With: Reimagining The Way You Relate To God

Destined to be a classic, in his book ***With: Reimaging The Way You Relate To God***, Skye Jethani—author, speaker, pastor, and consultant—provides a construct of the various ways we relate to God. He presents a case that is clear, faithful, helpful, inspiring, and compelling. Be prepared to think differently about your relationship with Christ. Make this a must-read. If you need some persuasion, check out these Book Notes to close the case.

Title: ***With: Reimagining the Way You Relate To God***

Author: **Skye Jethani**

Copyright Date: **2011**

Book Description:

Cleverly using four prepositions——under, over, from, and for, Skye Jethani convincingly diagnoses the reigning paradigms of life, whether secular or religious——and shows how each one has captured some element of truth but in the end is deficient. Ultimately, they miss the most important thing——real communion with the living God. Thus utilizing one final preposition, With, he lays out what it really means to know and experience communion with God——a life of faith, hope and love, the very things that we all desperately want and need. This is a helpful, encouraging, and inspiring book.—Jim Belcher, author of Deep Church.

Book Quotes:

My concern is that we are inoculating an entire generation to the Christian faith. Many come with a holy desire to know God, to experience his presence in their lives, to be cared for like sheep entrusted to a meek and gentle shepherd. But this is not what they see or experience. In fact, they may leave the church without ever seeing a beautiful and enthralling vision of LIFE WITH GOD. The lights are never turned on to reveal the beauty that is present just behind the shadows. Instead they are offered a substitute form of Christianity, one that cannot break through the shadows and that never really satisfies the deepest longings of their souls.
LOCATION: 109

Whenever I encounter new people, either in the church context or outside it, I'm usually trying to determine which posture best captures how they relate to God. A casual conversation about their life and faith and a few simple questions is usually enough to uncover their assumptions.

- Seatmate on a cross-country flight: "I really don't think much about God." Analysis: LIFE OVER GOD.
- Neighbor at the local farmer's market on Saturday morning: "If we can just stop these liberal judges, God will bless our country again." Analysis: LIFE UNDER GOD.
- Visitor at the church: "Every morning I wake up and pray for God to expand my

territory. And he has!" Analysis: LIFE FROM GOD.

- Pastor talking about his congregation: "They're just lazy. What they need is some motivational preaching so they'll share their faith with their neighbors." Analysis: LIFE FOR GOD. LOCATION: 176

A brief reflection on my own journey of faith reveals seasons in which I have occupied each of the four postures. I have lived OVER, UNDER, FROM, and FOR GOD. And when I think about my years in Christian ministry, I must admit that my efforts were largely focused on transferring people from one posture to another with mixed results. Sermons were written and preached, programs designed and launched, groups prepared and assembled, budgets created and tracked—all with the goal of moving people over God to under him and convincing others to start living for God and not just from him. LOCATION: 212

I could not explain why many of the people accomplishing the most for God seemed to reflect his character the least. Rather than being marked by peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and love, many of them were anxious, impatient, rude, aggressive, and sometimes even spiteful. This was not universally the case, I certainly know godly men and women in ministry, but the lack of godliness among church leaders was far more common than I was comfortable with. And I saw these same disturbing traits within me as I gave myself over to the work of God and ministry. Simply put, living for God was proving to be detrimental for my soul. LOCATION: 223

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." This is how the apostle John described the beginning of all things. Before time or space, the preexistent God lived in eternal communion with himself. John introduced Jesus Christ, the "Word," as God, but also as existing before creation in unity with God. LOCATION: 263

Eden was designed to be a collaborative environment where Creator and creatures worked together for a common goal. Eden is best understood as a base camp from which the man and woman were to extend God's garden to encompass the entire earth. They were intended to partner with God as his representatives and agents on the earth. The man and woman were instructed to "rule" over the earth on God's behalf and cultivate the order, beauty, and abundance of Eden in every corner of creation. This is the basis for the first command in the Bible: "fill the earth and subdue it." LOCATION: 276

If the Bible were the script for a play, both the opening scene and the final act of this drama would focus on God's desire to live and rule with his people. This impulse carries the drama from beginning to end. And yet the call to a life of intimate communion with God is largely absent today. It's as if we entered the theater late and left before the final curtain. As a result, we have a skewed understanding of the story. We've extracted one portion or another of the narrative and assumed it was representative of the entire story. This explains (in part) how we have come to exchange LIFE WITH GOD in favor of one OVER, UNDER, FROM, or FOR him. LOCATION: 293

