

A 28 DAY JOURNEY  
INTO ETERNITY  
BASED ON DR. LARRY CRABB'S  
FINAL JOURNAL

# The Best is Yet to Come



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LARGER **STORY**

# "The Best is Yet to Come"

## FORWARD

*Dad loved that saying. Eternal perspective kept him going to the end. And that perspective gives us real hope as we trudge through life in this fallen world. Larry left us with many things that continue to point us to Heaven. In the last few weeks of his life, he wrote out his thoughts - "The Thoughts of a Dying Man". His last written words continue to urge us all to FINISH THE RACE WELL. I'm so grateful to have known him and I hope these words continue to draw you to an eternal perspective during our short lives on this side of eternity. Dad became most clear of one thing "We live by faith not sight." He now sees Jesus and is living by sight in GLORY.*



Executive Director,  
Larger Story  
& Dr. Larry Crabb's Son



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# The Best is Yet to Come

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# ABOUT THE JOURNAL

This devotional began as a desire to share with you the last journal of Dr. Larry Crabb. Here at Larger Story, we have years of his journals in our archive that we might share at some point, but his last written words seemed particularly special to us. As we thought about how to share them, we could think of nothing that would honor him more than a devotional intended to lead you into a special encounter with God while pursuing a deeper understanding of what it means to live with an eternal perspective.

This is a unique opportunity to peer behind the curtain and get a glimpse into what a man who spent his life ardently pursuing God was thinking right before he entered the presence of the Trinity. It will not be surprising to see that his thoughts before he died were consistent with the message he had been given from the Spirit throughout his life. The questions he wrestled with as he died were similar to the ones he grappled with in life and that he wrote about throughout his storied career. Larry died as he lived. He did not quit. He finished well.

You will find in this devotional the full contents of Larry's journal during the month before he died on February 28th, 2021. There are also excerpts from his last public appearance on a webinar he filmed with his sons, Kep and Ken, during that same time. And finally, we have included a few relevant passages from some of his books that portray the eternal perspective he cultivated throughout his adult life. Following the inspirational passages are a series of questions intended to stir your heart toward the Trinity and Heaven. You may choose not to answer all the questions. Follow the Spirit's leading and trust that He will guide your introspection and your imagination to the places in your heart and mind He most longs to touch.

## SUPPORTING RESOURCES

This daily devotional includes other elements and resources such as Larry's Farewell Video and worship songs to enhance your experience with this daily journal. You can access the extra resources by going to:

[Largerstory.com/Larrys-last-journal](http://Largerstory.com/Larrys-last-journal)

## ELEMENTS OF THE DEVOTIONAL

Each Day of the Devotional is structured into three segments:

### HOLY INSPIRATION

If you have ever been around someone near death, you know you have stood on holy ground. The veil is lifted a bit and Heaven comes nearer....You feel it... You are moved by it...It is palpable. While reading these last words the sense of the sacred is weighty. Although Larry's writings are not holy in the truest sense of that word, these last words of his certainly lead us to a holy place. And as he did throughout his life, his words are filled with references and reflections of holy Scripture, which we included here to draw you closer to a holy God. It is our prayer that these inspirational passages will awaken a deeper desire in you to let go of the things of this world and hold tighter to the hope of Heaven.



## HOLY INTROSPECTION

When Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord and was confronted with holiness, he was broken and called to repentance. In the presence of the burning bush, Moses removed his shoes in recognition of the holy ground on which he stood. As you are inspired by this thin and hallowed space between life and death, take some time to care for your soul. Be honest with yourself before the Trinity. There in your brokenness you can “look bad in the face of love” and repent, come clean, be purified. With a clean heart and an open mind, you will be free to imagine.

## HOLY IMAGINATION

No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him, but the Spirit of God reveals things to us.

(1 Corinthians 2:9) And God has placed eternity in our hearts so that we cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

But how can we long for Heaven if we never imagine what it will be like?

C. S. Lewis said, “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.”

We thirst for something and Someone so profound that our hearts are never satisfied. If we follow that thirst, we find God and the place He is preparing for us. In this time of imagining, ask for a vision of Heaven. No matter how inadequate it may be, it is still necessary. Trust God to hide you in the mountain as He passes by. To lead you into the wilderness and speak tenderly to you. Be still and know. Let Him stir your longing and rouse your imagination.

*Final Musings*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

## Larry's Last Writings

It's February 3, 2021. I expect to die soon, perhaps in a month, maybe two or three months that I so badly want to spend with family, mostly with Rachael - then I long to see Jesus.

Perhaps I could call what I'm about to write – I don't yet know what words I will put on this paper – my spiritual will and testament – As best I can, I intend to write what is going on in my mind, heart, and soul. I've never died before, so I'm on virgin territory.

## Psalm 90: 1-2 &amp; 10-12

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God

The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span[c] is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

## Psalm 139: 16-18

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.



## Day 1 FINAL MUSINGS

Psalm 139:16-18, *continued*

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you."

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses- read the entire Psalm. What strikes you about it?

Explore the statement- "teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom." How do you number your days? How would that give you wisdom?

What does it mean to you that God has been your dwelling place from the beginning?

Do you rest in God as your dwelling place?

Reflect on Psalm 139. What does it mean to you that God had written all of your days in His book before you were ever born?

Do you live as if God wrote your story and invites you to join Him, or as if you are solely responsible for writing your own story every day? Give an example.

## Day 1 FINAL MUSINGS

If God's thoughts are really precious to you, what keeps you from resting in the story He has written?

If you could internalize the reality of Psalm 139, how would that impact your longing for Heaven?

Is the Spirit leading you to a place of repentance? If so, spend time there now.



### HOLY IMAGINATION

Imagine that this was your last month, week, day on earth. How well have you lived into the story God has written for you?

What do you want to do with your last days on earth? Who do you want to spend them with?

What is going on in your mind, in your heart, in the depths of your soul as you think about leaving this world behind?



## Day 1 FINAL MUSINGS

What do you leave behind?

Who do you leave behind?

What kind of legacy do you want to leave?

Write your spiritual will and testament below:

## *Sustaining Grief with Hope*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

February 3rd, continued:

It seems very clear that I'm to leave this world. Leaving Rachael, all family, and so many friends, actually leaving them never to see them until they too come home; seems so difficult, surreal, a first-time experience; I cannot process it. I can only feel a loss that one day will be fully compensated. That sustains my grief with hope. We will meet again, in a much better place.

Revelation 21: 1-4

"Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.[c] 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

## Day 2 SUSTAINING GRIEF WITH HOPE

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

What current losses in your life cause you grief today?

If you were to leave the world today, what then would cause you grief and loss?

How do you feel about a grief now that will one day be compensated?

What keeps your heart tethered to the things of this earth? People? Purpose unfulfilled? Anticipated plans? Others?

Do you ever think about the place Jesus is preparing for you? What stirs in your mind when you consider it?

Where are you struggling to trust?

Of what do you need to repent?



## Day 2 SUSTAINING GRIEF WITH HOPE

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Take some time to imagine being finally separated from the people and things you love most in this world. Describe how you are feeling.

Meditate on Revelation 21:1-4, especially verse 4. Consider those relationships you would grieve if you were to be separated from them today. Imagine how those relationships would be different in the new Heaven and new earth.

Now imagine being reunited with them in that place where there is no conflict, no illness, no lack. What is that reunion like?

Are there any changes you would like to make in light of this?

# *Trembling Curiosity*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 3rd, continued:

I've said to a few folks that I have no fear. Perhaps as I come closer to death I will. I don't know. I don't think so. But I do feel a trembling curiosity. What will the experience be? Will I walk through a door into Narnia to meet Aslan? Or will it be an entirely different experience of instantly leaving this disappointing world and right away meeting Jesus with a smile so warm and tender that I've never seen before? Maybe I'm wise enough to fantasize less and, just as I wrote, wait for Heaven? Only then, says John, will I see Him as He is, and only then will I be like Him as He is.

I John 3:1-3

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

HOLY INTROSPECTION

How do you feel about the statement “The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him?”

Are you curious about what it will be like to see Jesus? Do you resonate with Larry’s description of trembling in his curiosity? What is that like for you?

Are you curious about what you will be like when we are finally like Him?

Consider the statement, “Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” What needs purifying in you? Take those things before the Trinity.

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Take some time to imagine what it will be like when you see Jesus for the first time. Will it be walking through the wardrobe into Narnia? Or some other scene or metaphor that stirs your imagination?

How will you feel? What will you be thinking? What will you do?

Listen to “I can Only Imagine” on the playlist. (You can find it at [Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](https://largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) ) Read about the transfiguration in Matthew 17: 1-9. And imagine what you will see, think, and feel when you see Jesus in the fullness of His glory.

With a posture of trembling curiosity, describe what you think it will be like.

Imagine Jesus’ warm and tender smile for you. What do you hear him say in that moment? How do you respond?

# *My Spiritual Disappointments*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 3rd, continued:

Reading Moltmann's book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, again has let me see a bit more how eternally big God is, how above all my thoughts and ways the Trinity is unfolding a story that sometimes really disappoints me – I thought the Father would be more deeply experienced as a peaceful presence; I thought the Son's promise to never leave me nor forsake would generate an unfailing experience of joy; and I thought the Spirit would produce more spiritual fruit than I've been able to recognize.

Isaiah 55: 8-9

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

9 For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."



### HOLY INTROSPECTION

List all of your disappointments with God's ways? Think about your relationships, your work, your current circumstances. Be as honest and thorough as you can be.

Using Larry's honesty as a model, how are you disappointed with the Father?

How are you disappointed with the Son?

How are you disappointed with the Spirit?

How does this list of disappointments keep you from a closer connection to each person of the Trinity?

