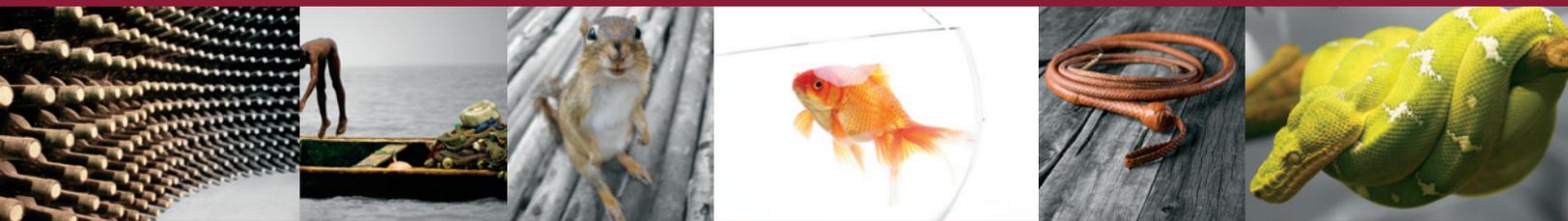


JOHN ELDREDGE

BEAUTIFUL

Outlaw

A COMPANION FOR INDIVIDUAL
AND SMALL GROUP STUDY



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

for Beautiful Outlaw Book and Video Series

INTRODUCTION

More words about Jesus are helpful *only* if they bring us to an experience of him.

We don't need further speculation or debate. We need Jesus himself. And you can have him. Really. You can experience Jesus intimately. You were meant to. For despite the vandalizing of Jesus by both religion and the world, he is still alive and very much himself. Though nowadays it takes a bit of uncovering to know him as he is.

For to have Jesus, really have him, is to have the greatest treasure in all worlds.

And to *love* Jesus—that is to settle the first question of human existence. Of your existence. Everything else flows from there.

Now, loving Jesus will not be a problem when you know him as he truly is.

This participant's guide is designed to be a companion for an individual or small group that is using the book *Beautiful Outlaw* by John Eldredge. We suggest you read the book and compliment your reading with the DVD series.

The eighteen sections of this guide dovetail with the seventeen chapters and the epilogue of the book.

If you're viewing the DVD series without the book, you may choose to go through the entire participant's guide or to limit your study to the section that corresponds to the DVD episodes.

Our guidance is pretty simple, actually.

Before you begin, a simple prayer at the outset will loose encounters like a landslide:

Jesus, I ask you for you. For the real you.

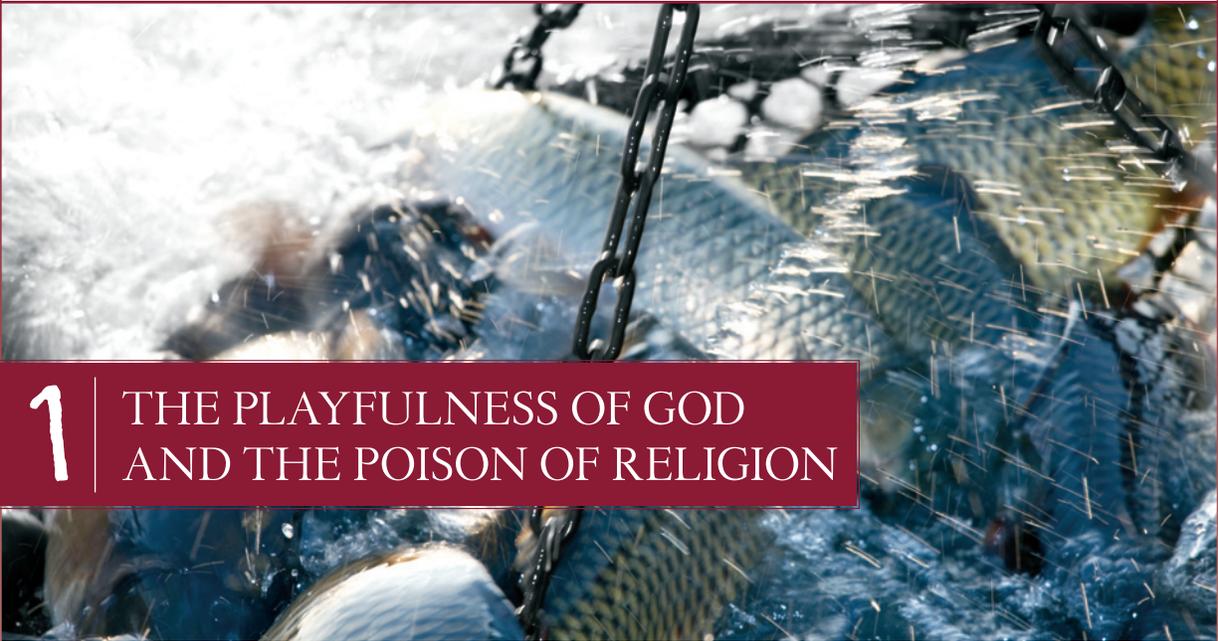
Then read a chapter or watch a segment of the DVD series (as a group if you're in one) in a setting that is as comfortable and as free from distractions as possible. Listen. Allow your heart to be moved as Jesus uses the words on the page and in the DVD to stir and direct your heart.

Then react to the material, think about it, and talk about it. We've suggested a few questions to help guide your reflection and your group's conversation.