Although God created humanity to live and rule with him, the story in Genesis 3 reveals our reluctance to abide by this plan. Rather than living and ruling with God, the man and woman sought to be apart from him. LOCATION: 330

Since Eden our human capacity to relate properly with God has been severely impaired. Like pilots in a fog with malfunctioning instruments, we cannot tell that we are flying upside down no matter how sincere our efforts at navigating may be. This is the effect of sin. LOCATION: 344

Monotheism, the belief in a single creator God, first emerged around five thousand years ago and moved beyond the ritualism of more primitive religious systems. The monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity,

and Islam—seek to win favor with and control God by combining rituals and morality. Live according to God's righteous expectations, we are told, and he will bless you and answer your prayers. It is a potent mix of pagan superstition and biblical morality. LOCATION: 414

The irony of a LIFE UNDER GOD is that we are seeking to exert control over God through strict adherence to rituals and absolute obedience to moral codes. It is Eden's rebellion all over again. Through our obedience we put God into our debt and expect him to do our bidding in exchange for our worship and righteous behavior. LOCATION: 421

Moving beyond the individual, even more destructive things occur when the LIFE UNDER GOD posture dominates a community. If blessing or calamity is the result of obeying God's rules, then keeping everyone in line becomes the paramount mission of religious leaders. Faith gets reduced to dogmatism—adherence to strict moral codes and the enforcement of boundaries and rules. In such places the clergy function as divine police officers and cultural crusaders ensuring no one violates the Almighty's will, because it's not just the individual on the line, but the whole community. LOCATION: 476

But what LIFE UNDER GOD cannot do is look into a person's heart. Although one's behaviors might conform to expectations, inside you may still be consumed by hatred, greed, pride, lust, and deceit. LOCATION: 569

The problem with the LIFE UNDER GOD posture can be summarized with the words of the prophet Isaiah, whom Jesus quoted while rebuking the religious authorities: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules that have been taught." LOCATION: 593

Many people would like to believe that the problems plaguing our world could be solved if we simply put divisive ideas behind us, religion being chief among them, and then work toward a more harmonious future. This is what John Lennon sang about in "Imagine." It is also an apt definition of the LIFE OVER GOD posture—humanity living without God and free from the fearful superstition of religion. But this view ignores two critical things—human nature and history. LOCATION: 629

Many of the criticisms of LIFE UNDER GOD are justified, but LIFE OVER GOD fares no better. Secular humanism has no record of removing fear, fostering peace, or leading to a more just and verdant world. Advocates of atheism may dream of a better world without religion, but their solution forces us out of the frying pan and into the fire. LOCATION: 647

But the scientific revolution and Enlightenment thinking presented a very different view of the universe. Cut into the apple and at the core one would not find divine will, they said, but natural law. The universe was not sustained by capricious deities but by predictable and rational principles. This view of the cosmos utterly changed our understanding of our place within it. The desire to control our environment and mitigate our fears no longer required appeasing God. Instead, the new view said the universe was like a machine, and our job was to understand how it operated and then leverage those principles to control it. Using mathematics and the scientific method, humans could discover the immutable laws that ruled everything from the motion of the planets to the origins of life. LOCATION: 667

Post-Enlightenment cultures have pushed God out of the space he once occupied. Faith and religion have become marginalized and reserved for those few aspects of human existence science cannot (yet) explain and control. For some this new understanding of the universe has done more than marginalize God, it has eliminated him altogether. LOCATION: 679

This understanding of God informs how many Christians engage the Bible. They believe the Scriptures are a divine instruction manual for life; a resource to be culled for principles that may then be applied to any

challenge or dilemma. I've heard pastors quip that B-I-B-L-E stands for "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth," and others have called it the "owner's manual" for a human being. We may chuckle at these cute metaphors for the Bible, but behind them is a very un-Christian understanding of God and ironically an unbiblical one rooted in Enlightenment thinking. LOCATION: 726

When the Bible is primarily seen as a depository of divine principles for life, it fundamentally changes the way we engage God and his Word. Rather than a vehicle for knowing God and fostering our communion with him, we search the Scriptures for applicable principles that we may employ to control our world and life. This is not Christianity; this is Christian deism. In other words, we actually replace a relationship with God for a relationship with the Bible. If one has the repair manual, why bother with the expense of a mechanic? LOCATION: 730