## Day 4 MY SPIRITUAL DISAPPOINTMENTS

How has your response to those disappointments caused you to miss an opportunity to be better prepared for Heaven?

How have you demanded that God's thoughts match up with your thoughts? How are you doing that today?

What about your disappointments and demands require repentance and forgiveness?



### HOLY IMAGINATION

Walk through each one of the disappointments you listed and consider what God might think about them in contrast to what you think about them.

Consider how God will turn these disappointments into delight in Heaven?

## Day 4 MY SPIRITUAL DISAPPOINTMENTS

Now write a lament about your disappointments and what you have missed by holding the disappointment. Start with the cry of your heart over all that disappointed you.

And then remember the God of hope whose thoughts are not your thoughts, whose ways are not your ways, because they are so much higher. Explore this hope that is higher than the Heavens are above the earth and praise the One who sustains the hope.

## *Tremble & Trust*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

*When God's Ways Make No Sense* pg. 227-229

Unsettled Trust:

As I finish writing this book, I realize I still tremble more than I trust. Perhaps that is your story as well.

I've just re-read everything I've written in these nineteen chapters. And something occurred to me that might encourage both of us to stay the course. Western Christian culture appears to be divided in half. One half, perhaps three quarters, emphasizes God's love in a way that de-emphasizes God's holiness. The other half, maybe only one quarter, emphasizes God's holiness in a way that de-emphasizes His love.

Both belong together each infused with the other. Dividing them has unfortunate consequences.

Consider the obvious:

- Because God is holy, His thoughts and His ways are holy.
- Because God is love, His thoughts and His ways reveal love.

Emphasize God's love over His holiness, and you come up with a compassionate God who wants nothing more for His followers than that they feel good about themselves and their lives. God therefore supports and approves whatever we do that relieves distress and provides satisfaction, within broad limits of morality.

Self-examination in the light of God's holiness then becomes an unnecessary bother, a needless journey toward self-awareness. *Big sins are obvious, easily recognized and mostly avoided. Relational sins, sins that fall short of holy love, are subtle, easily ignored, and mostly committed without awareness. They are not of concern.*

Self-assured confidence in God's loving thoughts and ways obscures conviction in the presence of His holy thoughts and ways. Real trembling is avoided, and naïve trust is enjoyed.

Emphasize God's holiness over His love:

God therefore grudgingly supports and approves whatever we do that conforms to His rigid standards at least the standards we lower to put within our reach.

Safe rest in the warmth of God's love becomes a luxury still sinning people cannot afford. Harsh scrutiny energizes continual self-examination with the goal of owning wretchedness that pleads mercy in the hope of avoiding God's deserved wrath.

Conviction in the presence of God's holy thoughts and ways eliminates the joy of rest in God's loving thoughts and ways. Anxious trembling continues and restful trust proves impossible.



God is love and God is holy. *He is the God of holy love, the God whose love never compromises His holiness and whose holiness never trivializes His love.* It is this God who tells a story that requires us to tremble because He cannot and will not allow true disciples to be satisfied with less than the depths of His holy love. Suffering is inevitable in order to combat *premature contentment* with a comfortably blessed life. God can and will do a good work in us that empowers us to patiently endure life's difficulties that He does not prevent as we wait eagerly for the eternity of perfect joy that He promised.

You and I can tremble in hope as we trust that all is well. His good story is on track. All things are working together for a good purpose, to slowly form us into "little Christs" who display the relational holy love of Jesus until we share in divine happiness forever.

Trembling is inevitable on the road we must walk if we are to trust that the God whose ways make no sense is always doing us good.

Ezekiel 36: 22-29

"Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Journal about each of the following statements from the inspirational passage. How do they strike you? Are they reflective of what happens in your soul, as you deal with the tension between God’s love and His holiness? Do these statements lead you to a place of conviction?

Emphasize God’s love over His holiness:

*Big sins are obvious, easily recognized and mostly avoided.*

*Relational sins, sins that fall short of holy love, are subtle, easily ignored, and mostly committed without awareness. They are not of concern.*

Self-assured confidence in God’s loving thoughts and ways obscures conviction in the presence of His holy thoughts and ways. *Real trembling is avoided, and naïve trust is enjoyed.*

Emphasize God’s holiness over His love:

God therefore grudgingly supports and approves whatever we do that conforms to His rigid standards *at least the standards we lower to put within our reach.*

Safe rest in the warmth of God's love becomes a luxury still sinning people cannot afford. Harsh scrutiny energizes continual self-examination with the goal of owning wretchedness that pleads mercy in the hope of avoiding God's deserved wrath.

Conviction in the presence of God's holy thoughts and ways eliminates the joy of rest in God's loving thoughts and ways. Anxious trembling continues and restful trust proves impossible.

Now read the Ezekiel 36:22-29. Explore the kind of love God offered you in order to protect and preserve His holy name. How does that make you feel? What desires are stirred in you? Does this bring you to a place of repentance?



### HOLY IMAGINATION

Now respond to the God described in this passage. How do you feel about Him? What are you thinking? What do you long for? Remember the words of Ezekiel 36 as you reflect.

Imagine a comfortable, lovely setting where you are having a conversation with your Father. Share with Him all that stirs in you as you read Larry's words below:

He is the God of holy love, the God whose love never compromises His holiness and whose holiness never trivializes His love. It is this God who tells a story that requires us to tremble because He cannot and will not allow true disciples to be satisfied with less than the depths of His holy love. Suffering is inevitable in order to combat premature contentment with a comfortably blessed life.

Imagine that it is God communicating to you the truths Larry wrote about below. How do His truths settle in your heart? How do you want to respond to Him?

You and I can tremble in hope as we trust that all is well. His good story is on track. All things are working together for a good purpose, to slowly form us into "little Christs" who display the relational holy love of Jesus until we share in divine happiness forever. Trembling is inevitable on the road we must walk if we are to trust that the God whose ways make no sense is always doing us good.

If you feel led to praise the Lord or commit something to Him, write about that here.

## *A Trembling Rest*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

February 3rd, continued:

But no! The Trinity seems to want me to live by faith, not by the more (wrongly) desired by sight, right up to my death. Only THEN will I live by sight, when I see Jesus! I am finding a mildly trembling rest – an oxymoron? - as I just wrote of a trembling curiosity – in the inter-relations among the Trinity that led to the release of divine love. A love that required the infinite God to somehow make space in their infinitude for this world outside of their infinitude for a finite world with finite creatures who actually bear the image of the *human God*, mere humans who were given a free will, and seized that gift by abusing their freedom. As I have, foolishly, sinfully, disrespectfully to God, believing there was a greater good than drawing near to God. In my proclivity toward Satan's kingdom, I actually believed it would be a great good, greater than drawing near to God, to enjoy a much-blessed life in this world: a wonderful marriage, godly children, healthy saved grandchildren, a well-received ministry, enough money to enjoy legitimate pleasures available in this world.

Was I that wrong? No, it's not wrong to enjoy God's blessings during our time in this world. But it's fiendishly wrong to count them as our greatest good. Suffering is required to detach us from our wrong understanding of the greatest good God provides. It's a narrow road of affliction that introduces us to real life.



Hebrews 11:1

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

How have you seized God’s gift of free will and abused it?

How are you inclined, even in a subtle way, toward Satan’s kingdom- that of seeking the much-blessed life? How did that play out today?

Do you rest in the divine love of the Trinity or in your much-blessed life? What does that realization stir in you?

What narrow road of affliction is currently introducing you to “real life”? Are you grateful for it or struggling to accept it?

What repentance is needed to detach you from a wrong understanding of God’s blessings?

HOLY IMAGINATION

Take some time to study Andrei Rublev's icon of the Trinity. (You can find it at [Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](http://Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) ) What do you notice?

Read Henri Nouwen's reflection on this ancient artistic conception of the Trinity:

The more we look at this holy image with the eyes of faith, the more we come to realize that it is painted not as a lovely decoration for a convent church, nor as a helpful explanation of a difficult doctrine, but as a holy place to enter and stay within.

As we place ourselves in front of the icon in prayer, we come to experience a gentle invitation to participate in the intimate conversation that is taking place among the three divine angels and to join them around the table. The movement from the Father toward the Son and the movement of both Son and Spirit toward the Father become a movement in which the one who prays is lifted up and held secure...

We come to see with our inner eyes that all engagements in this world can bear fruit only when they take place within this divine circle... the house of perfect love (Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons, p. 20-22). Imagine yourself at the table. Listen to the gentle invitation to participate in the intimate conversation taking place there. What do you hear?

## Day 6 A TREMBLING REST

As you experience the movement from the Father toward the Son and the movement of both the Son and Spirit toward the Father what are you feeling?

What is it like to be at that table?

Does this vision have the power to detach you from whatever blessings you hold as a greater good?

## *Waiting for Heaven to Begin*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

Life remains difficult, frustrating, nearly unbearable. But it seems now like Tom Brady throwing practice passes before lining up behind the center waiting for the next Super Bowl to begin. But oh, what a feeble analogy. I'm waiting for Heaven to begin! Something good rises up in my soul as I ponder and anticipate Heaven. So much that seemed important: life's opportunities for pleasure- life's responsibilities that require action- seem not only unimportant but fully dismissible. When I arrive in Heaven, everything will be dismissible as the reality of freely given joy becomes my daily experience. Mostly, such thoughts wonder through my mind, though in moments they seem only a warm sun rising slowly into a cold morning.

For now, the cold morning includes neuropathy that Jesus has done nothing to relieve, ongoing cancer that He has not cured, diabetes that remains in my body, a sleeplessness without relief now for many months. But again, Moltmann's book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, has opened my eyes wider, not nearly wide enough, to grasp that there is a much bigger story going on in the Trinity that I can pass no judgment on, but only *by faith* believe that it is unalterably good no matter how much my understanding of what is good doesn't line up with God's. My faith has its weaknesses, but it is alive.