End your time with prayer or personal journaling.

Remember, some of your best reflections, conversations and applications will come after your study/small group time. Listen and watch expectantly for Jesus both to show himself to you as well as to invite you into the extravagant life he has for you.

These materials have one purpose: to help you and those you know experience Jesus as he truly is. May it be so.



1

THE PLAYFULNESS OF GOD AND THE POISON OF RELIGION

Religion gives the *impression* of having Christ, while it inoculates you from experiencing the real thing.

Does the thought of Christ being “playful, funny, so human, so hopeful, so unreligious” strike you as a breath of fresh air or does it sound a little irreverent? Put words to your thoughts.

After all the nonsense that is repeated about Jesus being a gentle peacemaker, reading the Gospels is really quite a shock. We discover a Jesus who is in fact *frequently* embroiled in conflict—most of which he provokes himself (like healing on the Sabbath). And every single one of these clashes is with very religious people.

How have you thought of Christ? Have you thought of him as the gentle peacemaker or as the provoker of conflict? What about playful or religious?



2

THE MISSING ESSENTIAL - HIS PERSONALITY

What comes to mind when you think of Jesus? Is Jesus near, or is he far? Is he close at hand, right here at your elbow, or is he distant and engaged in loftier things? Does he have a sense of humor? What words would you use to describe him?

Reading the Gospels without the personality of Jesus is like watching television with the sound turned off. You get a very dry, two-dimensional person doing strange, undecipherable things.

Personality is what distinguishes real music from elevator music. Both are made up of notes; only one is worth listening to. Think of the people you have most loved and trusted—*why* did you love and trust them so? Was it because of one quality, or was it the funky, endearing combination of all those qualities that together made them who they were?

Personality is what makes someone *someone* and not everyone, or anyone.

What is the personality trait or traits of Jesus your “particular brand of church” or circle of friends emphasizes? Is it an inviting picture? Is it a true picture?



3

IS JESUS REALLY PLAYFUL?

Is Jesus playful? Does he have a sense of humor?

What in nature, in life, or in the stories of Jesus make you laugh?

You were *meant* to laugh. After all—it was God who gave us a sense of humor. Do you really think Jesus came to take it away?

Think of the crowd Jesus dined with. These rabble-rousers quickly earned Jesus a reputation as a drunkard and a glutton, and it wasn't because they served water and crackers. This was a wild group, and surely such a crowd got rolling in laughter from time to time, if only from the joy they were experiencing being with Jesus. Now, surely the creator of these colorful characters didn't sit there frowning, looking pious, Mr. Killjoy, Mr. I'm-Above-All-This. Imagine his own happiness at having these very lost sheep back at his side.

But the religious tight-shorts didn't like it one bit.

Why are we hesitant to laugh, to joke, and to acknowledge God's sense of humor... his playfulness?



4

FIERCE INTENTION

Jesus is a man on a mission. The same man who could be so playful is also a man on fire. If you would know Jesus, you must know that this—his fierce intentionality—is essential to his personality.

What does the thought of Christ having “fierce intention” stir up in you? Does the thought of Christ being fierce and aggressive strike you as frightening, a little irreverent, or a breath of fresh air?

Is the fierce intention of Christ something you’ve experienced?

Yes, there is a leisureliness to Jesus. He’ll stop whatever he’s doing to attend to someone in need. The man never, ever seems to be in a hurry. But his manner can be appreciated only in light of a deeper river flowing in him, this fierce intentionality. Otherwise, you get those popular and ridiculous portraits of Jesus as the wandering storyteller, no more controversial or dangerous than a clerk in a health-food store.

This is our Jesus.



5

THE MOST HUMAN FACE OF ALL

Something has crept into our assumptions about Jesus that makes it almost impossible to relate to him, not to mention love him. It's the notion that Jesus was really "pretending" when he presented himself as a man. We who worship Jesus Christ hold fast to the belief that he was God. "Very God of very God," as the Nicene Creed states. The heroic actions and miraculous powers of Jesus' life attest to it. So, when we read what we would call the more human moments, we feel that Jesus was sort of...cheating.

Have you thought of Jesus as really, really human in ways just like you? Why might we be hesitant to think of him as fully human?

It will do your heart good to discover that Jesus shares in your humanity. He was, as the creeds insist, fully human. (Yes, yes—more than that to be sure. But never ever less than that.) I'm sure the chipmunks made him laugh. The Pharisees sure made him furious. He felt joy, weakness, sorrow. The more we can grasp his humanity, the more we will find him someone we can approach, know, love, trust, and adore.

"He is a man in a way that we have forgotten men can be: truthful, blunt, emotional, nonmanipulative, sensitive, compassionate." (Brennen Manning, *Abba's Child*)



6

EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY

An artist is revealed in the work he or she creates and in the *abundance* of the work created.

I am sitting on the beach this evening, watching the swells roll in toward me. Each wave builds as it approaches, ascending, taking shape, deep greens below sweeping upward into translucent aquamarine. A sculpture in motion, curling forth like shavings from a jade carving. The sheer elegance is enough to take my breath away. The wave I'm fixed upon crashes to the sand like a work of art toppling from its pedestal, but before I can feel the loss another is rushing to take its place, sweeping upward, forward, utterly mesmerizing beauty. Then comes another, then another, and another, in an unending processional.

