times – they're big because they feed that religious anxiety – they feed it. So, things like The God Journey, The True Face out of Arizona, there's other things to listen to – Richard Rohr, read Father Gregory Boyles Tattoos of the Heart - there's things that you can read and explore that help you lean into this space.

C: Okay, okay

W: People send me videos all the time. I'll listen to a video and the guy starts out good, maybe it's funny – but as soon as he goes to that religious stuff – I turn click off - I'm not feeding my heart with this stuff.

I find the fellowship I have or the things that I'll listen too or read - are things that *invite me* into that relational love. And as soon as I hear the guilt of "you're not doing enough" - I turn those off, because you can't, particularly in the earliest stages of this journey you hear that and you're going – "yeah, I know I don't do enough; I should do more.."- that feeds the flesh in us that wants to earn a relationship.

And so, it seems right - it seems like – "Yeah, I am that bad person – I need to do more." All that seems true, but it's **not** true. That's the lie, the lie of Darkness says, "You're not enough, you don't do enough, you don't care enough, you don't love enough" - that's the Enemy – he's the Accuser.

God is, "I love you Courtney, I care about you. I know you don't see Me as well as I want you to see Me and I want to help you grow in that journey." And when you read the Bible - read the Bible to explore that journey. Don't read the Bible for answers to questions. Don't read the Bible to give me what I should do about X, Y, or Z. Read the Bible to invite me into who God is.

And when I know the Jesus of Scripture, when I watch the way He treats people - then it's easier for me to understand Jesus speaking to me. So, when I hear "You know, you're not reading the Bible enough" my next thought is, "Did Jesus ever say anything like that to anybody? No, He didn't." And so, you've got to know the Jesus of Scripture well enough. Did Jesus ever have to say you have to go to a weekly meeting to be a Jesus person? He didn't say that. He didn't teach the boys to say that.

I think we woefully misunderstand who Jesus is. I tell people when they're going to read the Bible – why don't you read the gospels for like three years – just keep going over and over and over until you get a sense of who Jesus is in the Book **and** the sense of the voice of Jesus in you. Because the voice of Jesus is in you. And when those things come together – because what happens to so many is that we've got Jesus' voice connected to the religious voices in my life and that's what we've got to disconnect. He's not the religious voice in your life. He's the loving – the inviting to trust – He's that voice.

He says He's got you covered even when you screw up – "I've got you." Even when you've had a bad day, said a bunch of bad things – "I've got you." "It didn't change My love for you – that hasn't changed today."

C: It's so, weird because as much as I've studied and practiced Christianity – I feel like I'm at zero as far as the journey of love and trusting God. It's strange to me. I don't know that I clearly hear anything that sounds like that – like that loving, forgiveness – and maybe it's just like the Christian rhetoric and condemnation is just so loud I can't hear the voice of God but none of that resonates with me – I have no context for what you're talking about as far as God talking to me – or Jesus in me encouraging me like that.

W: And that's the most damning indictment of Christianity I know – that I can practice it for 30 some-odd-years and say – "I don't know this." But I've heard that from so many people.

That's basically what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3. He comes at him and says "Look you've got to be born again; you've got to start all over" – because he's a Pharisee. So, all that religious stuff you know which is all the Bible and it's all true stuff - but it's all been misinterpreted in a way that He's saying – "you've got to go on a different journey. You've got to follow the breath of the Spirit."

Courtney, I don't think you're as far off from it as you may feel like it talking to me as your processing all of this right here. I don't think you're as far off of it that you may think. But I do think that's what being born again means. It doesn't mean "we got saved, we got born again". It means that I begin to think in that different paradigm. I begin to think inside a loving Father and His voice will become clear. And you'll come to a point where you'll recognize – "Gosh, that's one of those religious voices." It's been guiding you – like I need an answer, I've got to go to the Bible and read more and ...

No, I just need to lean into Jesus more. I don't mean hours and hours of prayer – don't make it religious – just while you're going to work, while your combing your hair in the morning – while you're doing whatever you're doing – say, "Jesus what do You want to show me today? How is it that You want to let me live in You?"

And then find - and you'll notice there's books and things that will feed that and there's books and things that will **not** feed it, that will crush it. And so, you lean to, "Okay, I'm going to get into these things that help feed that part of my soul." Then you'll see it take over and then you won't be sitting here 5 years from now saying, "I don't know the whole Jesus trust thing inside of me." You'll go, "Oh my God, this is great!" And I'll say, "Yeah, I know it is."

C: Yeah, that would be great.