*2 Corinthians 5: 1-5*

*“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our Heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on[a] we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

So, we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

HOLY INTROSPECTION

What seems important today- life's opportunities for pleasure? Life's responsibilities that require action? Something else?

What would it take to look at all of those things you listed and deem them fully dismissible in light of Heaven?

Today, where is your understanding of your story not aligning with the story God is writing for you?

Where do you need to say, “Amen” (so be it) to the story God is telling with your life?

Where is your faith weak? Where is it alive?  
Read the passage in 2 Corinthians again. What lingers?

#### HOLY IMAGINATION

Ponder and anticipate Heaven- what rises up in your soul today?

How is your groaning about this earthly tent fueling your longing for Heaven’s dwelling?

What does it mean to you to walk by faith- not by sight?

Now imagine what it will be like to walk by sight, knowing that your faith was alive and true?



# *Sustaining Props*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 3rd, continued:

Well, those are my thoughts as I prepare to die. So many sustaining props have been taken away that had provided me with what the world (and counterfeit Christianity) thinks of as the good life. I liked my former life better than I like my life now.

Ask me if I desire healing more than I long for conformity to the way Jesus viewed His suffering, and I might have to think that the prospect of thinking like Jesus is taking shape, I'm quite sure I would choose conformity to the image of Jesus. Perhaps that choice would seem something like a small bright cloud in an otherwise dark day.

Mother Teresa lamented, "Jesus is asking a bit too much". I complain, "it is too much". Can I move through my unhealed multiple sicknesses and the loss they bring to a comfortable life, and from somewhere deep within my soul declare with anticipated hope and longed for joy that I want Jesus? Do I love the Lord who could return me to the good life I lived for more than seventy years, but doesn't? Is He after something more from me, something better? Is there no better plan for the rest of my days in this unsatisfying world than to trudge through difficult days with a less than rejoicing attitude?

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

"The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. (*Continued on next page*)

God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose."

Jeremiah 2: 13

"For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

"17 Now the Lord[a] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, [b] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.[c] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Honestly consider what are your sustaining props- the things besides the Trinity that keep you going when life is hard?

What broken cisterns do you go to?

When you go to these broken cisterns, do you think about the reality that you have forsaken God, the fountain of living waters?

What is too much for you right now?

In light of your current circumstances, can you sincerely say with Larry that “you are quite sure you would choose conformity to the image of Jesus?”

Adapt these questions to your circumstances and ask yourself the questions Larry was asking:

Do I love the Lord who could return me to the good life I lived for more than seventy years, but doesn't?

Is He after something more from me, something better?

Is there no better plan for the rest of my days in this unsatisfying world than to trudge through difficult days with a less than rejoicing attitude?

How do you feel about your answers to these questions?

As you consider what you have written, what is the Spirit leading you to do?

HOLY IMAGINATION

Think about how Christ is forming you now- What does it mean for you to be a “little Christ”?

What is He forming in you?

What is He forming out of you?

How is He asking you to be a “little Christ” in your closest relationships?

In your work?

Ask Him what His vision is for you now.

What is the vision He has of you in Heaven?

In light of your answers to these questions, describe who you might be in Heaven?

## *Higher Dream*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

#### Shattered Dreams

The highest dream we could ever dream, the wish that if granted would make us happier than any other blessing, is to know God, to actually experience Him. The problem is that we don't believe this idea is true. We assent to it in our heads. But we don't feel it in our hearts.

Perhaps we can better hear what our Lord means when He tells us to live now with untroubled hearts....

I know things are not now as you want them. I know many of your dreams are not coming true. I want you to understand that things are not as I will one day make them. I like neither the distance between us nor the pain you suffer. Until I come to bring you to My Father's house, I am devoting myself to only one thing: I am preparing a place for you. And My Spirit, on My behalf, is devoting Himself to only one thing—preparing you to enjoy Me and all that I will provide.

I have called you not to the secular journey where you must make everything in your life now as pleasant as possible. I have called you to the spiritual journey, to a process of enlarging your heart to desire Me above everything else.

Do not be troubled by all the dreams that will shatter while you remain on earth. You will feel deep pain. But every sorrow you experience will be used by My Spirit to deepen your desire for Me. He will speak to you about Me. Listen for the voice. You will hear Him most clearly when suffering humbles you enough to want to hear Him, to know you cannot go on without hearing Him.

This time of distance, when you will feel such disappointment both with your life and with yourself, will awaken your heart to receive Me with great joy when I finally come. I will not delay. I will come at exactly the appointed time. My Father will give the signal. Listen for the shout.'

And our response is, Come, Lord Jesus; come soon! Until then, we wait with untroubled hearts. We scream, we cry, we fail, but we wait, abandoned to our Kinsman-Redeemer, confident that He has paid a price for us that guarantees our eventual intimacy."

John 14:1-7

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;[a] believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?[b] 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going."[c] 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.[d] From now on you do know him and have seen him."

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Deeply consider each of the ideas below. What happens in your heart as you absorb the truth of them?

"Until I come to bring you to My Father's house, I am devoting myself to only one thing: I am preparing a place for you. And My Spirit, on My behalf, is devoting Himself to only one thing—preparing you to enjoy Me and all that I will provide."

“I have called you not to the secular journey where you must make everything in your life now as pleasant as possible. I have called you to the spiritual journey, to a process of enlarging your heart to desire Me above everything else.”

“You will hear Him most clearly when suffering humbles you enough to want to hear Him, to know you cannot go on without hearing Him.”

Now consider the way that you live and the way you relate to God. Where are you falling short of living into the truths that Larry writes about?

#### HOLY IMAGINATION

Read John 14 again and imagine the place being prepared for you. What is it like? Do you have a place here on earth that feels so right to you that it might reflect the place Jesus would prepare for you? Describe or draw the place you see in your mind's eye below.

With that place in your mind's eye, read this last statement and respond to God out of the emotion and desire, positive or negative, it creates in you.

“This time of distance, when you will feel such disappointment both with your life and with yourself, will awaken your heart to receive Me with great joy when I finally come. I will not delay. I will come at exactly the appointed time. My Father will give the signal. Listen for the shout.”



*A Living Hope*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

The Week of February 8th-

Larry was at home and his whole family had gathered with him for one last time. During their time together, Kep and Ken took a few minutes to sit with their dad and record one last message from him to you. You can find the video here ([Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](http://Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal)) Below are portions of the transcript from that conversation.

Larry speaking: "But I want to be very clear that I believe the most important person you could ever know is Jesus Christ. Because he died. So, we're going to go to Heaven...

1 Peter makes that clear, on behalf of the Holy Spirit, on behalf of Jesus, when He says, put your entire hope in the coming of Jesus. Because until then, of course, he's with us. He'll never leave us nor forsake us. But it doesn't mean he's going to take our problems away. So, we really shouldn't sing, as if, because Jesus exists, we're not going to suffer. Because the Bible says through suffering, you enter the kingdom of God. And Jesus often doesn't relieve suffering. He's not relieving my suffering now, but he's telling me that "I'm with you." But he's not with me to eliminate pain. He's with me to trust him for the last day that's coming. So, I believe with all my heart, he is the King of Kings. He's the Lord of Lords. He's the Savior of mankind. He's the Savior of my soul. And that's one thing that seemed very, very important to me."

1 Peter 1: 3-10

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Slowly repeat to yourself the four statements Larry heard as if God were saying those things to you. How do they land in your heart?

Which statement is the hardest for you to believe and to receive?

Now read the passage from Ephesians 1 and underline anything that strikes you or is difficult for you. Which statement is the most difficult for you?

## Day 10 A LIVING HOPE

What does it mean to you that you were chosen? Before the foundation of the world?

How do you respond to the idea that you have been adopted as a son or daughter? What does that mean to you at a visceral level?

Finally, using Larry's musings as an example, talk to God about the reality that He wants you. He actually wants you so much. Sit with that simple statement, "I want you" and let the truth of it offer healing grace to the raw and wounded places in your heart.

Offer whatever is on your heart to God...

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Listen to the song, "Living Hope". You can find it in our Spotify playlist linked here ([Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](https://largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) )

How would you describe your Living Hope?

What is your inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading?

Can you join with Peter and get in touch with the reality that : Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory?

Capture whatever joy is filling your heart here, with words, a picture, a song a smell, a feeling....

Imagine coming into the presence of Jesus and Him finally taking your problems away, the things that have “grieved you for a little while”. What is that scene like?

among the Trinity that led to the  
divine love that created the universe

Day 11

## *I Want You*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

Week of February 8th, from the Farewell Video

Larry speaking: But there's something I've really heard. And I believe it was definitely from the Lord in the Spirit of God, maybe a couple of years ago by now, but it is rung in my ears as though I heard an audible voice. I did not hear an audible voice. But this is what I heard: "I want you!" This is the Spirit of God talking to me through Jesus,

*"I want you." "I'm with you." "I can use you." "And I'm coming for you."*

*I heard that almost audibly. And I've repeated that to myself at least five times a week. "I want you. I'm with you. I can use you." Even as I'm talking, hopefully, from my deathbed, I hope I am, because I want to go home. But "I want you"? I'm thinking, "You really want me? You know how I failed you so many times?" "I've forgotten them all."*

Ephesians 1:3-10

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us[b] for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known[c] to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in Heaven and things on earth"*

## HOLY INTROSPECTION

Slowly repeat to yourself the four statements Larry heard as if God were saying those things to you. How do they land in your heart?

Which statement is the hardest for you to believe and to receive?

Now read the passage from Ephesians 1 and underline anything that strikes you or is difficult for you. Which statement is the most difficult for you?