I look down. Scattered at my feet lie a thousand shells, delicate, intricate, the work of a jeweler. An artist with very small tools and exceptional eyesight. If all this is the work of an artist's hand, what does it tell us about the artist? Creation is epic and intimate. *He* is epic and intimate. Everywhere around me, an obsession with beauty and attention to detail.

But most of all, I am thunderstruck by the abundant generosity strewn around, constantly rolling in. It's as if someone took the family silver and ran down the beach, tossing handfuls here and there like a madman.

In your own words, describe "extravagant generosity." What kind of person is extravagantly generous?



7

DISRUPTIVE HONESTY

Remember, Jesus is not strolling through the Israeli countryside offering poetry readings. He is on a mission to rescue a people who are so utterly deceived most of them don't even *want* to be rescued. His honesty and severity are measured out precisely, according to the amount of delusion and self-deception encasing his listener. When a soul is encrusted with pride, bigotry, self-righteousness, and intellectual elitism—as was his dinner host—then that shell does need to be struck hard at times in order to cause a crack that might allow in some light. Jesus strikes with the precision of Michelangelo.

Poet or Navy Seal on a mission? How have you viewed the purpose of Christ's coming?

If Christ came to dinner with you and your friends, what do you fear or hope he would do or say?

The man shoots straight. Sometimes he's playful; sometimes he's fierce; the next moment he's generous. This is the beauty of his disruptive honesty—you can count on Jesus to tell you the truth in the best possible way for you to hear it.

8

A SCANDALOUS FREEDOM



One of the stories of Christ involves a leper approaching him and asking to be healed. Picture this man as someone in the late stages of AIDS—emaciated body, nearly bald, wheezing, face ravaged by ulcers. In Israel at that time, to get within a stone's throw of someone so diseased was to jeopardize your own righteousness and reputation.

The man comes near Jesus—but not too near. What does Jesus do? *He reaches out and touches him.*

Wouldn't you, if you were God's Son, be more concerned about your reputation and the perception of others than Jesus appears to be? Why isn't he?

Jesus doesn't seem to care. Or better, he cares very deeply about the right things.

What does Jesus' scandalous freedom in living and relating to others stir up in you?

Jesus sets before us a deeper, *truer* view of holiness. The issues are first and foremost internal (our motives), before they are ever external (behaviors). You can murder someone without ever pulling a trigger. You break the Sabbath if come Sunday night you're exhausted. All those external "rules of men" do nothing to promote a genuine holiness. But they do make people Pharisees. By the truckload.

Remember, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). The only possible way that can happen is through an internal revolution, a changed heart. When we have a heart like Jesus'.



9 | CUNNING

Jesus is holy and cunning.

Is cunning a word you would ever use to describe Jesus? Why or why not?

God's response to the Tower of Babel uprising was cunning—confusing the languages of the earth. It was certainly better than taking away the faculty of speech. Men could make some headway, but they would have a heck of a time uniting the world again in a rebellion against God.

Setting eternity in our hearts was cunning, so that every last one of us would be haunted all our days with unmet longings that would cause us to seek the only Fountain that can quench our thirst.

Sex was cunning. Given the selfishness and self-centeredness of mankind, how else to get people to commit to the daily-sacrifice-for-a-lifetime called parenting?

I think the movement of the Spirit in the church is cunning—first here, then there, keeping men from systemizing it, keeping the enemy from squelching it. It's like a game of rugby.

Now, perhaps this is nothing new to you; perhaps you've seen a bit of this before. But bring it into the present—do we love Jesus for his cunning? I don't recall a worship song with the word *cunning* in it. "Thou Art Cunning," or "Cunning, Cunning, Cunning."

Do we interpret his actions in our lives as perhaps part of some cunning plan? That delayed answer to prayer—is there something brilliant about the timing? Would it help us to rest if we thought so? When he answers our prayers with "No," do we see him sparing us some unseen danger? And when it comes to our own "imitation of Christ," do we approach our days wondering, *How would Jesus have me be snakelike today?* Doesn't it sound a little unchristian?