D: But it's a different way of living. And unfortunately, Christianity has taught us to be a good practitioner of a religion called Christianity and calls it 'the life of Jesus'. But 'the life of Jesus' is something very different unfortunately. It's "How do we know Him? How do we – it's John 10 – read John 10 if you want to – where it talks about My sheep know My voice, they know Me, they'll follow Me.

C: I was thinking of that Scripture yesterday.

W: See, when you said, "I don't know if I hear the voice of Jesus" – **that** was Jesus – leading you to a verse of Scripture that would be part of something we talk about today so that you could draw a line and say, "Ah, this is more than just Wayne. The Holy Spirit was already drawing me to this reality yesterday." He's been drawing you toward it your whole life – it's just the religious thing got so loud that that's what you're doing.

C: So those types of things happen often.

W: You just told me that that never happens.

C: Well, I'm thinking of something totally different. That's the thing that's confusing. Those little things - I don't know where I got this - God winks. It's like these little coincident, for lack of a better term. Those things happen often, but that doesn't foster – at least it hasn't yet, a sense of trust, or a sense of companionship with God.

W: Why not?

C: I don't know!

W: Why not? Because I think you dismiss them for these religious things you're supposed to do. God's winking at you – or God, you know – somebody talks about looking for God's fingerprints in your life because the relationship begins there. It's – I'm not in control of this relationship – religion teaches me that I am. Scripture teaches me that God is. That God's in control of this.

C: But, what does that mean, though?

W: That means that I don't get to decide how it happens. Instead of Wayne saying, "Ok, God I want this today." It's saying, "God what are You doing today. What are You giving me today?"

C: Because when you think of relationship you think of two people - so you're both in control of it - dictating the direction that it goes. So, I keep looking for that feedback from God – like, “Okay, we're doing this, right?”

W: Yeah – and all those little fingerprints or all those little winks are God saying, “Yeah, I'm doing this. I'm doing this Courtney.” Look for those and when you see them feel loved by them.

I'll give you a good example, I got an email this week from a lady who I was with four years ago - six months after her twenty something daughter had been killed in an accident, tragic accident and she was pretty down. And a friend of a friend asked if I'd meet with her because I knew her. And I met her and her husband at a restaurant in VA. And she wrote me just a week ago to tell me all that God had done from that conversation and beyond it.

One of the things she said was that shortly after that - they were coming into her house in VA - winter had come early, everything had died in the yard, except this – she's walking up her driveway and there's one little white daisy sitting in the flowerbed – and she thought, “man, how did that survive?”. She walked by it for 4-5 days and then she's thinking – “What does that mean? Does that mean something?” And so, she picks it and puts it in her kitchen. That flower lived in a vase until January from October.

And she finally over time began to see this is a gift – now she says this is a gift from her daughter – “this is exactly what my daughter would do to let me know that she's okay, she's fine, she's whatever.” Now I don't know that the dead is able to communicate to us - **but** would Jesus put a daisy in her life to invite her to that same conclusion – my daughter is fine; Jesus has got her. She said that every year but one, since then, a daisy shoots up in that part of the garden. And every year now when she sees it, she feels incredibly loved by God and feels incredibly great about her daughter being safe in Him.

Now that is something! She could have walked by that daisy – you know it didn't catch her eye - you know nothing happened and she would have missed it. I think there's lots of things like that in our life.

I think in my life if I catch 10% of what God's doing on a day – I'd think that would be probably pretty cool. Because I think God has just amazing ways to put His little fingerprints in us. But if we're not catching them – but when you start talking to me and go, “Well, that stuff happens to me a lot.” I'm going, “Yes it does!” I think that's great.

John 10 – I would read it for a week. I would just read John 10 and not read it saying – “Well, I don't know His voice so I'm not one of His....” because that's how the religious mind wants you to read it. What it's saying is “I'm teaching you this, I'm teaching you to be My sheep, I call you by name, you are Mine.” Focus on that, pray that back to Him, let that soak into your heart because that's where life is.

C: Well, this paradigm that you are in - I'm realizing that just my whole way of being is something that challenges my faith in general. How do you break from that given how pressing life is, the issues of quarantine and all these things that stir us up in negative ways that don't exactly put you in a posture of trials and faith and feeling like....

W: The questions has to go back to – “Doesn't He know? Doesn't He know you're in quarantine? Doesn't He know the challenges in your life? Doesn't He have a way of inviting you into that reality?”

And I think if we see it less as a – and this is where religion has warped us again – you know, if we make the right decision than everything changes overnight. No, it's like a.... it's not the on and off switch in your bedroom or your living room, it's a dimmer switch. So, I'm going to lean into this reality God's showing me and out of this reality.

