

## Walking Away From Faith

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Rich Nathan

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Family Mess 2 Series

2 Chronicles 22-24

If you've taken a philosophy class at a university, you may have come upon a 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche. He is considered by many to be one of the most aggressively anti-Christian philosophers in history. His philosophy became the basis for Nazism. And he railed against the ethics of Jesus.

What you may not have been told in your philosophy class is that Nietzsche, like many other philosophers, who taught against belief, had a strong Christian background. He was born and raised in a family of Lutheran preachers. And when he was a child, he was referred to as the "little minister." As a young child his biographers said he took delight to seclude himself and read to the Bible, or to read it to others, so as seemingly to bring tears to their eyes. At age 20 while he was at university, he walked away from his childhood faith calling Christianity "the one great curse" and the "highest of all conceivable corruptions" because of its emphasis on mercy and pity.

How many of you are familiar with the name Chuck Templeton? Chuck Templeton grew up in Toronto one of five children. His father abandoned the family when Chuck was a child. When Chuck was a teenager, he came home one night after going to a strip show. His mother was awake and she called to him. She began to talk to Chuck about God and about how she loved to see him and his brothers and sisters in church. Chuck felt unclean, sleazy because of what he had been involved in. He knelt down by his bed with his head in his hands and for the first time in years, he prayed to God. He felt a weight lift off of him and he heard himself whispering over and over again, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord."

At age 19 Chuck went into the ministry. This was back in the 1930's. After reading some books and meeting with some local pastors, he was ordained in the Church of the Nazarene. He spent several years as a traveling evangelist and then came back to Toronto where he built a 1200 seat church building. In six months the building was filled with people who flocked to hear Chuck Templeton preach.

He then went to work with Billy Graham. Right after WWII Chuck and Billy did some evangelistic crusades with Youth for Christ. But then Billy Graham's and Chuck Templeton's paths diverged. Billy continued to evangelize. Chuck found himself wracked with doubts about his Christian faith. He decided to go to Princeton Seminary. He thought that would help resolve some of his doubts. He was eventually ordained in the Presbyterian Church.

But the doubts continued. He started reading books by atheistic philosophers. He looked out at a world in which there was much suffering. Eventually, his faith, such as it was, collapsed. He decided he had to leave the ministry because he was living and preaching a lie, a lie that he no longer believed. He wrote an autobiography called:

### **Farewell to God by Chuck Templeton**

The book offers a standard set of arguments against the Bible and against Christianity and against religion in general. Just as an aside, the vast majority of anti-Christian philosophers throughout history have a deep father-wound in their souls, either their fathers died when they were children, or their fathers abandoned their families like Chuck Templeton's father did. Or they suffered deep disappointment or deep hurt at the hands of their fathers, a hurt or disappointment that has never been healed.

In any case, many Christian parents like the parents of Nietzsche say: My child used to go to church. They used to pray or read the Bible. They used to profess faith. But now they are nowhere with God. As I complete this series on Family Mess 2, my final message is titled Walking Away From Faith. Let's pray.

We're going to be looking at a not-too-well-known story – the story of King Joash, who appeared to be connected to the faith when he was young, but who then walked away. The story of King Joash can be divided into two periods, the good years and the bad years. 2 Chronicles 23 and the first half of chapter 24 are the good years. 2 Chronicles 24.17ff are the bad years.

Many families could say this about one of their family members. You might say: My husband or my wife, my father or mother, my sister or brother, my kids had good years, many years of faith. They read their Bibles and they prayed. They even talked about ministry. There were many good years when they were children, when they were teens, when they were young adults, when we first got married. But now they're nowhere with God. They don't ever attend church. They're really disinterested, or indeed, are hostile when I talk to them about faith. Their lifestyles are totally antithetical to how they were raised, or to how they used to say they believed.

I want to begin with the good years of King Joash.

### **The good years**

It is perfectly natural when you see someone who used to confess faith, they used to pray, they used to attend church, but now they are totally disinterested, or hostile. It is absolutely natural to say to yourself: God's work in their lives is done. Whatever flame there was has been completely extinguished by the change in my family member's lifestyle and the change in their stated beliefs. The promises of God have failed.

I want to start this talk on Walking Away From Faith and consider with you the promises of God.

### **The promises of God**

Let's look together at 2 Chronicles 22.10-12.

#### **2 Chronicles 22:10–12 (NIV)**

**When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes who were about to be murdered and put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Because Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she hid the child from Athaliah so she could not kill him. He remained hidden with them at the temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.**

Let me give you the background of this text. At this time in history, God's people, the Jews, were divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel made up of 10 tribes, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah consisting of 2 tribes, the tribe of Judah and the tiny tribe of Benjamin. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, the larger portion of the Jewish people, was completely apostate. They were filled with idolatry and immorality and the worship of the false god of the Canaanites, Baal. In the period right before the story that we're reading, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was ruled by a wicked king named King Ahab and his even more awful wife, Jezebel.