But in our zeal to honor the importance of God's Word and extol its usefulness, we may unintentionally do the opposite. We may reduce the Bible from God's revelation of himself to merely a revelation of divine principles for life. LOCATION: 738

The formulaic approach to the Christian life is perhaps most evident among church leaders—those responsible, like Moses, with leading God's people and providing for their spiritual nourishment. Ministry conferences and resources are saturated with promises of guaranteed outcomes and proven effectiveness. LOCATION: 808

Effectiveness is an odd value to be held in such high esteem by those of us who claim belief in a sovereign and unsearchable God. To guarantee effectiveness requires one to be in control over every variable and aspect. But if we are in control of the outcomes, where does that leave God? A friend once asked me, "If God's Spirit left your church, would anyone notice?" Put another way, if everything happening can be explained by human causality, then why do we need God? LOCATION: 817

This is the third great failure of the LIFE OVER GOD approach—it causes us to gauge success based on effective outcomes rather than faithfulness to God's calling. LOCATION: 844

LIFE OVER GOD exchanges a relationship with him for applicable principles. It fails to alleviate our fears by stating that we are ultimately responsible for every outcome in our lives. And finally, even when things go as planned, it may leave us far outside the boundaries of what God intended. LOCATION: 855

When contemporary and relatively affluent people look at the God inkblot, they don't necessarily see the God revealed in the Bible or even the God presented by rational science or superstitious traditions. They see a divine butler, a cosmic therapist, a holy vending machine who dispenses the wares and wisdom they desire. LOCATION: 896

This is the essence of the LIFE FROM GOD posture—God exists to supply what we need or desire. LOCATION: 899

The LIFE FROM GOD posture is so appealing because it doesn't ask us to change. What we desire, what we seek, what we do, and how we live—all shaped by consumerism—are not disrupted. Our values and way of life are simply projected onto God and incorporated into a religious system in which we receive divine assistance to meet our desires. In this way LIFE FROM GOD is nothing more than consumerism with a Jesus sticker slapped on the bumper. LOCATION: 912

In the LIFE FROM GOD posture, God also carries no inherent value. Like everything else in the consumer worldview, God's value is determined by his usefulness. He orbits around us. "What have you done for me lately?" could be the mantra of the LIFE FROM GOD posture. Religion is a means to an end—a more spiritual

method of achieving our desires whether they are the products of advertising or of nobler sources. Those who relate to God primarily as the Almighty Provider hold a decidedly one-dimensional understanding of him: God gives and we receive. LOCATION: 957

As we have seen in previous chapters, fear is central to the human experience in this world, and every religious system is an attempt to deliver us from it. But consumerism, and the LIFE FROM GOD posture derived from it, takes a slightly different tack. Rather than removing our fears and pains, consumerism tries to distract us from them. Commodified goods and experiences are used to keep us amused—anesthetizing us from the unpleasant realities of our existence. Neil Postman explored this phenomenon at length in his influential book, Amusing Ourselves to Death. Amusement, he reminds us, literally means "to not think," in other words, to be distracted. Filling our lives with trivial possessions and experiences is an attempt to distract us from the fears and pains of life. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." LOCATION: 971

But distraction is not the same as deliverance. Consumerism and LIFE FROM GOD may numb our fears and pains, but it does not remove them. And ultimately LIFE FROM GOD offers us no redemptive explanation for the existence of pain and suffering in the world. C. S. Lewis reminded us that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains: It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." LOCATION: 985

Jesus used the story of the prodigal son to illustrate God's relationship with his people. The parable shows God's character through the father and our rebellion through the son. The story is a vivid illustration of the LIFE FROM GOD posture—the son valued his father's gifts more than he valued his father. Ultimately the son only wanted what his benevolent and wealthy father could give him, and once he possessed it, the relationship was no longer necessary. He walked away. LOCATION: 1034

Elsewhere Jesus warned about the dangers of seeking wealth, a comfortable home, or a stellar reputation. None of these things are bad; in fact each is very good. But Jesus knows how easily we can twist one of God's good gifts into an ultimate desire. It can take a place he alone is worthy to hold in our lives. LOCATION: 1050

Here we discover what lies at the center of the LIFE FOR GOD posture. If you recall, LIFE UNDER GOD believes divine will is at the center of the cosmic apple. LIFE OVER GOD says that natural law or principles are at the core. And LIFE FROM GOD places the self with its desires at the center. Cutting open the LIFE FOR GOD's cosmic apple would reveal a mission at the core. Some great goal—understood to be initiated by God and carried forward by us—defines everything and everyone. An individual is either on the mission, the object of the mission, an obstacle to the mission, an aid to the mission, or a fat Christian who should be on the mission. LOCATION: 1182