And this is the bigger one right now – this religious thinking and this other is the smaller reality – but if I keep leaning here – it will grow. Like the astronauts who left earth's orbit to go to the moon. All the velocity they needed to get out of orbit, to get out the earth's gravity – but somewhere on their way to the moon – but the moons smaller it's got less gravity – but somewhere in that journey the pull of the moon become stronger than the pull of the earth. I think that's a great analogy.

The tide is here. The moon's gravity is on earth – you can go to the ocean and see it – right? That's what the tides are. It's the moon pulling on the waves of the ocean. But we don't feel it. We never feel it, but it's here – we can see it.

Now as you lean more into God's reality it's going to become at some point - and this is probably years away so don't be in a hurry – years away it's going to be easier for you to trust than not trust. Right now, it's easier to not trust. We all were there – I was there. It's easier to think what I can do and I'm going to save myself – that's always easier right now. Because that's the gravity that I grew up in, that's the world's way, one, and religion made that worse. Religion is still – it's about me doing for God, right?

But the life of Christ is Jesus doing with you, it's not for you, it's not you for Him. He wants to do with you - life. He wants to show you how to live inside His reality.

Some decisions He'll have for you and He'll make clear, some decisions He wants you to make. He doesn't care probably if you move to Austin or Louisiana or Virginia. It probably wasn't important to Him – "I'm going to be with you wherever you go – but this job looks good to you – so go there and see and if that's not it then you can explore something else." That's a really free journey.

It's not this narrow road where I've got to stay on this path of God's will every day. God's will is – the narrow road is not about that – the narrow road is about am I going to trust Him or am I going to trust myself. That's what makes the road narrow. It's not – "if I missed God and I moved to Austin and He really wanted me to be in Memphis and now I've ruined my whole life" – no, that's not possible.

C: Well, a lot of it is motivated by fear of danger – very real danger. And so at times like this where it feels like the country is stirring up and there's some very unsettling things going on – this is a case where I feel even more prone to doubt past decisions, doubt if God is there, doubt I'm right with God – so, all these things...doubt that if I did come into some sort of calamity or danger that I could handle it because in my mind I'm all by myself. But what your saying is that "Nope, God would be there and so, ...

W: He IS there.... even if you get coronavirus and you die. I mean Sara and I are in that boomer age group you know – we could get the coronavirus and die. But even if God's with us *through* it, God's with us *beyond* it. Whatever comes my way today I do what's prudent. We're pretty well hunkered down here because Sara has some respiratory issues that could make her a real threat - so were hunkered down, we're doing what's prudent but were not living in fear every day because even if we go home to Jesus through this I'm going home – it's fine – that's the better ride anyway.

C: Yeah – that confidence - I would love to have that confidence.

W: Well it starts in very small ways. It starts by recognizing – I mean I love that I bring up John 10 and you're going "I've been thinking about that yesterday" – that's fingerprints of Jesus, right? Because that's exactly where God's inviting you in. And because of your background, you've been invited into a lot of really, like Nicodemus, you've got a lot of religious crap – but you've also got the reality of Jesus underlining all of that.

I knew that when I first met you. There's Jesus in your heart and life - so it's not like it's all been bad. No, Jesus keeps trying to break through this religious crust and now I think we've got a little better picture to go, "Oh, I'm going to lean this way, I'm going to explore John 10, for like a week, or a month - I'm going to pray it, I'm going to talk to Jesus about it, I'm going to say "I want You to be my Shepherd and for You to lead me and guide me."

You might go to Ezekiel 34, God says to the shepherds of Israel "you've been faithless, worthless shepherds" – that's how it starts out. And then it gets to the end and He says, "so I will shepherd My own people and I will lead you to rest where you'll never need to be afraid again." Now those are verses as true today as they are when Ezekiel wrote them. I'd lean into those passages. That's how you'll begin to lean into this space and away from that religious kind of stuff.

C: And so, this idea of intimacy with God and God leading us - I really want to talk about that.

W: Don't make it more than it is. Don't make it like – "Oh, if I really get to intimacy with Jesus I'm going to wake up in the morning and sit down to breakfast and Jesus and I are going to have a conversation and then were going to do this, and then were going to do this."

It's not going to be that way because it's the transcendent God making His way inside creation. It's a big deal. It's huge. But it doesn't come like a human relationship. Intimacy is just – man, God put something in my heart today or I had this nudge in my heart to call someone today and I called them and they needed me at that moment and I go, "Oh, God that's awesome."