What does it mean to you that you were chosen? Before the foundation of the world?

How do you respond to the idea that you have been adopted as a son or daughter? What does that mean to you at a visceral level?

Finally, using Larry's musings as an example, talk to God about the reality that He wants you. He actually wants you so much. Sit with that simple statement, "I want you" and let the truth of it offer healing grace to the raw and wounded places in your heart.

Offer whatever is on your heart to God...

## HOLY IMAGINATION

Do you really believe that you are holy and blameless before Him? Visualize standing before God like Moses at the burning bush, but truly being holy and blameless because of the work of Jesus. What happens in you as you imagine that?

Imagine Jesus sitting in Heaven right now, wanting you. Eagerly waiting for you to come to Him. Getting ready to come for you. What is He saying to your heart?

What is happening in you as you listen to the One who loved your soul so much that He left Heaven to die for you?

Consider singing a hymn of joy and thanksgiving to the One who wants you. {see the Spotify playlist for ideas} (find the link at [Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](https://Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) )



# *I Am With You*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Week of February 8th, from the Farewell Video

“You have forgotten all my sins and you’re with me? You are never going to leave me or forsake me?”

Matthew 28: 19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

## HOLY INTROSPECTION

Just sit with that statement for a minute- “You have forgotten all my sins and you’re with me? You are never going to leave me or forsake me?” Explore what that reality means to you.

Look at Matthew 28. We stay so focused on our commissioning, but what if the most important part of that passage is the last phrase? What do you think drives the emphasis on the first part of the passage?

What would change for you if the emphasis was on who was with you instead of your commissioning?

Read this paraphrase that puts the last phrase first.

“Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. So go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Does anything new strike you?

How are you feeling as you reconsider this passage that is so foundational to our Western Christianity?



### HOLY IMAGINATION

Jesus says He is with you always, but what does that mean for today? Imagine you had an entire day off and you chose to spend the whole day with Jesus. Plan it with the same care you would plan a date with your special person or a birthday party for someone you love. What would you do?

Envision that day. What happens? What do you talk about? How are you feeling? What are you experiencing?

He also says that He is with you until the end of the age, so imagine spending that same day with Him in Heaven. What is that like? What is different? What is the same?

Now that you have planned and imagined your day with Jesus, ask Him what He would have planned. Sit for a minute and listen to what He says to you...

Consider finding some time in your schedule to set aside and spend with Jesus in this way.

## *You can use Me?*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

Week of February 8th, from the Farewell Video

“And you can use me?” Maybe on this little webinar, you can use me to encourage a few people. I'd love to be able to do that.”

Philippians 1: 27-30

“27 Only let your manner of life be worthy[h] of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, 30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Consider Matthew 28:19-20 again from yesterday. Think of all the places where Jesus describes His mission here on earth. (Isaiah 61, Luke 4:43 & 19:10, Revelation 21:5, etc.) How is he inviting you to participate with Him in His mission?

## Day 13    YOU CAN USE ME?

Consider Matthew 28:19-20 again from yesterday. Think of all the places where Jesus describes His mission here on earth. (Isaiah 61, Luke 4:43 & 19:10, Revelation 21:5, etc.) How is he inviting you to participate with Him in His mission?

What makes you glad, eager, enthusiastic about that mission?

What makes you anxious, afraid, insecure, resistant, or unwilling as you consider that mission?

Notice Larry's humility in the statement about being used by God on this webinar considering his 50 years of serving Jesus. Would you talk about your work with and for God in the same way? If not, how would you talk about it?

What inspires and/or convicts you as you read the passage from Philippians?

HOLY IMAGINATION

Imagine Jesus telling you how he can use you. Ask him.

Ask the Lord to impress on your heart how He has used you in the past.

How He wants to use you in the future.

Listen to song by Ray Boltz, *Thank You for Giving to the Lord*. (You can find it here- [Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](http://Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) )

Imagine what that day might be like. Who might come up to you? What might they say?

As you imagine that scene, look over to your Father. What do you see? What is He doing, feeling, saying to you?

# Are You Coming for Me?

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Week of February 8th, from the Farewell Video

"And I'm coming soon for you." I hope soon is today. It might be now, I don't know.

But those words are ringing in my soul. And you can hear them too. That's not a privilege afforded only to me. It's a privilege afforded to you. And I also have to say with the Apostle Paul would say this is going to be worth it all when we see Jesus. That's going to be everything. No, we're not going to complain. We're not going to say he allowed us to suffer too much. How could we ever tell Jesus he didn't do something well? He's doing everything well, even now.

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

*"16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

## HOLY INTROSPECTION

What light and momentary troubles caused you to complain today?



## Day 14 ARE YOU COMING FOR ME?

What does it mean that He is doing everything well in the midst of whatever trouble you are experiencing, whether those troubles are inconveniences or significant tragedies and traumas?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

What does it mean that Jesus is coming from you?

What kind of repentance is He inviting you into?

Imagine the scene from the parable of the prodigal son. Read it again (Luke 15: 11-32) to keep it fresh in your memory. Now imagine that you are the son- weary, forlorn, with only one small scrap of hope left- the sanctuary of your father's land. You lift your head....What do you see? Imagine what you are thinking, feeling, desiring as you see the One whose love you spurned, run toward you with arms outstretched, the One whose love is so great it reaches down the broken road you traveled and pulls you home....

Get inside that scene. Write about it here. What wells up inside of you as you see your Father running toward you with pure joy at the sight of the one He loves so much? If you are having trouble visualizing this scene, spend some time with Rembrandt's painting, *The Return of the Prodigal*. (Find the link at [Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](http://Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal))

As you imagine that scene, look over to your Father. What do you see? What is He doing, feeling, saying to you?

# *The Bible Means Everything*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Week of February 8th, from the Farewell Video

The Bible has come to mean everything to me because we don't typically hear God audibly. I've never heard God audibly. But I believe with all my heart that the Bible is literally not just the Word of God, certainly, but the words of God. And to be absent from the world is to be present with the Lord. And that's our destiny. Whatever good times you're going through, celebrate, and thank God for his blessings. Whatever hard times, you want to experience them as an opportunity to trust Him. And that's the Christian life. It wasn't meant to be easy. It's meant to be wonderful at some point. So, don't feel sorry for me. As the old saint said, "when I'm dead, I am probably more alive than I've ever been before. And I believe that, so I don't know what else to say. I am sure I could think of a dozen more things but those are my words. I hope they're an encouragement to you.

Hebrews 4: 9-16

"9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. *(Continued on next page)*

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the Heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

How do you value the Word of God that are the actual “words of God”?  
What does that distinction mean to you?

How is the Scripture living and active for you? When was the last time you experienced Scripture that way?

Do you value and rely on Scripture more in the good times or in the hard times?

Let the passage above, or some other favorite passage (such as Psalm 1 or 51) work in your heart as a living and active two-edged sword. How is it piercing the division of your soul and your spirit? What is it discerning about the thoughts and intentions of your heart?

Is this alive and active Scripture leading you to repentance?

## HOLY IMAGINATION

Think of the passage of Scripture that is most meaningful to you, perhaps your life verse or a passage that helps you when times are hard. Imagine the voice of God speaking those words over you. What happens in you as you experience His words in His voice?

Imagine Heaven where you will hear His voice speak tenderly to you every day and you will see His face as He gazes on you in fondness. Where there will be no brokenness or darkness to diminish the fullness of feeling perfectly loved. What rises up in you as you ponder that scene?

Think of a time recently when you have felt most alive. Or if it has been a while, think of the time in your past when you felt most alive. Write about that below, describing how you felt, what you did, where you were, what you were experiencing.

Now try to imagine that same experience multiplied a hundred-fold. Write or draw or dream about that.

Listen to “I Ran Out of That Grave” (You can find it here [Largersstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](http://Largersstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal) ) or another song that makes you feel vigorously alive. What does the music do in your soul as you are in this place of dreaming about Heaven?

# Confident, Holy Indifference

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Tuesday, February 9, 2021 - A brief effort at Journaling

What's going on in me today? A strange sense of peace, more quiet, almost holy experience of indifference. What will be is in the Lord's hands. His hands are always doing me good, but, as I've observed, my idea of God's goodness directed to me doesn't always match God's idea of unblemished loving goodness. So even as I wait for His goodness to be revealed in the days ahead, it seems best to me to develop no expectations as to what's coming, to rest in confident, holy indifference, to live now as a surrendered soul, denying myself as an entitled self. To demand anything from God seems the height of hubris. I do feel more mystery than clarity about what it will mean to first die, then to be in Heaven, and to see Jesus. My imagination captures little, but whatever shapes my imagination seems more pleasantly awesome than merely pleasant. I like that. Well, my thoughts for today. This, too: I'm happily bored. Nothing is required of me. I'm just waiting for whatever comes next. It's not up to me.

Philippians 1: 19-26

"Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. *(Continued on next page.)*

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

What do you think Larry means by a “holy indifference”?

Do you hear that same holy indifference in Paul’s words? How is it similar and/or different?

What are you feeling as you contemplate Larry’s and Paul’s attitude?

What motivates Paul in the work that he is doing? Do the same things motivate you?

Are you convinced to continue? Explore that conviction.

If not, what other desire is stronger?

What do you think Larry meant when he said that holy indifference enabled him to live as a surrendered soul? Are you a surrendered soul? In what way?

Or do you see your heart more through the filter of an entitled self, living from a place of entitlement instead of gratitude and humility?

Who do you most want to be?

#### HOLY IMAGINATION

Enter the mystery and embrace it. Read this part of the journal again: “My imagination captures little, but whatever shapes my imagination seems more pleasantly awesome than merely pleasant. I like that. Well, my thoughts for today. This, too: I’m happily bored. Nothing is required of me. I’m just waiting for whatever comes next. It’s not up to me.” What stirs in you as you read those sentences?