10

HUMILITY

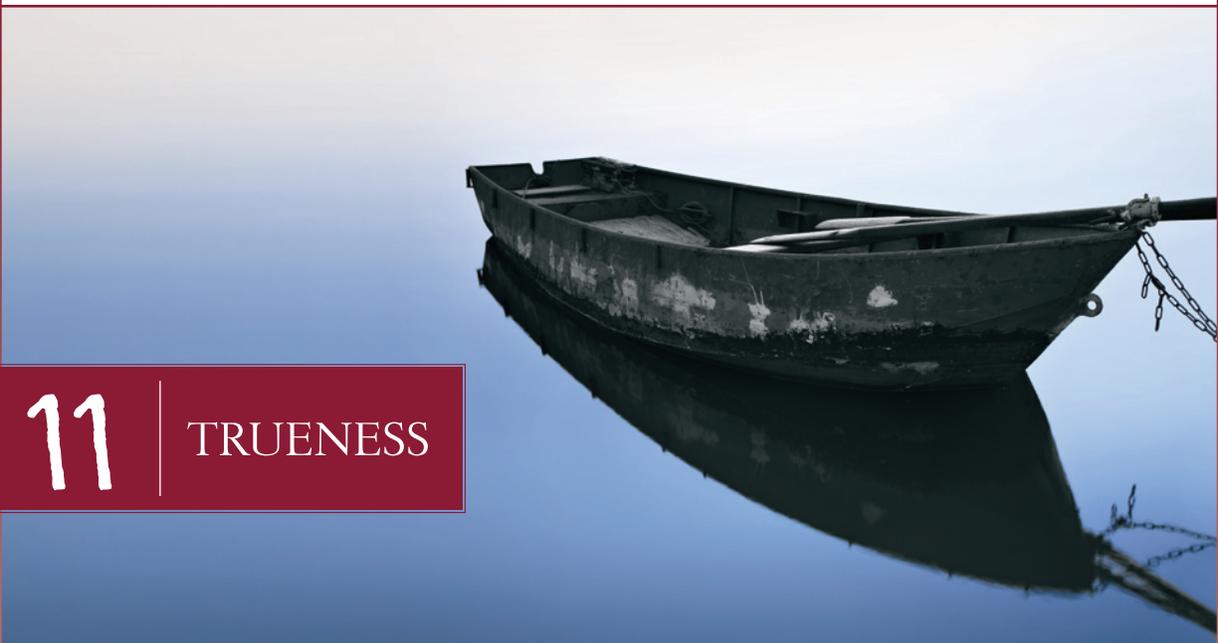


“Humility” hardly begins to describe the incarnation. It boggles the mind. The eternal Son of God, “Light of Light, Very God of Very God...One Substance with the Father,” spent nine months developing in Mary’s uterus. Jesus passed through her birth canal. He had to learn to walk. The Word of God had to learn to talk. He who calls the stars by name had to learn the names of everything, just as you did. “This is a cup. Can you say cup? Cuuup.”

Or did you think baby Jesus came into the world with the vocabulary of Dictionary.com?

What thoughts have you given to the humility God showed when he became a man?

Remember—Jesus wasn’t faking it when he took on his humanity. Think of the implications. He who never tires, never slumbers, accepted the need for sleep. Every night. How deep was the exhaustion that kept him dozing right through the gale, waves crashing over the boat? Jesus ate, every day, breakfast, lunch, and dinner; he needed to. He had to trim his toenails. He who clothes the lilies of the field with greater glory than Solomon’s splendor had to do his laundry, squatting riverside, rinsing the dust from his worn garments like any other peasant.



11

TRUENESS

“What people think of me” is a *very* powerful motivator. It is still shaping us more than we’d like to admit. It shapes our theology, our politics, our values.

The fear of man. Peer pressure. What will others think?

How much of your life is motivated by fear of man? Where, or in what ways, are you currently feeling this pressure?

Think of it—what would it be like to be entirely free from false guilt, free from pressure, free from false allegiances? Wouldn’t it be absolutely extraordinary?

Jesus being true has the ability to navigate praise and contempt. Neither success nor opposition have power over him. One day the crowds love him, the next they are shouting for his crucifixion. Jesus is the same man—the same *personality*—through the whole swirling tempest. Jesus is free from the fear of man. It is something more than integrity, though it certainly encompasses that. He is true to himself, true to his Father, true to what the moment most requires, true to love. In this forest of fig leaves, where you are never sure you are getting the true person, there is nothing false about Jesus.



12

BEAUTIFUL

Jesus is beautiful.

His ability to live with all these qualities we've seen, in such a way that no one quality dominates—as is so often the case in our personalities—eclipsing the richness of the others. To live in such a way that there is always something of an element of surprise, and yet, however he acts turns out to be exactly what was needed in the moment. Oh, his brilliance shines through, but never blinding, never overbearing. He is not glistening white marble. He is the playfulness of creation, scandal and utter goodness, the generosity of the ocean and the ferocity of a thunderstorm; he is cunning as a snake and gentle as a whisper; the gladness of sunshine and the humility of a thirty-mile walk by foot on a dirt road. Reclining at a meal, laughing with friends, and then going to the cross. That is what we mean when we say that Jesus is beautiful.

What, from your experience or understanding, would spur you to describe Jesus as beautiful?

But most of all, it is the way he loves. In all the stories, every encounter, we have watched love in action. Love as strong as death; a blood, sweat, and tears love, not a get-well card. You learn a great deal about the true nature of a person in the way they love, why they love, and, in what they love.

At this point, how would you describe Jesus to someone who knows nothing of him?



13

LOVING JESUS

You are *meant* to have this Jesus, more than you have each new day, more than you have your next breath. For heaven's sake—he *is* your next day, your next breath. You are *meant* to share life with him—not just a glimpse now and then at church, not just a rare sighting. And you are *meant* to live his life. The purpose of his life, death, and resurrection was to ransom you from your sin, deliver you from the clutches of evil, restore you to God—*so that* his personality and his life could heal and fill your personality, your humanity, and your life. This is the reason he came.

Anything else is religion.

What is your reaction to John's thoughts above?

Do you share a similar passion or belief as this? If so, how did you come to that point?
If not, put words to your relationship or beliefs concerning Jesus.

We are not meant to merely love his teaching, or his morals, or his kindness or his social reforms. We are meant to love the man himself, know him intimately, keep this as the first and foremost practice of our lives. First things first. Love Jesus.



14

LETTING JESUS BE HIMSELF - WITH YOU

What if we *could* experience everything we've seen about Jesus in this book? What if that were *available*? Why, then, don't people talk more about this? Where are the encounters with this magnificent Jesus?

Do you find your heart wondering, Is this sort of thing Biblical? Is this real? How come I never experience Jesus like this?