It's exploring how God just makes Himself known. And it's never certain, it's never 100%, It's not – I don't have conversations with God where I say this, He says that – I say this, He says this - it's not that way. It's - I hold things in front of Him – "God, I want some wisdom about this"- and I think about it for days, or weeks, and then I may be doing something totally unrelated – taking a shower or working outside and all of a sudden this thought comes to my mind and I say – "That's what I've been looking for! That thought right there!" - And it's not directly connected at Jesus I need this answer and Jesus says, "Ok, here it is."

C: What kind of confidence do you have to be able to wait?

W: Because He's always done it. I don't have real direction about travel in January, I don't – but I do some things that seem prudent. I had some trips in March I had to cancel and I didn't have real direction like I needed to be there then, like I normally have – but it's just that they've wanted me to come, so, yeah, I'll go. I've got room for that.

So, then I don't know what April was all about but I can look back at the whole four months and go – "That was incredible!" I was praying for something for which the Holy Spirit had no answers – so, He didn't give me one. So, I made up some answers on my own - because that's what I do - and I want to do less of that. If I don't have that nudge in the future, I'm not going to just schedule a trip – I'm just not.

C: So, I think fear is a real hinderance for me personally and I think that's probably what dampens everything I feel. Should I address that directly or is that something that just kind of goes away as I pursue

W: Well, I'd address it directly with Jesus. I'd just say, "Jesus, You know how fearful my heart is. You do." And then when you have a specific fear – "Jesus, I'm fearful that You really don't have my back and I can make a mistake and then it will ruin my life." Talk about it with Him. Invite Him into that fear and then hear what He would be saying to you about that.

If you don't know – talk to some people who might know – just saying you know what I think He's got your back. But He wants you to know it. He wants you to learn to lean into – don't believe it because I believe it. And you talking about it with Him and then He'll show you something – somehow, you'll read something or He'll just draw you to John 10 or whatever then just kind of go on this journey with Him and eventually you'll find, yes, the fear is gone.

But what we usually pray is "Oh, Jesus, take my fear away." And then we don't understand why He doesn't just take it away – "Why won't Jesus just take my fear away?" Because the fear is not the problem, the fear is only a symptom. It's like putting my hand on a stove and praying, "Oh, God, take the pain away." I don't want Him to take the pain away. The pain is what's going to allow me to respond in a way that will get my hand off that freakin' stove so I'm not going to get burnt more.

Anxiety and fear when we pray, "Oh, God, take my anxieties away." Same thing. I used to pray that all the time and it frustrated me that God would never do it. Now it's like, ok He was like saying. No, no don't anxiety tells you where you don't trust that gives me a chance to lean into that space with you so, come talk to me about what is it that you don't trust me to do.

And is that expectation fair or is it unfair. If I expect God to make sure there's never any painful stuff in my life - well, that's not a fair expectation. But only by exploring the stuff with God, with Scripture, with other brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit will He sort that out over time.

And that's what it means to wait on the Lord. Be still and know that I am God. Those are all those Scriptures that come back to me and go, "yeah that's how Jesus works." Meanwhile, "you know, I asked You for this right now -You didn't give it to me so, obviously You don't love me." That's the carnal mind. That's not the spiritual mind.

C: Hmm. Well, this did not go the direction that I expected...

W: It went a better direction.

C: It really did. This is the root of the problem for me and I realize the only reason I had all these questions about the word 'blessing' Because I was looking for some firm foundation in my understanding of Scriptures and then I would feel confident. Hmm. Okay, so we'll be talking again. Because...

W: I think this is often when people come to Jesus, they always have important theological questions right – and Jesus, like the woman at the well - when she finally figures out, that He was a prophet – she says, "Oh, so, our forefathers say worship on that mountain; and you Jews, you worship on that mountain." And He says, "The mountain doesn't matter – because whoever worships Him in spirit and in truth is" I think we have the wrong questions theologically because were trying to think inside that mindset. And so, when our hearts are open to love and trust - now we have a different set of questions and explorations are going to be far more life giving.

We can talk again about your other questions.

C: I don't even care about that anymore...

W: That's perfect. That's perfect! I love that!

C: Could you suggest – well, like I don't have a community yet. There was this one church that I was interested in getting involved with here in Austin and so I watched one of the - just for community – so I was gonna try to figure out how to do that. Like how to be in the church but not have to go to the sermons. Not have to do certain things – I'm trying to figure that out – cause I've tried to find a community without engaging in a church and it's just not working.