But as we discussed in the last chapter, an idol is a good thing made into an ultimate thing, and the temptation within activist streams of Christianity is to put the good mission of God into the place God alone should occupy. LOCATION: 1224

Remember, God's original intent for us was a mission. He called humanity to rule over the earth, to fill and subdue it, and to extend his creative order and beauty far beyond the confines of the garden of Eden. This work was to be accomplished in perpetual communion with God, and it was to be motivated not by a fear of insignificance, but by the assurance of God's love for us. After the rebellion and the breaking of our union with God, humanity retained a sense of mission, a desire to achieve and subdue the earth. But when this work is pursued without God and not empowered by his presence and love, what was intended to be good and life giving becomes twisted and destructive. And rather than finding our value in God as his beloved children, instead we try to find our value in the mission we are chasing. LOCATION: 1248

Sometimes the people who fear insignificance the most are driven to accomplish the greatest things. As a

result, they are highly praised for their good works, which temporarily soothes their fear until the next goal can be achieved. But there is a dark side to this drivenness. Gordon MacDonald called it “missionalism.” It is “the belief that the worth of one’s life is determined by the achievement of a grand objective.” He said, Missionalism starts slowly and gains a foothold in the leader’s attitude. Before long the mission controls almost everything: time, relationships, health, spiritual depth, ethics, and convictions. In advanced stages, missionalism means doing whatever it takes to solve the problem. In its worst iteration, the end always justifies the means. The family goes; health is sacrificed; integrity is jeopardized; God connection is limited. LOCATION: 1254

Others have shown how ministry rooted in the LIFE FOR GOD posture actually contributes to addictive behaviors. When the accolades that give pastors a sense of significance cease or never come at all, some pastors begin to nurse secret pleasures on the side to numb their pain. LOCATION: 1283

Leaders may be burning out at a rate of fifteen hundred per month, young people may be riddled with anxiety, and divorce rates in the church may be rising and families falling apart, but no one seems to stop and ask whether this is really what God intended the Christian life to be. No one asks, at least not out loud, how Paul could be filled with joy in prison while not accomplishing anything tangibly for God. They don’t ask because that might slow things down. Remember, the work must go on. Impact, man! LOCATION: 1298

Like the younger son we often build our identities around what we receive from God. Or like the older son we find our value in how we serve God. A great deal of effort is expended in faith communities trying to transform people from younger sons into older sons. But this is a fool’s errand, because what mattered most to the father was neither the younger son’s disobedience nor the older son’s obedience, but having his sons with him. And so it is with our heavenly Father. Reversing the rebellion of Eden and restoring what was lost can only be accomplished when we learn that at the center of God’s heart is having his children with him. LOCATION: 1342

If you recall, each of the four popular postures has a different way of seeing the universe. LIFE UNDER GOD sees the world as governed by the capricious will of God. LIFE OVER GOD places immutable natural laws at the center. LIFE FROM GOD assumes the world orbits around the self and its desires. And LIFE FOR GOD sees a divine mission at the core of all things. LOCATION: 1386

If we peeled back the physical and metaphysical layers of time and space and peered into the very core of the universe, we would not discover divine will, natural law, personal desire, or global mission. Instead we would find God existing in eternal relationship with himself. This changes our view both of the world and why God created it. I like how Kevin DeYoung explained it: “With a biblical understanding of the Trinity we can say that God did not create in order to be loved, but rather, created out of the overflow of the perfect love that had always existed among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who ever live in perfect and mutual relationship and delight.” LOCATION: 1396

The LIFE WITH GOD posture is predicated on the view that relationship is at the core of the cosmos: God the Father with God the Son with God the Holy Spirit. And so we should not be surprised to discover that when God desired to restore his broken relationship with people, he sent his Son to dwell with us. His plan to restore his creation was not to send a list of rules and rituals to follow (LIFE UNDER GOD), nor was it the implementation of useful principles (LIFE OVER GOD). He did not send a genie to grant us our desires (LIFE FROM GOD), nor did he give us a task to accomplish (LIFE FOR GOD). Instead God himself came to be with us—to walk with us once again as he had done in Eden in the beginning. Jesus entered into our dark existence to share our broken world and to illuminate a different way forward. His coming was a sudden and glorious catastrophe of good. LOCATION: 1401