We have been a little naive. We thought knowing God would come easily. We didn't account for the fact that we still live behind enemy lines. If knowing Jesus is the single most important thing that could ever happen to a person, then would it not follow that our enemy would have a very strong investment in keeping this from happening? So he'll throw whatever he can in the way.

What's been thrown at you that makes your relationship—your walk with God—difficult?

Our experience of Jesus is limited most often by the limits we put on him!

As you've read through this book, think now about what limits you currently put on Christ. Name them.

Can you identify what limits you have put on him in the past?

The best place to begin and one of the most powerful things you could ever pray is this:

I renounce every limit I have ever placed on Jesus. I renounce every limit I have placed on him in my life. I break all limitations, renounce them, revoke them. Jesus, forgive me for restraining you in my life. I give you full permission to be yourself with me. I ask you for you—for the real you.

You'll probably want to pray that more than once as you go along.

NOTES



15

CLEARING AWAY THE RELIGIOUS FOG

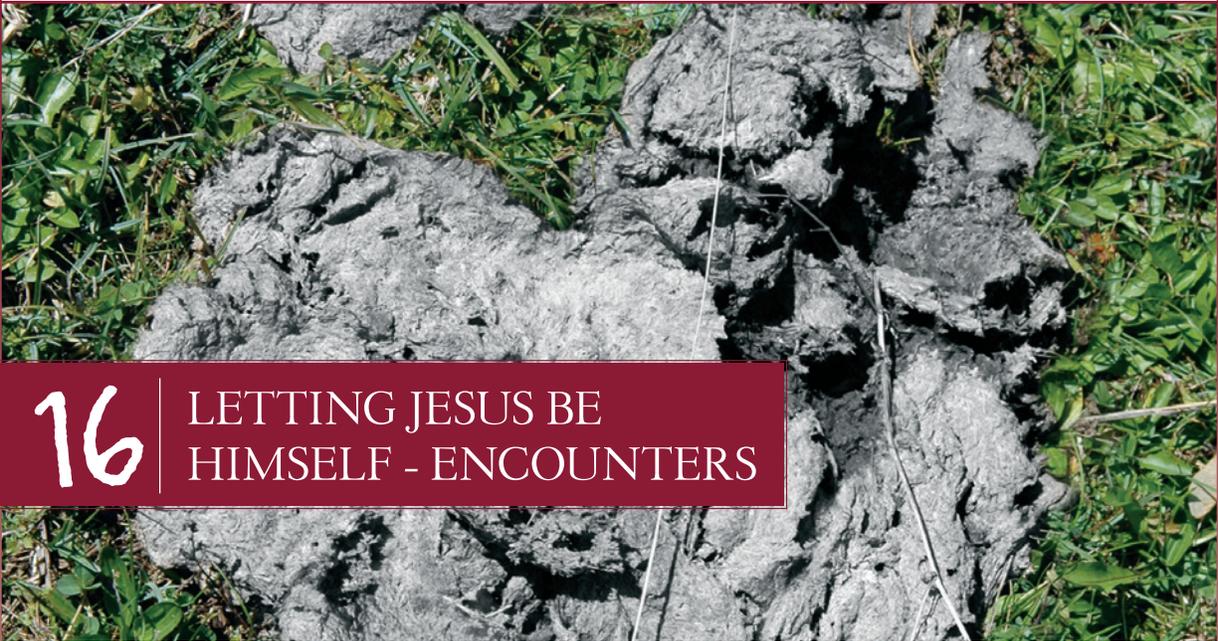
The way a person gets angry and what they get angry about is a real clue to who they really are.

So—what about Jesus? What really fries this gracious, humble, immensely patient man?

If you will simply read the Gospels without bias, you cannot come to any other conclusion but that religion is the enemy—or in the hands of the enemy. Every hostile encounter Jesus has is with very “churchy” people. This spirit is the great enemy of our life with God, and it is *this* spirit that Jesus warned his boys about when they were whispering in the boat about the bread: “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees,” and then he says it again, to make sure they are paying attention: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6, 11).

If you would know Jesus, love him, experience him, you must pay *very careful attention* to this warning.

Maybe it is more revealing to ask: Do you share Jesus’ anger at this religious stuff?



16

LETTING JESUS BE HIMSELF - ENCOUNTERS

We should expect to encounter Jesus anytime, anywhere, everywhere.