Try to put yourself in Larry’s place. Imagine what that would like to just wait, with nothing required of you, for whatever comes next. How are you feeling? What are you thinking? What do you want most? Describe what that is like here.



Designate a time- 5 minutes, a few hours, set aside an entire day- where nothing is required of you but just waiting- waiting on the Lord, waiting for whatever comes next, waiting for Heaven. You don't have to do anything; you just have to wait and enjoy God as you do it.

What is that like for you? Is this a practice you might consider doing again or even regularly?

# *You Will Seek Me and Find Me*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

From Finding God, pg. 190-91

You still struggle, sometimes severely, with fear, anger, and discouragement. But now a quiet awareness will not fully go away, an awareness that God is good, that sin is bad, and that the relief it brings is temporary and, in the long run, futile. You find yourself a little more patient. You check irritability when it rises. You are confident, even in the middle of panic, that things will be all right. You actually begin to believe the Lord when he says, "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). You rest in the guarantee that all the badness in the world will never overcome God's goodness. The last chapter, the one that never ends, will be the story of goodness reaching into every part of life: reunions of unparalleled joy, relationships without selfishness, work without pressure, travel without accidents, and the pure laughter of people having a really good time.

Can you imagine what it will be like to enjoy perfect confidence in God in a world with absolutely no trials, no mistreatment, and no sorrow? "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself" (1 John 3:3) by obeying the commands of Christ. And he who obeys them, "he is the one who loves me . . . and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21, italics mine). We are called to move through our problems toward finding God. " 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the LORD" (Jer. 29:13).

John 16:33

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Jeremiah 29:11-14

“11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”

John 1:1-5

“1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life,[a] and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 14:23

“23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

1 John 3: 1-3

“1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

“We are called to move through our problems toward finding *God*. ” 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the LORD" (Jer. 29:13).”

Be honest. Are you stuck in your problems? What are the problems currently in your life that stand between you and finding God? How is your response to those problems hindering your relationship with God?

Read through the Scriptures provided with this excerpt from Larry’s journal. What do those words of God speak to your heart?

Do any of these reflections move you to purify yourself?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

“The last chapter, the one that never ends, will be the story of goodness reaching into every part of life: reunions of unparalleled joy, relationships without selfishness, work without pressure, travel without accidents, and the pure laughter of people having a really good time.”

Sit with this sentence and personalize each one of those statements about the last chapter. How will goodness reach into your specific circumstances, relationships, and experience of life?

## Day 17    YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME

Can you hear the laughter, feel the warm hug from someone who has been estranged for a while, experience work that is delightful and easy, enjoy a conversation where no one has an agenda? (Journal these questions on the next page)

Imagine that last chapter and document it here. Be as specific as possible.

*A New Body*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Thursday, February 11th:

Weak beyond description. Reaching for a pen feels like a terrible chore. Yet I am comfortable, not at all depressed, just eager for Heaven. I'm feeling more certain of Heaven when I die. It's strange – I can't imagine what Heaven will be like – I suppose its intended to be beyond my fondest and wildest imagination, of which I have little, maybe none. A new body is promised – that sounds wonderful. Come back, Lord Jesus. I'm ready. Spare me death. Come back. If not, death sounds wonderful. I am so supported by family. That element couldn't be better.

*1 Corinthians 15: 50-58*

"I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

## HOLY INTROSPECTION

What can you be grateful for about your body- the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit?

Think deeply about the brokenness of your body. How does your body:  
Tempt you?

Fail you?

Disappoint you?

Pain you and make you weak?

Continually perish?

Move toward death?

What role have you actively and/or inadvertently played in this corruption of your body?

What repentance do you need to offer for the way you have stewarded your body?



## HOLY IMAGINATION

Imagine your new body. Imagine the moment when it will all be changed. Walk through the lists you made above and consider how each item on that list will be remade and renewed. Describe what that will be like here.

Capture what is happening in you as you visualize being instantly made new.

From perishable to imperishable....

From mortal to immortal....

Describe your longing for your new body. What are you hoping for? What will be possible?

# *The Pure Goodness of God*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 15, 2021

Such a strange oxymoron. I so often, nearly with every waking moment, feel disappointed with God. Yet, at the same time, I'm confident in the pure goodness of God. How can I deny, or even question, the unimaginable loving goodness of Jesus Christ who died so that I could enjoy eternal happiness forever? I can't, but I do. Why? Because God creates me for joy, and He allows, no, He calls me, to suffer, to wait what to me seems like a very long time, for the bliss He designed me to experience for ever.

I'm aware God does all things for His own glory. When I first heard that in the Bible, I immediately thought, "so God's a narcissist?" I think I knew, even then as a teen or maybe in my twenties, that couldn't be true. It was then I came to realize God is LOVE. There's no relational energy or passion that is other than love. It isn't just that He loves. He is love. God takes ultimate pleasure and delight, therefore, in loving.

Romans 2:4

"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

2 Corinthians 3: 13-18

"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. *(Continued on next page)*

## Day 19 THE PURE GOODNESS OF GOD

2 Corinthians 3: 13-18, continued

14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one[c] turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord[d] is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,[e] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.[f] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Do a word study on God’s goodness and immerse yourself in His kindness. Here are a few passages to get you started, but don’t stop with these:

(Psalm 27:13, & 31:9, & 34:8, & 119:68 Nahum 1:7, Jeremiah 29:11-12, Romans 8:28, Lamentations 3:22-26, Genesis 50:20, Luke 18:18-19, 1 Chronicles 16:34, John 10:11) Look for others that are meaningful to you.

What struck you as you read about God’s goodness? How did it lead you to repentance?

Have you ever wrestled with the idea of God as a narcissist when He talks about glorifying Himself? Talk about that struggle here?

## Day 19 THE PURE GOODNESS OF GOD

Now do a word study on God's glory. Here are a few passages to get you started. (John 1:14, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 3:16, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:27, Philippians 1:11 & 2:11, Romans 1:20 & 11:36 & 8:18) Look for others that intrigue you.

After meditating on God's glory, what does it mean to you that God does all things for His glory, including both the good and bad things that happen in your life?

Read back through all you have learned about God's goodness and His holiness. What does this tell you about God's love?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

You have just soaked in the truth of God's goodness and His glory, a goodness and glory that He generously pours out on us. Sit for a while and imagine what it will be like to live in perfect understanding and unblemished experience of both His goodness and glory, all the time, fully and completely.

What will you understand more, experience deeper, and live into more consistently?

Imagine your daily life in Heaven where your idea of God's goodness will finally always align with His holiness. There will be no flaw marring your experience of His perfect kindness, magnificent grace, and all-encompassing mercy. Ponder what that experience will be like in your relationships, your work, your identity, etc., and journal about it here.

# *The Aroma of Heaven*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

*God of My Father's* pg. 161-162

Written by Larry's father, Lawrence Crabb, Sr.

I don't know how I will face my death. Still, I can speak sincerely of a whiff of Heaven, a fragrance so intense, so inexpressibly captivating that it creates a longing for entrance into his presence, whether that entrance will be full of ease or plagued with doubting.

In the weariness of my eighty years, I sometimes find the words of Alexander Pope quite appealing, "Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife/ and let me languish into life. But I find far more comfort in the words of the psalmist, "My times are in their hand...Oh how great is thy goodness." (Psalm 31: 15-19 KJV)

Someday I'll hear the music clearly, the perfect harmony of fully restored relationship. Hints of that day are sprinkled throughout Scripture. During a time of celebrating, Nehemiah wrote, "The singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. (Nehemiah 12:42) Jezrahiah means "Jehovah shines forth." The picture of richer truth is incredibly charming. Jehovah, God himself, will one day be fully revealed, shining forth in his Son, who leads the innumerable choir of the redeemed. The rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents will soon reach its ultimate crescendo as all his redeemed enter into the fullness of his presence. Now we catch an occasional whiff of Heaven. Now we occasionally hear the distant harmony. But soon, we will smell the full aroma and hear the complete choir with no one missing. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

Psalm 31:15-19

“My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

16 Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!

17 O Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol. (Verses 17-19 Continued on

next page) 18 Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against

the righteous in pride and contempt. 19 Oh, how abundant is your

goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked

for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Think back and journal about a time when you sensed of whiff of Heaven’s aroma. Describe it here.

Now think of a time where you would say you heard the harmony of Heaven. Describe what that was like:

Look at the passage from Psalm 31. Personalize it and rewrite it here.

Review your journaling from today. Where do you sense a need to repent?



## HOLY IMAGINATION

Looking back at your remembered whiffs and snippets of Heaven, what do those experiences tell you about what Heaven will be like?

Can you identify with the words of Lawrence Crabb, Sr. when he writes: “I can speak sincerely of a whiff of Heaven, a fragrance so intense, so inexpressibly captivating that it creates a longing for entrance into his presence, whether that entrance will be full of ease or plagued with doubting.”

What is so inexpressibly captivating to you that it creates longing for the fullness of His presence?

## *Inheritance & Legacy*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

God of My Father's pg. 167-168

An Excerpt from Larry's letter to his sons written in 1994:

You are part of a story you never chose. All four of your grandparents, like all four of mine, love Jesus Christ. Both of your parents love him. Our family is blessed beyond measure. And with blessing comes the responsibility of unique opportunity.

With the Christian legacy you've inherited from generations before you, you both have been prepared to live for Him and to make difference in this world. Leave your mark. Leave it on people: first on your wives, then on your children and friends. Don't look to do big things. Simply be faithful. Perhaps you will minister to thousands, maybe to only a handful. It really doesn't matter. Ask God to direct your steps faithfully into the part of His story He has already created for you.