LIFE UNDER, OVER, FROM, and FOR GOD each seeks to use God to achieve some other goal. God is seen as a means to an end. For example, LIFE FROM GOD uses him to supply our material desires. LIFE OVER GOD

uses him as the source of principles or laws. LIFE UNDER GOD tries to manipulate God through obedience to secure blessings and avoid calamity. And LIFE FOR GOD uses him and his mission to gain a sense of direction and purpose. LOCATION: 1414

But LIFE WITH GOD is different because its goal is not to use God, its goal is God. He ceases to be a device we employ or a commodity we consume. Instead God himself becomes the focus of our desire. But before we can really desire God, we must have a clear understanding of who he is and what he is like. The reason most people gravitate to one of the other four postures is because they've never received a clear vision of who God is, and so they settle for something less. LOCATION: 1418

Those with an incomplete or tainted vision of God either want to use him or dismiss him. But when a full, clear, and rapturous vision of God is presented, we will not settle for anything less than being with him. LOCATION: 1450

What does LIFE WITH GOD look like? A vision of God that causes us to treasure him is not the same as living with him. There are two additional components necessary to complete the picture. Consider a young man who recently acquired his driver's license. He wants to start his new motorized life with a vintage Ford Mustang. First, the young man must have a vision of such a life, one that leads him to treasure the Mustang. But treasuring the Mustang is quite different from living with the Mustang. Two other things must occur. He must also be united with the Mustang. This may happen by purchasing it, by receiving it as a gift, or by stealing it. But until he has it he cannot have a life with it. Finally, his envisioned life will not be fulfilled when the Mustang is in his driveway. He must do more than possess it; he must experience it. He must take it for a drive, cruise the streets, and engage the machine…LIFE WITH GOD entails all three—treasuring, uniting, and experiencing. LOCATION: 1489

John Piper captured the problem well: Christ did not die to forgive sinners who go on treasuring anything above seeing and savoring God. And people who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God. It's a way of overcoming every obstacle to everlasting joy in God. If we don't want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel. LOCATION: 1518

Fulfilling God's desire to be with us is why Jesus went to the cross. He did not die merely to inaugurate a mission (LIFE FOR GOD) or to give us a second chance at life (LIFE FROM GOD). He did not endure the horrors of the cross just to demonstrate a principle of love for others to emulate (LIFE OVER GOD) or to appease divine wrath (LIFE UNDER GOD). While each of these may be rooted in truth and affirmed by Scripture, it is only when we grasp God's unyielding desire to be with us that we begin to see the ultimate purpose of the cross. It is more than a vehicle to rescue us from death; it transports us into the arms of Life. The cross is how we acquire our treasure. It is how we find unity with God. LOCATION: 1527

The fact is, having been united with God through Christ, we are invited to experience LIFE WITH GOD now. It is true that we will experience him most fully when the world and we are completely set free from the malady and malice of sin, but that does not mean we cannot experience God in the present. LOCATION: 1541

While Jesus certainly prayed vocally both in private and public, these utterances did not encompass the fullness of his relationship with his Father. A fuller reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus lived in constant communion with the Father even when no words were used. This fuller understanding of prayer is often perplexing to those who have only known prayer as communication. LOCATION: 1577

Thomas Kelly wrote about this kind of life in his simple but profound classic, A Testament of Devotion. He described it as "simultaneity"—the ability to be engaged with two things at the same time: There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing,

calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings. The secular world of today values and cultivates only the first level believing this is where the real business of mankind is done . . . But we know that the deep level of prayer is the most important thing in the world. It is at this deep level that the real business of life is determined. LOCATION: 1597

Coming to see prayer as communion and not just communication changes its place in our Christian life. If God is truly our treasure, and if we have faith that through Christ we have been united with him, then prayer ceases to be a Christian's duty and becomes our joy because it is how we experience our treasure in the now. LOCATION: 1608

Although each uses a different approach, each of these four postures is an attempt to control the world in order to alleviate our fears—especially our fear of death. But each of them fails to deliver on this promise. LOCATION: 1636

Faith is the opposite of seeking control. It is surrendering control. It embraces the truth that control is an illusion—we never had it and we never will. Rather than trying to overcome our fears by seeking more control, the solution offered by LIFE WITH GOD is precisely the opposite—we overcome fear by surrendering control. But surrender is only possible if we have total assurance that we are safe. We must be convinced that if we let go we will be caught. This assurance only comes when we trust that our heavenly Father desires to be with us and will not let us fall. LOCATION: 1665