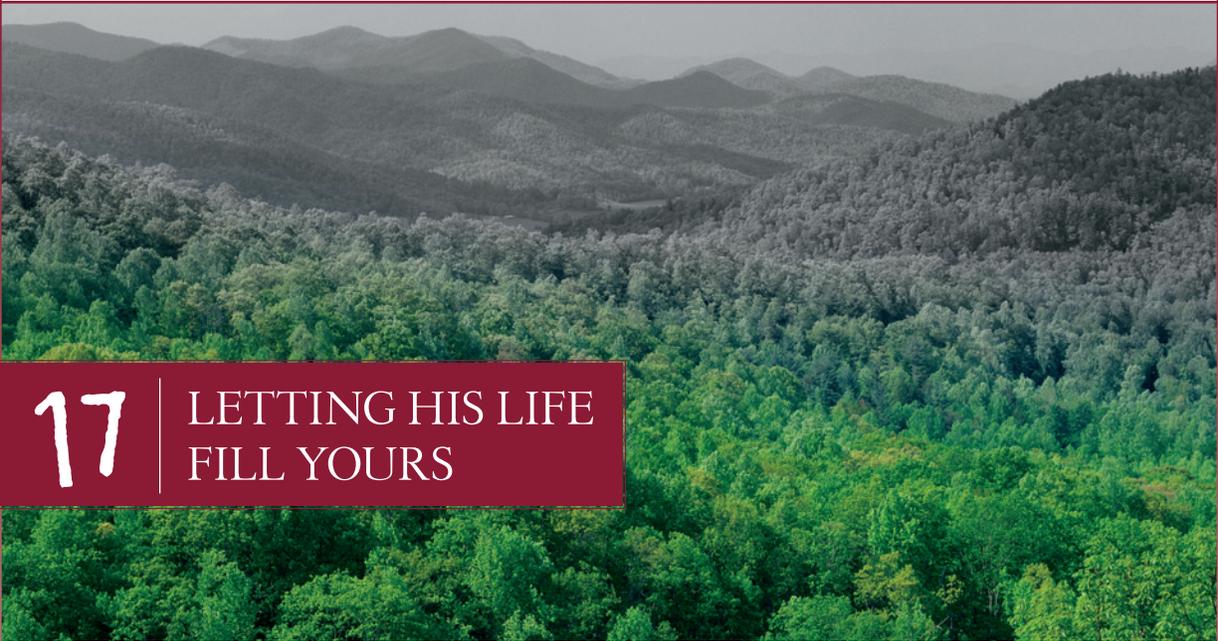
Such a simple and profound thought. Anytime? Anywhere? Everywhere?

What does this truth stir up in you? Hope? Joy? Comfort? Fear? Anxiety?

Be open to the ways Jesus *wants* to come to you. Don't insist it be in exactly the way he comes to someone else. This artist is infinitely creative.

Don't let someone else's remarkable encounter with Jesus diminish the beauty of what you know of him. Hold fast to the treasures you have.

But, at the same time, you haven't experienced all there is with God. There is more. Much more. Those new possibilities are often opened to us through hearing the ways Jesus is working in other people's lives. Put down both the ashes and the stones. Let's discover more of Jesus, together.



17

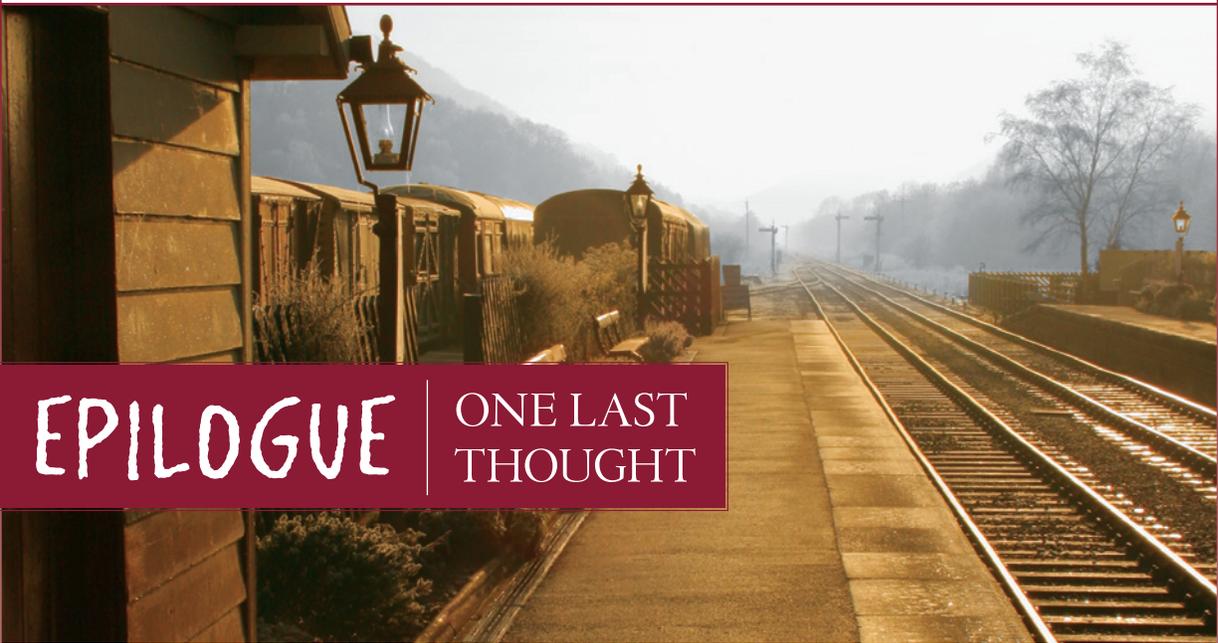
LETTING HIS LIFE FILL YOURS

If you were to choose one word to describe the movement of Jesus through his three stunning years of public action, what word would it be?

The word I choose to describe Jesus is *life*. Pure, lush, exuberant Life. Life that proves to be unquenchable, unstoppable, indestructible. Now for a wonder of wonders—not only do you get Jesus, you get to live his life. Really.

There seem to be two basic reactions when sincere folks encounter the beautiful, scandalous life of Jesus: *I can't possibly do that*, or, *I want to try to live like him*. Which do you gravitate toward? Why that particular reaction?

By the way, this is the point of encountering those things in your life you cannot handle—you are forced to turn to Christ. Did you really think you could be kind for the rest of your life without the inner help of Jesus? One day of kindness is a miracle. What about forgiving? Generous? Honest? Did you really think you could overcome your lifelong strongholds without some sort of Lazarus-like breakthrough? It simply isn't going to happen—not without the life of Jesus in you.