W: But Jesus has a way to lead you into community. Right now is not the time for community because you can't go do it any way - maybe in Texas they're opening up and you can. I always tell people early in this journey – the most important relationship to get settled in is the one with Him. It's like when a young couple gets married - go be alone for a year. Just get to know each other, learn to live in that love then you'll be able to share it with other people.

And I think our need for community often time tries to fill the "God void" in us. That if I fill it with God first then I'll have community not because I need people but because God gifts me with people. And God makes me a gift to people. And so, community is a gift. It's not something I need. He's what I need.

This is a great time for people to hunker down into that relationship. This is a good time for me to get to know God better than I have. And then He'll have a way – there's a way, there's people that God wants you to know in Austin that you'll have community with. If they go to a church somewhere, He might lead you there, if you might just meet them at work, you might meet them just in general just moving thru town and a group emerges of 5 to 6 people that you really enjoy sharing your journey with - that could happen to. You just don't know how He'll do it. He has unlimited ways to do it.

C: Can you back up a minute – about – you said, "we don't need community..."

W: It's a gift. If you haven't read [Finding Church](#) download it and read it. [Finding Church](#) is a whole different way to look at church than we've looked at it.

C: It's mind blowing, because I have been on this journey to find friends for like a decade. For like a decade I've been, "God, you just won't send good people, you just won't send good people..." and somewhere in there a friend of mine said, "maybe God just wants you to Himself." Something like that - And I was like, what are you talking about? So, to have several years go by and to come back to this point and I'm thinking I should look into it. But it's challenging though cause

I'm finding out that I'm an extravert so I get a lot of energy from interacting with people and I'm miserable by myself for the most part.

W: God knows that – it's not a bad thing. What I hope you've learned over the last 10 years is - I can't find my own community.

C: Well, after you saying that about it being a gift – I said – “ohhhh...”

W: Yeah...because we were a gift, right? We were a gift in your life - we came into your life at a certain point and then you moved away so we don't have the same community thing - but just let it grow. You've been trying to find community in your own wisdom and it's been fruitless. A good thing to learn.

Now what was it that caused you to write me, call me and say can I get together with you and Sara sometime? And what was that that did that? That's that nudge you want to follow. There may be somebody on your heart at work, and it may not be because they're in the same place you are – you may be a voice to encourage them you may be the gift to them. They may be the gift to you. Jesus will nudge you.

That as your trust in Him grows, as your awareness of His love grows your trust will grow, as His trust will grow, you'll recognize the gifts He's given you. And you'll find yourself with more community than you'll know what to do with.

W: I think we've got plenty to think about.

C: Yes, I do.

W: You mind me sharing these conversations?

C: Not at all. I feel like I rambled a lot.

W: No. I will edit it down. But I think your questions and there where it went from blessing, the thing about blessing in Scripture all the way to growing - this is what I want people to hear more than anything. And then people may contact me from Austin saying I would love to know her. And that may be a way that God gives you some people.

C: That would be great, yeah.

W: So, I may put this on The God Journey. I haven't worked out what to do with it yet. I didn't know where it would go. I love this conversation though. I LOVE how you steered it. Cause I let this conversation to go wherever you wanted.

C: You did. I was like, “Okay, uh, what are we doing?”

W: That's what trust allows you to do, right? I don't have to control the conversation. It didn't have to be something that we shared at the end of it. I didn't try to make anything out of it. If at the end of it there's nothing to share here, except what you and I got to do. That would be all great with me. But I sensed this morning as I was thinking about things – “you know what – I know that other people are going to want to be a part of this conversation. So, thank you.

C: Thank you. That's such a refreshing way to live – like, agenda objective free – let it be what it's going to be. Like, that's nice – I want to get there.

W: You will. Your hungers there. Your hungers there that's why we had this conversation – everything – 'cause I didn't shape it - you did. This is the hunger on your heart. But you need to know that. And Jesus knows that already.

C: Awesome!

CLOSING

W: Awesome it was! Wow! I loved the journey she took on this phone call. From Bible questions that were more intellectually based trying to sort out the answers she needed from this Book - to discovering a more relational journey full of trust and love. And this Book pointing us to a relationship with Jesus *in whom* our questions are answered and

resolved. And I loved how this list she wanted to go down eventually became irrelevant because there was something more exciting to pursue.

Courtney, thank you so much for letting me share that with others because I think what you're discovering is what so many others are hanging right around the edges of as well. Is to how I can go on a more relational journey - and have the Scriptures be a part of that but not an idolatress part where they become the substitute for the Jesus I need to know and follow.