There are no two men whom I love more than you two. Complete my joy by committing your lives to telling His story. Let your minds imagine the scene of your grandparents and mine, and theirs before them, gathering for a huge family reunion. Your uncle Bill will grab his guitar- he'll play it better than Mother and I will smile at each other as we've never smiled before, Leslie and Kim will be laughing and singing; and then we'll become quiet. The Lord will step into the middle of the circle and invite each of you to tell the story of how you lived for him on earth. You'll both burst with humble joy as you reflect on your decisions that honored the Savior; you'll slap each other on the back with excitement over how your lives counted. *(Continued on next page)*

## Day 21 INHERITANCE & LEGACY

And when you finish your tale, the Lord will smile and with a tenderness that will forever amaze us all, will embrace you and say, “Well done. It’s time for the party!”

Can you imagine watching my father dance? In ways that not even he understands, the best is yet to come.

Kep and Ken, I love you. Live for Christ.

Dad

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Consider your spiritual inheritance. How would you describe it?

What is your inheritance like? Does it feel weighty? Is it full of harm and disappointment or is it full of care and benevolence?

What are you thinking and feeling as you read Larry’s blessing to his sons? Envious? Warm? Inspired? Confused?

How has your spiritual inheritance or lack thereof, prepared you for your part in the story?

As you consider your inheritance, what inheritance are you leaving for the ones who follow you? How would you describe your spiritual legacy?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Read again Larry's letter to his sons. Are there parts of it that you long to hear from your earthly father?

If God were to write a letter to you as your dad about your inheritance and legacy, what would He say? Using Larry's letter as a inspiration, and what God shares about His heart in Scripture, imagine this letter from God to you and write it here.

## *How Good It Is To Be Near God*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

February 15th, continued:

But there's a problem, actually two. One, my depraved twisted fallen mind has pretty clear self-centered idea of how God should love me according to my understanding of what my greatest good should be in every circumstance, even at every moment. God doesn't agree. Nearly always, though not never, my perceived greatest good has less to do with Asaph's belief that "I desire You more than anything on earth" and then "...as for me, how good it is to be near God" (Psalm 73: 25, 28).

Psalm 73: 23-28

"Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in Heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength[b] of my heart and my portion forever. 27 For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. 28 But for me it is good to be near God; I have made them Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Read the passage from Psalm 73. Can you honestly say the things the psalmist is saying? Rewrite the psalm so that it accurately reflects your relationship with God. Be honest- no one else is reading this.

## Day 22 HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE NEAR GOD

How does your relationship with your earthly father impact and shape your relationship with your Heavenly Father?

As you review what you wrote, is there anything for which you want to repent?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

You believe that it is good to be near God, but what does that mean for today? Imagine you had an entire day off and you chose to spend the whole day with your Father. What would you do? Crawl up in His lap? Ask all the questions? Let Him teach you how to do something you have been struggling to learn? Explore a special place together?

Plan the day with the same care you would plan a date with your special person or a birthday party for someone you love. What would you do?

Envision that day. What happens? What do you talk about? Externally, what are you experiencing?

## Day 22 HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE NEAR GOD

What is happening internally as you live this day with the Father? How are you feeling? What longings are stirred up in you?

He is your portion forever, so imagine spending that same day with Him in Heaven. What is that like? What is different? What is the same?

Consider finding some time in your schedule to set aside and spend with the Father in this way.



# *An Ingredient in Divine Delight*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 15th, continued:

The second problem: God apparently somehow receives more glory when, despite very real suffering in an endless variety of forms, I trust His long-term purpose in trusting enough in His good purpose of forming me like His Son. Without clear recognition of how, at my current best, I fall far short of mature relational formation that reveals the love of Jesus, I am foolish enough to think I've arrived or at least come pretty close to loving like Jesus. So, in allowing ongoing suffering, God believes He is loving me to help me become, as C.S. Lewis says, to "become an ingredient in divine delight".

"To please God... to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son- it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is." CS Lewis *The Weight of Glory*

2 Peter 1:1-4

"1 Simeon[a] Peter, a servant[b] and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to[c] his own glory and excellence,[d] 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

HOLY INTROSPECTION

What do you do that gives God pleasure?

Do you think of yourself as a delight to God?

When have you been a source of delight/pleasure to God? To someone else?

When have you felt like a disappointment to God? To another significant person in your life?

Which one is easier to recognize?

How do your fear, pride, distractions, distortions steal God's enjoyment of you?

Is there repentance you could offer here that would "give God a good time"?

HOLY IMAGINATION

How might you be an ingredient in the delightful relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit. Take some time to imagine what it would feel like to be an ingredient in the divine delight....

Isaiah 62- meditate and hear God saying these words over you.

“For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken,[a] and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,[b] but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,[c] and your land Married;[d] for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”

What wells up in you as you hear your Father proclaim these words over you?

Now envision this day described in Revelation 19:6-10:

“6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. *(Continued on next page)*

## Day 23 AN INGREDIENT IN DIVINE DELIGHT

9 And the angel said[a] to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

Our hearts are irresistibly drawn to weddings. So much promise- the hope of completion and perfect acceptance. Maybe your own wedding resulted in your greatest pain or your best joy or both. Maybe you are still waiting for a wedding that hasn't or might never happen. Or maybe that wedding is nothing more than a shattered dream.

No matter your wedding story, we are promised the perfect wedding to the perfect Groom where we will be the perfect bride. Imagine that day. Describe it here.

Now in the context of your eternal wedding, hear the Bridegroom tell you His delight is in you. What is that like? What happens in you as you imagine this future scene?

# Maturity

## HOLY INSPIRATION

February 15th, continued:

I so often sing, “To God be the glory for the things He has done”, then effectively live for my glory in a life designed for whatever pleasure I can arrange in my difficult life. I am not a mature man, not yet as mature as I could be or wish I were. But the evidence of developing maturity, perhaps more evidence of being stuck somewhere between rank immaturity and true maturity.

Either way, wherever I am on the maturity level, I am fully forgiven fully loved, and fully wanted. The Christian journey to Heaven is not easy. I wasn’t meant to be. But God’s infinite love will one day be fully revealed in Heaven forever when there will be no more tears, suffering, or pain, and it’s only then when we will say to Jesus, “every bit of suffering was worth it all, and You have done all things well”. That is our hope. And it’s enough for us to persevere in faith no matter what happens in this life.

Revelation 21: 1-8

“ Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.[c] 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

## Day 24 MATURITY

6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Larry often said, “The Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of truth (as defined by Jesus) deals with us where we are not where we wish we were or where we pretend to be.”

How do you feel about this idea?

Where are you spiritually?

Where do you wish to be?

Where do you often pretend to be?

How do you feel about your maturity level?

Could you honestly say with Larry, “I am not a mature man” (or woman) or do you feel an internal argument against that statement?

## Day 24 MATURITY

What about “I am not yet as mature as I could be or wish I were”?

How does that reality compare with the reality of being fully forgiven, fully loved, and fully wanted?

What matters more to you? Being fully forgiven, fully loved, fully wanted, or fully mature?

Here is another quote from Eugene Peterson:

It is easy to be honest with God with our hallelujahs; he is somewhat more difficult to be honest with in our hurts; it is nearly impossible to be honest before God in the dark emotions of our hate. But when we pray the psalms these classic prayers of God’s people, we find that will not do. We must pray as who we actually are, not who we think we are, not who we think we should be.

What conviction stirs in you as you read that quote? What do you need to be honest with God about?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Cease striving and imagine sitting with the Spirit who has guided you on this Narrow Road journey of maturation.

How have you experienced Him?



## Day 24 MATURITY

How might you experience Him in Heaven?

Read the Revelation passage again and put yourself in that scene. Imagine seeing all things being made new as you watch. Made new- not returned to some past place of perfection but made into something altogether new. What would you be watching for?

What would give you the most joy?

What is it like seeing yourself being made new, inside and out?

End your time by listening to the hymn, "To God Be the Glory". (You can find a version on the Spotify playlist linked here ([Largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal](https://largerstory.com/Larrys-lastjournal)) Offer your sacrifice of praise as you worship.

# *My Dying Day*

## HOLY INSPIRATION

Around February 20th....MY DYING DAY

A new experience. Since I'm writing these words, it's quite clear I've never died before. I'd like to perhaps inadequately, describe what seems most alive in me as I prepare to die. It will require some thought.

I'm quite uncomfortable. I can't arrange my rather fancy chair to a comfortable position. I wish I could. I'm almost too weak to move the buttons. But I very much want to die. My death will carry me into the bliss of Heaven, with Jesus. If I helped myself to morphine, I'm told the death process could take days. That sounds miserable, but I might prefer it to just sitting here, longing to be in Heaven. Can't seem to make up my mind.

1 Corinthians 13

"1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,<sup>[a]</sup> but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>[b]</sup> 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

## Day 25 MY DYING DAY

12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Write your own love story. Walk through each statement of what love is and is not in the passage and document how you have experienced God’s agape love here on earth and how you have experienced the opposite.

Now walk through each of those statements again documenting where you have offered God’s agape love and where you have offered the opposite.

What repentance do you need to enter into because of your broken offer of love and your responses to the broken offer of love you received?

### HOLY IMAGINATION

In light of the disappointments you just listed, is the most alive thing in you a desire to see Jesus?

## Day 25 MY DYING DAY

Write yourself a new love story- or better yet tune your ears to the great love story God is telling to you and about you. Cultivate that flicker of aliveness by walking through each statement about love again, only this time visualize what it will be like to experience that perfect love with Jesus in Heaven, when you no longer see through the mirror dimly?

Now read verses 8-13 and imagine your dying day and what you will experience as you leave behind your small, broken love story and enter fully alive into His wonderful love story.