EPILOGUE | ONE LAST THOUGHT

Surely you have noticed that we have entered a time of great suffering on the earth.

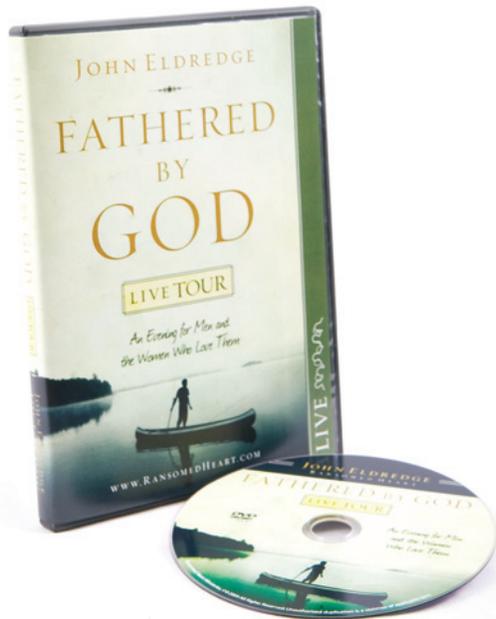
And Jesus warned us about this. Before his death, his teaching turned very sober—nothing that would make a best seller in this world of “tell me how to make life work *now*.”

How badly would you love a guide from God on “how to make life work”? Is there such a guide?

Be very, very careful and pay attention to how you *interpret* your suffering. Don't jump to conclusions. Interpretation is critical. Be aware of the agreements that you make. This is where the enemy can destroy you. Agreements such as *God has abandoned me; it's my fault; I've done something wrong*, and a host of others. If you've been making these agreements, you will want to break them. They allow a chasm to form between you and your Jesus.

How might you have misinterpreted events or circumstances in your life? What agreements or conclusions did you draw? How have those misinterpretations led to a chasm between you and Jesus?

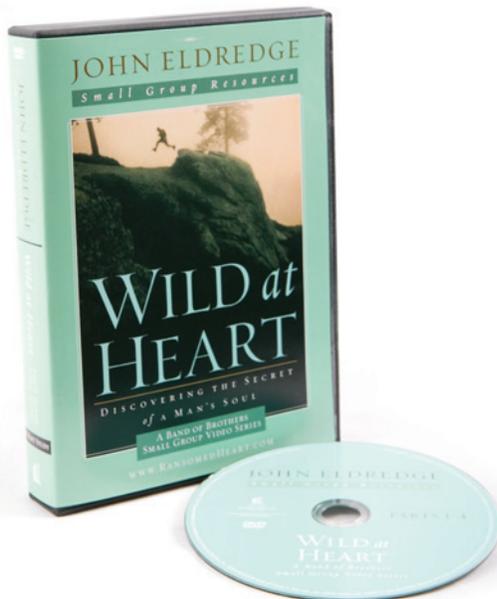
Interested in diving deeper in Ransomed Heart's Video Series?
Check out these and more at RANSOMEDHEART.COM



Fathered by God DVD

Using a men's small group setting, John takes users through the six stages a man goes through as he matures in life and faith, sharing insights and teachings on how each stage can be encouraged and supported. Each session includes a 3-6 minute opening from John followed by 15-20 minutes of a men's small group, led by John, in a "Band of Brothers" way.

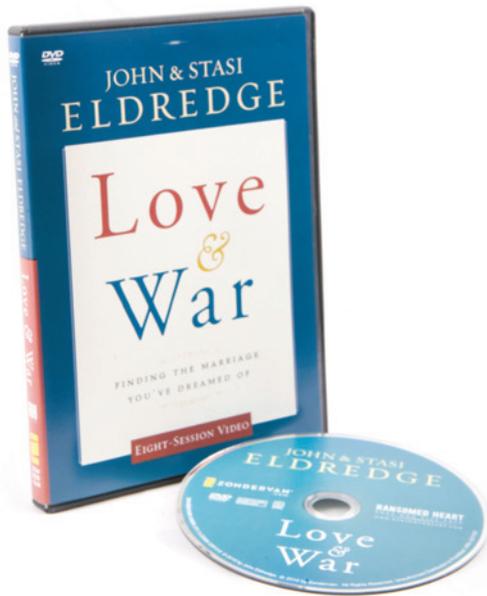
Inspiring and challenging for men and the women in their lives, this DVD delivers a way to forge companionship with God the Father while undergoing a transformation, releasing the fullness of the life and the passion God designed them to live.



Wild at Heart: A Band of Brothers DVD

Fierce. Dangerous. Wild.

Available for the first time in just a package of DVDs, the *Wild at Heart: A Band of Brothers Video Series* will become the catalyst study groups and retreat leaders use to help them discover how God defines authentic masculinity. John Eldredge and his band of brothers invite you to join them as they embark on a journey to learn how God can heal wounded hearts and put a spirit of adventure back in the life of any man.