It is only when we live with God and come to experientially know his goodness and love that the shadows break and these commands begin to make sense. If I am eternally safe in the care of my Good Shepherd, and I come to see the world as a safe place, then I am set free from my fears. I am free to give rather than hoard. I am free to enjoy each day rather than worry. I am free to forgive others rather than retaliate against them. And I am even free to love the person determined to harm me. But all of it starts with trust (a.k.a. faith) in God's ever-present love and care for me. LOCATION: 1765

But hope is an idea that seems to have lost some of its weight. We use the word in a way that means little more than wishful thinking. "Oh, I hope the Cubs make the playoffs this year." Or it is used as a political brand making promises no candidate can possibly fulfill. But hope is much more than wishful thinking or unfounded optimism. Biblically, hope is understood to be a "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul." Hope is what allows us to keep our bearing in turbulent seas; it is the assurance that the chaos we experience in this world will not win, but God's purposes will overcome. In this way hope is inexorably linked to faith. In Nouwen's trapeze metaphor, faith is the act of surrender when the flyer lets go of the bar. Hope is what the flyer experiences as he soars through the air. It is the assurance that the catcher will catch him even before he sees the catcher's hands or feels his grasp. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." LOCATION: 1955

LIFE UNDER GOD promotes moral certitude in a culture that can no longer define right and wrong. It tells us that obeying divine commands will be our anchor in these volatile times. LIFE OVER GOD, at least the non-atheist variety, says hope will come from employing God's principles in your life. You can navigate to safe harbor if you just use the right charts. LIFE FROM GOD places hope in the process of self-actualization. Purpose comes from identifying and then fulfilling one's desires. And LIFE FOR GOD finds hope in devoting one's life to the accomplishment of a purpose greater than one's self. Mission is the anchor that will give you meaning and significance. LOCATION: 1989

Os Guinness said it this way: "First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia)." In other words,

it is not our circumstances or behaviors or radical decisions that give our lives meaning and hope, but our unity with God himself. LOCATION: 2081

What brings a person value, significance, and hope is not what he does but with whom he does it. The call to live in continual communion with God means that every person's life, no matter how mundane, is elevated to sacred heights. LOCATION: 2099

Hope does not depend on what's happening around your boat. Hope depends on who is in your boat. LOCATION: 2119

Without silence and solitude with God, said Nouwen, we remain unconvinced of our worth. Instead we will live each day striving for affirmation, praise, and success. Rather than being set free to love others, we will be endlessly seeking to prove our own value. We will labor to water our gardens by drawing buckets from the world's empty wells. In the end this leads not to love, but to a dry and weary existence. LOCATION: 2230

If we return to Nouwen's trapeze analogy, we can see the transient nature of both faith and hope. Faith is the courage to release the trapeze trusting that the Catcher will rescue us. Hope is the peace and assurance we experience as we soar untethered through the air knowing the Catcher will not let us fall. But once we are caught, once we are safely and fully in his grasp, faith and hope disappear. All that remains is the love between the Catcher and the caught. "Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away." LOCATION: 2315

- Am I a sinner—a despicable being, living under the constant threat of God's wrath and punishment, who must appease his will through strict obedience to moral and ritual commands (LIFE UNDER GOD)?
- Am I a manager—an autonomous being who has been given a divine manual for operating my life and world, and whose fate will ultimately rest upon how well I implement God's principles and instructions (LIFE OVER GOD)?
- Am I a consumer—a discontent being comprised of unmet desires and longings who demands all things, people, and even God to orbit around me and fulfill my expectations (LIFE FROM GOD)?
- Am I a servant—a worker created to fulfill a great mission whose sense of value is inexorably linked to what I am able to accomplish and the magnitude of my impact on the world (LIFE FOR GOD)? LOCATION: 2335

At various times and in different places, each of these identities has been true of me. I am a sinner who has lived selfishly and with disregard for God and others. I am a manager who must steward resources and abilities with wisdom and foresight. I am a consumer with needs and desires that can only be satisfied by God and others. And I am a servant called by God to accomplish things in this world for his glory. Disconnected from a LIFE WITH GOD, each of these can lead to a dangerously flawed understanding of Christianity, not to mention a warped perception of God and myself. But even when tethered to a robust communion with him, none of these identities captures fully who I am. LOCATION: 2343