Write yourself a new love story- or better yet tune your ears to the great love story God is telling to you and about you. Cultivate that flicker of aliveness by walking through each statement about love again, only this time visualize what it will be like to experience that perfect love with Jesus in Heaven, when you no longer see through the mirror dimly?

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## *The Larger Story*

### HOLY INSPIRATION

A Different Kind of Happiness, pg. 226, 231-233

It is one thing to believe in God as a supporting actor in the drama of our story,

a story that begins at our birth and ends at our death. It is quite another to know ourselves to be small but significant actors in the eternal drama of God's story, a story that begins in eternity past, stretches out from Genesis 1: 1 through Revelation 22: 21, and continues as a dance of love into eternity future.

I long to be a man of faith. I want to rest in the assurance that God is always up to something good. My next step on the narrow road is not to quiet the undertone of misery but to feel its intensity so strongly that I passionately ask the question I'm writing this book to answer:

God, how can I make sense out of life as I experience it? Are You really telling a good story, a story that brings everything I see and feel into line with a loving purpose, a purpose that if I saw I'd thirst to honor, a purpose that is worth all the pain and fear that I can neither explain nor manage?

In His answer to the seven questions of spiritual theology, God has revealed the love story He is right now telling to me and to you, and to anyone who is listening (*Questions on next page*)

Seven Questions:

1. Who is God?
2. What is God up to?
3. Who are we?
4. What's gone wrong?
5. What has God done about our problem?
6. How is the Spirit working to implement the divine solution to our human problem?
7. How can we cooperate with the Spirit's work?

I exist. I have always existed as a three-person community of love (Q# 1). My heart of love longs to include others in our party, to share in our happiness (Q#2). I therefore created you in My image and likeness as a relational person, capable of receiving My love with joy and with joy pouring it into others (Q#3).

But you refused to trust My love. You set out on a foolish ill-fated course, to get from others what only I can provide. That road leads to the misery of living unloved and unable to love. And as you taste that misery along the way, you demand relief by protecting yourself from others rather than giving yourself to others. And you seek pleasure in second things, mistaking the happiness they bring for the happiness I created you to enjoy. That journey ends in relational isolation, the misery that comes when you live apart from Me, the only source of real love and true happiness (Q#4).

Real love, the love that defines who I am, is committed to your well-being at any cost to Myself. I therefore suffered the consequence of your lack of love, your rebellion against Me that left you ruled by the passion of self-centeredness. The Cross has you covered. You are now forgiven, restored into relationship with Me and made a participant in My divine nature (Q#5).

I am now alive in you, empowering you to seize the opportunity to experience Me by expressing Me to others. But it is an opportunity you will not meaningfully seize until you feel how miserable you are when you continue to live for second things and how broken you should be over your recognized relational sin. Only then will you value My love as your supreme good (Q#6).

Tell My story by living together with other true disciples, living with each other, living to know each other, and living to give My life to each other. Make visible to everyone who knows you what you can see when you view life from above the sun (Q#7)

Paul, perhaps more than any true disciple since, clearly heard God's story and lived to tell it. Listen to his testimony, with a few clarifying comments added.

"I once thought these things" – prestige, power, and privilege – "were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything" – every source of meaning and happiness available under the sun – "is worthless compared with" – the first thing – "the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else" – everything I once believed brought life – "counting it all as garbage" – the Greek word translated garbage literally means what we flush down the toilet – "so that I could gain Christ and become one with him" – a follower of Christ who is being formed into a little Christ (Philippians 3: 7-9 NLT).

My struggle now is to not mute the undertone of misery, but to see it mutate into the ache of thirsting to look at life from above the sun, to hear the story God is telling, and to yearn to know Christ and to make Him known.



The struggle to increasingly surrender to the Spirit's work as He forms Christ in me will continue until I see Jesus face to face. So will yours. But it's a good struggle. Fix your eyes of faith on the story unfolding above the sun, the love story revealed in the 66 love letters God has written to us. Walk the narrow road. Live the larger story. Battle for a better love. It's why we're alive.

#### HOLY INTROSPECTION

As you reflect on the good struggle Larry describes here, what strikes you?

Go back and read Larry's summary of the story God is telling through His answer to the seven questions and underline the parts that are most meaningful to you. How does this story help you make sense of life?

Read Larry's paraphrase of Paul's words in Philippians 3: 7-9. How do these words land in your soul? Are they convicting? Inspiring? Do they resonate and reflect your own perspective, or is something exposed in you by them?

HOLY IMAGINATION

Spend some time on this last paragraph from the excerpt. Respond from your whole heart (what you think about it, how it makes you feel, what desires are stirred, and what you choose to do as a result) to each statement in it.

Fix your eyes of faith on the story unfolding above the sun, the love story revealed in the 66 love letters God has written to us. Walk the narrow road. Live the larger story. Battle for a better love. It's why we're alive.

Fix your eyes of faith-

The story unfolding above the sun- the love story revealed in the 66 love letters God has written to us

Walk the narrow road

Live the larger story

Battle for a better love

It's why we're alive!

## Divine Energy

### HOLY INSPIRATION

You've never seen Me. You've never laid eyes on My Son. You've not felt His literal embrace. And, therefore, you've never experienced the fullness of unmixed joy that is My Spirit. But you've had tastes. You taste the reality of real life every time you love others for Our sake and theirs. By loving, you can enjoy communion with Me now in this life until our union is complete in the next. (1 John)

I want you to love, to relate in real life to real people: young people who live more in the felt moment than in My enduring truth, older folks who wish things wouldn't change, and the great majority of people who do their best to manage their everyday lives without compromising their values or surrendering their visions for a good life. Live in the real world as a real person. You feel down, you pay bills, you get lonely, you enjoy golf. My Son was a real person, a boy who lived with a mother and dad, a young man who learned a trade, an adult who danced at a wedding, cried at a funeral, prayed when things got rough and died for a cause He believed in. My Son lived the real life I call you to live, *divine energy visible in common humanity*. (2 John)

It was that energy that kept Him loving in a world of people who didn't. When you see something in another that's worthy of criticism, before you respond to that person's faults, check out your own life. Is divine love energizing your attitude and the words you want to say? (3 John)

1 John 4: 7-21

“7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot<sup>[a]</sup> love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

## HOLY INTROSPECTION

Do you truly love others for God's sake and theirs at any cost to yourself? Reflect on your "record". Describe a time when you did love like that.

Describe a time when you failed to love like that.

What does 1 John 4 have to say about how we should love?

Where have you been hurt when trying to love?

What are your biggest relational fears? Rejection, being consumed, loneliness, being devalued, bearing someone's anger, etc.

How do you protect yourself from those fears in relationship?

What would the counsel of 1 John 4 say to your fears and self-protection?

What is convicting about this statement- “When you see something in another that’s worthy of criticism, before you respond to that person’s faults, check out your own life. Is divine love energizing your attitude and the words you want to say?”

Think of a relational situation in your life right now that you need to respond to in this way.

### HOLY IMAGINATION

Where have you experienced *divine energy visible in common humanity*?

Look at your list of relational fears again. If fear and love can’t occupy the same space (vs.18) visualize perfect love replacing each one of those fears.

How does that reality impact your need to protect yourself?

Imagine relating in Heaven where you have no need to protect yourself because there is nothing to harm you. Describe what that kind of relating would feel like.

## THE ETERNAL DAY

### HOLY INSPIRATION

*66 Love Letters*, pg. 394

Always keep My story in the forefront of your mind. I've invited you to My party. I've equipped you to love. I've anchored you in hope. You'll face terrific opposition as you live to tell My story. Keep My story alive in your mind, and I'll keep you dancing on the narrow road. Keep moving. Keep waiting. My plan will soon come to a spectacular climax. (Jude)

Trust ME. Things are not as they seem. My Son is right now bringing His kingdom to earth. The collision of kingdoms, the resistance of everything opposed to My plan, is the source of all the upheaval in the world. My Son will judge severely. The forces of evil will be destroyed. And He will bless abundantly. My story is about to end in the eternal day of a new way to live in a new world. Can you hear the music? The party is underway. It won't be long till My Son makes everything new. And then you'll really dance! (Revelation)

1 Thessalonians 5: 5-11

“For you are all children[b] of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”



Jude 24-25

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time[h] and now and forever. Amen.”

### HOLY INTROSPECTION

Respond from your whole heart (thinking, feeling, desiring, choosing) to each one of these statements:

I’ve invited you to My party.

I’ve equipped you to love.

I’ve anchored you in hope.

You’ll face terrific opposition as you live to tell My story.

Keep My story alive in your mind, and I’ll keep you dancing on the narrow road.

Keep moving. Keep waiting.

My plan will soon come to a spectacular climax.

What does it mean to you that you belong to “the day”?

HOLY IMAGINATION

Rewrite the Jude doxology above as if the Father were speaking it over you. Make it as intensely personal as you can.

Now imagine God saying these words you have written to you. Describe that experience here.

# *The Final Analysis*

- Spend just a little bit of time sealing this eternal perspective on your heart. Write these things here and come back to it as the tangible realities of life seek to erode your certainty and eager expectation of Heaven.
- Look back and summarize your most meaningful realizations.
- Review and reaffirm your deepest repentance and keep it before you.
- Reminisce and recall those moments in your imagination where you were lifted up into a gossamer dream of what Heaven will be like.
- Let your longing grow for the perfect Father. Describe that longing.
- Let your yearning develop into an exquisite thirst that draws you to Jesus, the source of living water. What is that like?
- Feel the inconsolable ache that only the Spirit satisfies and write about how He might satisfy. Put words to that ache and the satisfaction the Spirit offers.
- The long arms of Heaven are reaching back through time to meet you on your broken road.....