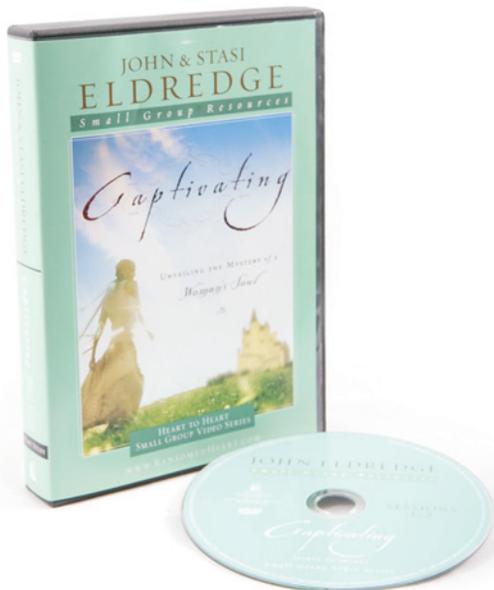
Love and War DVD

With refreshing openness that will grab you from their first words on the Love & War eight-session DVD video study—designed for use with the Love & War Participant’s Guide in a small group or retreat setting—hosts John and Stasi Eldredge candidly discuss their own marriage and the insights they’ve gained from the challenges they’ve faced. Each talks independently about what they’ve learned, giving their guidance a personal immediacy and balance between the male and female perspectives that has been absent from all previous group studies on this topic.

The Eldredges acknowledge that Marriage is fabulously hard, but they advise you that the sooner you get the shame and confusion of the fabled fairytale marriage off your back, the sooner you’ll find your way to the real love and happiness you deserve.

The Love & War DVD and Participant’s Guide show you how to step into the great adventure of a fruitful Marriage God has waiting for you and your spouse ... together.

Walking alongside John and Stasi Eldredge, you and your spouse will discover how your individual journeys are growing into a story of meaning much greater than anything you could do or be on your own.

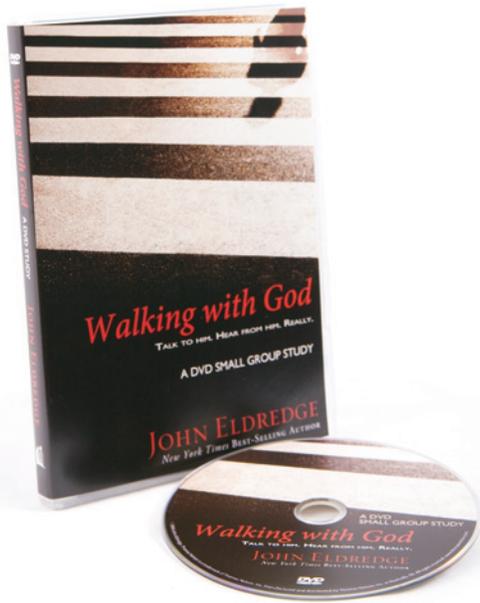


Captivating Heart to Heart DVD

Every woman in her heart of hearts longs to be romanced, to play an irreplaceable role in a great adventure, and to unveil beauty. God placed these desires in women’s hearts to help them discover who they are meant to be, the role that is theirs to play, and to draw them more deeply into His heart.

Join Stasi Eldredge and her friends in ten sessions of honest and vulnerable conversation, teaching, and discovery. Through their laughter and tears, their prayers and wisdom, you’ll find God drawing you into the life He meant for you to live as a woman!

Perfect for individuals, churches, retreats and small groups, the Captivating Heart to Heart Video Series will guide you through the adventure of rediscovering the romance, the adventure, and the beauty God set within every woman’s heart.



Walking With God: A DVD Study

These resources give you access to practical guidance on how to develop conversational intimacy with Jesus. Also included for your small group or retreat group are discussion questions as well as ways to help one another listen for and hear the sound of God's voice in your lives.

The video sessions are each about ten minutes long, and you'll want to allow at least forty-five minutes to an hour for discussion. Each DVD segment covers, in broad strokes, one of the significant entries in the *Walking with God* book. During the week, group members should read the entries from the book that correspond with the video discussion. Group members may also want to use *A Personal Guide to Walking with God* for personal reflection and taking the study deeper.

God offers to speak to us and guide us. Every day. It is an incredible offer. To accept that offer is to enter into an adventure filled with joy and risk, transformation and freedom. And more clarity than we ever thought possible. It is a life of getting to know God, of hearing his wonderful voice speaking to us ... personally, of loving him and living with him in intimate relationship.

Join John in the expedition of recovering this life—the life we were created to live!

BEAUTIFUL *Outlaw*

More words about Jesus are helpful *only* if they bring us to an experience of him.

We don't need further speculation or debate. We need Jesus himself. And you can have him. Really. You can experience Jesus intimately. You were meant to. For despite the vandalizing of Jesus by both religion and the world, he is still alive and very much himself. Though nowadays it takes a bit of uncovering to know him as he is. For to have Jesus, really have him, is to have the greatest treasure in all worlds.

And to *love* Jesus—that is to settle the first question of human existence. Of your existence. Everything else flows from there.

Now, loving Jesus will not be a problem when you know him as he truly is.

This companion to John Eldredge's *Beautiful Outlaw* book and video series will give incredible guidance to experience the playful, disruptive, extravagant personality of Jesus.




RANSOMED HEART
LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.
WWW.RANSOMEDHEART.COM

© & © 2011 Ransomed Heart Ministries. All rights reserved.
Any unauthorized reproduction is a violation of applicable laws.

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.RANSOMEDHEART.COM

US \$10.00

ISBN 10: 1-933207-53-X
ISBN 978-1-933207-54-4



9 781933 207544