# *The Journal*

## Larry's Last Writings

It's February 3, 2021. I expect to die soon, perhaps in a month, maybe two or three months that I so badly want to spend with family, mostly with Rachael - then I long to see Jesus.

Perhaps I could call what I'm about to write – I don't yet know what words I will put on this paper – my spiritual will and testament – As best I can, I intend to write what is going on in my mind, heart, and soul. I've never died before, so I'm on virgin territory.

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It seems very clear that I'm to leave this world. Leaving Rachael, all family, and so many friends, actually leaving them never to see them until they too come home; seems so difficult, surreal, a first-time experience; I cannot process it. I can only feel a loss that one day will be fully compensated. That sustains my grief with hope. We will meet again, in a much better place.

I've said to a few folks that I have no fear. Perhaps as I come closer to death I will. I don't know. I don't think so. But I do feel a trembling curiosity. What will the experience be? Will I walk through a door into Narnia to meet Aslan? Or will it be an entirely different experience of instantly leaving this disappointing world and right away meeting Jesus with a smile so warm and tender that I've never seen before? Maybe I'm wise enough to fantasize less and, just as I wrote, wait for Heaven? Only then, says John, will I see Him as He is, and only then will I be like Him as He is.

Reading Moltmann again has let me see a bit more how eternally big God is, how above all my thoughts and ways the Trinity is unfolding a story that sometimes really disappoints me – I thought the Father would be more deeply experienced as a peaceful presence; I thought the Son's promise to never leave me nor forsake would generate an unfailing experience of joy; and I thought the Spirit would produce more spiritual fruit than I've been able to recognize.

# *The Journal*

But no! The Trinity seems to want me to live by faith, not by the more (wrongly) desired by sight, right up to my death. Only THEN will I live by sight when I see Jesus! I am finding a mildly trembling rest – an oxymoron? - as I just wrote of a trembling curiosity – in the inter-relations among the Trinity that led to the release of divine love that required the infinite God to somehow make space in their infinitude for this world outside of their infinitude for a finite world with finite creatures who actually bear the image of the human God, mere humans who were given a free will, and seized that gift by abusing their freedom. As I have, foolishly, sinfully, disrespectfully to God, believing there was a greater good than drawing near to God. In my proclivity toward Satan's kingdom, I actually believed it would be a great good, greater than drawing near to God, to enjoy a much-blessed life in this world: a wonderful marriage, godly children, healthy saved grandchildren, a well-received ministry, enough money to enjoy legitimate pleasures available in this world.

Was I that wrong? No, it's not wrong to enjoy God's blessings during our time in this world. But it's fiendishly wrong to count them as our greatest good. Suffering is required to detach us from our wrong understanding of the greatest good God provides. It's a narrow road of affliction that introduces us to real life.

Life remains difficult, frustrating, nearly unbearable. But it seems now like Tom Brady throwing practice passes before lining up behind the center waiting for the next Super Bowl to begin. But oh, what a feeble analogy. I'm waiting for Heaven to begin! Something good rises up in my soul as I ponder and anticipate Heaven. So much that seemed important: life's opportunities for pleasure; life's responsibilities that require action; seem not only unimportant but fully dismissible when I arrive in Heaven: Everything will be dismissible as the reality of freely given joy becomes my daily experience. Mostly, such thoughts wonder through my mind, though in moments they seem only a warm sun rising slowly into a cold morning.



# *The Journal*

For now, the cold morning includes neuropathy that Jesus has done nothing to relieve, ongoing cancer that He has not cured, diabetes that remains in my body, a sleeplessness without relief now for many months. But again, Moltmann's book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, has opened my eyes wider, not nearly wide enough, to grasp that there is a much bigger story going on in the Trinity that I can pass no judgment on, but only by faith believe that it is unalterably good no matter how much my understanding of what is good doesn't line up with God's. My faith has its weaknesses, but it is alive.

Well, those are my thoughts as I prepare to die.

So many sustaining props have been taken away that had provided me with what the world (and counterfeit Christianity) thinks of as the good life. I liked my former life better than I like my life now.

Ask me if I desire healing more than I long for conformity to the way Jesus viewed His suffering, and I might have to think that the prospect of thinking like Jesus is taking shape, I'm quite sure I would choose conformity to the image of Jesus. Perhaps that choice would seem something like a small bright cloud in an otherwise dark day.

Mother Teresa lamented, "Jesus is asking a bit too much". I complain, "It is too much". Can I move through my unhealed multiple sicknesses and the loss they bring to a comfortable life, and from somewhere deep within my soul declare with anticipated hope and longed for joy that I want Jesus? Do I love the Lord who could return me to the good life I lived for more than seventy years, but doesn't? Is He after something more from me, something better? Is there no better plan for the rest of my days in this unsatisfying world than to trudge through difficult days with a less than rejoicing attitude?

# *The Journal*

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

A brief effort at Journaling

What's going on in me today? A strange sense of peace, more quiet, almost holy experience of indifference. What will be is in the Lord's hands. His hands are always doing me good, but, as I've observed, my idea of God's goodness directed to me doesn't always match God's idea of unblemished loving goodness. So even as I wait for His goodness to be revealed in the days ahead, it seems best to me to develop no expectations as to what's coming to rest in confident, holy indifference, to live now as a surrendered soul, denying myself as an entitled self. To demand anything from God seems the height of hubris. I do feel more mystery than clarity about what it will mean to first die then to be in Heaven, and to see Jesus. My imagination captures little, but whatever shapes my imagination seems more pleasantly awesome than merely pleasant. I like that. Well, my thoughts for today. This, too. I'm happily bored. Nothing is required of me. I'm just waiting for whatever comes next. It's not up to me.

Thursday, February 11th:

Weak beyond description. Reaching for a pen feels like a terrible chore. Yet I am comfortable, not at all depressed, just eager for Heaven. I'm feeling more certain of Heaven when I die. It's strange – I can't imagine what Heaven will be like – I suppose its intended to be beyond my fondest and wildest imagination, of which I have little, maybe none. A new body is promised – that sounds wonderful. Come back Lord Jesus. I'm ready. Spare me death. Come back. If not, death sounds wonderful. I am so supported by family. That element couldn't be better.



# *The Journal*

February 15, 2021

Such a strange oxymoron. I so often, nearly with every waking moment, feel disappointed with God. Yet, at the same time, I'm confident in the pure goodness of God. How can I deny, or even question, the unimaginable loving goodness of Jesus Christ who died so that I could enjoy eternal happiness forever? I can't, but I do. Why? Because God creates me for joy, and He allows, no, He calls me, to suffer, to wait what to me seems like a very long time, for the bliss He designed me to experience for ever.

I'm aware God does all things for His own glory. When I first heard that in the Bible, I immediately thought, "so God's a narcissist?" I think I knew, even then as a teen or maybe in my twenties, that couldn't be true. It was then I came to realize God is LOVE. There's no relational energy or passion that is other than love. It isn't just that He loves. He is love. God takes ultimate pleasure and delight, therefore, in loving.

But there's a problem, actually two. One, my depraved twisted fallen mind has pretty clear self-centered idea of how God should love me according to my understanding of what my greatest good should be in every circumstance, even at every moment. God doesn't agree. Nearly always, though not never, my perceived greatest good has less to do with Asaph's belief that "I desire You more than anything on earth" and then "...as for me, how good it is to be near God" (Psalm 73: 25, 28).

# *The Journal*

The second problem: God apparently somehow receives more glory when, despite very real suffering in an endless variety of forms, I trust His long-term purpose in trusting enough in His good purpose of forming me like His Son. Without clear recognition of how, at my current best, I fall far short of mature relational formation that reveals the love of Jesus, I am foolish enough to think I've arrived or at least come pretty close to loving like Jesus. So, in allowing ongoing suffering, God believes He is loving me to help me become, as C.S. Lewis says, to "become an ingredient in divine delight".

I so often sing, "To God be the glory for the things He has done", then effectively live for my glory in a life designed for whatever pleasure I can arrange in my difficult life. I am not a mature man, not yet as mature as I could be or wish I were. But the evidence of developing maturity, perhaps more evidence of being stuck somewhere between rank immaturity and true maturity.

Either way, wherever I am on the maturity level, I am fully forgiven fully loved, and fully wanted. The Christian journey to Heaven is not easy. It wasn't meant to be. But God's infinite love will one day be fully revealed in Heaven forever when there will be no more tears, suffering, or pain, and it's only then when we will say to Jesus, "Every bit of suffering was worth it all, and You have done all things well". That is our hope. And it's enough for us to persevere in faith no matter what happens in this life.

# *The Journal*

## MY DYING DAY

A new experience. Since I'm writing these words, it's quite clear I've never died before. I'd like to perhaps inadequately, describe what seems most alive in me as I prepare to die. It will require some thought.

I'm quite uncomfortable. I can't arrange my rather fancy chair to a comfortable position. I wish I could. I'm almost too weak to move the buttons. But I very much want to die. My death will carry me into the bliss of Heaven, with Jesus. If I helped myself to morphine, I'm told the death process could take days. That sounds miserable, but I might prefer it to just sitting here, longing to be in Heaven. Can't seem to make up my mind.

# Notes

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# About Dr. Larry Crabb



Dr. Larry Crabb was a well-known psychologist, conference and seminar speaker, Bible teacher, popular author, founder of New Way Ministries and the catalyst for the Larger Story, his legacy and library of his lifework. In addition to many other speaking opportunities, Dr. Crabb founded the School of Spiritual Direction and was the distinguished Scholar in Residence at Colorado Christian University. Dr. Crabb has authored more than 30 books including two Gold Medallion award winners, *Inside Out* and *Understanding People*.

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