Well, the daughter of this miserable pair was named Athaliah. She married the Southern King, Jehoram. So now the Northern Israelite idolatry and immorality was brought into the very heart of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It was like a church throwing the doors open and welcoming into the church heretical teachers. It was like a church pastor deciding to marry a wife who practices witchcraft. Right into the bosom of God's people, they welcome in this idolater, this immoral queen, Athaliah.

So the King of Judah, Jerhoram, and his Northern wife, Athaliah, kill off all the rest of the royal family so that there are no competitors. After Jehoram dies and their son dies, Athaliah goes further and kills off all of her grandchildren. All the nieces and nephews were killed by Arab marauders. Athaliah, this utterly corrupt and idolatrous murderer, installs herself as Queen of Judah. Everyone in the whole line of King David has been murdered except one baby boy, a one-year old named Joash.

Now, God had made a promise to King David, a promise that we read about in Psalm 89.1-4:

**Psalm 89:1–4 (NIV)**

- 1 I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever;  
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known  
through all generations.**
- 2 I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**
- 3 You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant,**
- 4 ‘I will establish your line forever  
and make your throne firm through all generations.’ ”**

God had a plan to save the world through one of David’s descendants. It was through the line of King David that the Messiah was to come. And of course, Satan knew what God’s plan was. God openly promised to bring the Messianic King through the line of David. So, what does Satan do? Satan works overtime to inspire the murder of every single descendent of David.

So, did Satan win? Did God lose? There is this broad Mississippi River of descendents and it is narrowed to this tiny little stream, down to a single point, a one-year old baby boy named Joash. Athaliah is on the throne. Idol worship is the law of the land. The temple, the place where people meet with God is locked up and falls into disrepair.

If you were a believer during those dark days of the nation of Judah, it would have been completely appropriate for you to ask with the psalmist, “Have the promises of God failed?” I think of psalms like Psalm 77.1-9,

**Psalm 77:1–9 (NIV)**

- 1 I cried out to God for help;  
I cried out to God to hear me.**
- 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;  
at night I stretched out untiring hands,  
and I would not be comforted.**
  
- 3 I remembered you, God, and I groaned;  
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.**
- 4 You kept my eyes from closing;  
I was too troubled to speak.**
- 5 I thought about the former days,  
the years of long ago;**
- 6 I remembered my songs in the night.  
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:**
  
- 7 “Will the Lord reject forever?  
Will he never show his favor again?”**

**8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever?  
Has his promise failed for all time?  
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful?  
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"**

You know, there are times in our lives when times in our society and in history where it seems that there is no way the plan of God can succeed. There are times in our own lives, and there are times when we look out at the world and we say that the activity of God is so hidden and the forces and powers arrayed against me or against God's will are so great there is no way God's plan and promises can ever be fulfilled.

GK Chesterton, who was a brilliant 20<sup>th</sup> century English writer, a Christian, wrote a book back in the 1920's called The Everlasting Man. In it he describes five times in history where it seemed like Christian faith had died. No way could it survive this. It would have been natural for the faith to decline and fall with the fall of the Roman Empire and the invasion of the barbarians. Or to disappear after the armies of Islam swept across the Christian strongholds of the Middle East – North Africa up into Spain, and the northwest all the way to Hungary. It would have been natural for Christianity to dissolve when the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance or to vanish in the Age of Revolution. Or to dissolve completely in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from the challenges posed by Marx, Freud, and Darwin.

In every one of these cases, the crises of faith were followed by times of renewal and revival. Time and again, as Chesterton notes, the faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs. But each time, he writes, "it was the dog who died!"

Thomas Jefferson predicted that there was not a young man now living in the US who will not die as a Unitarian. This was just a few years before the second Great Awakening and millions of Americans were swept into the Christian faith.

The Dean of the Harvard Divinity School in 1946 said that Christianity was entirely discredited in America and almost no one would become a Christian right before Billy Graham launched his evangelistic crusades.

Friend, have you looked at your own life, your own situation and said, "The promises of God seem to have failed. I cannot see God at work in my home, or with this loved one. Darkness seems to be on the throne. There is no hope that any of this can turn around. I cannot see how God can bring good out of this."

God's promises never fail. Here is what we read in Philippians 1.6,

**Philippians 1:6 (NIV)  
being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on  
to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

I like the way it is stated in the Message Version of the Bible. We read:

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There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

I have been a pastor for over a quarter of a century. I've led in some capacity for almost four decades now. And I have regularly seen the "no" of people's rebellion and unbelief overcome by the "yes" of God's grace.

So this one baby, Joash, is preserved and protected.

Now, the first half of chapter 23 speaks of three covenants. Jehoiada, the priest, who with his wife, looked after the little Prince, Joash, for the first six years of his life, judges that the time was right to reveal Joash as the King. And so three covenants are entered – first, between the high priest and the commanders, in 2 Chronicles 23.1,

**2 Chronicles 23:1 (NIV)**

**In the seventh year Jehoiada showed his strength. He made a covenant with the commanders of units of a hundred: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zikri.**

The second covenant was between the assembly and the king, 2 Chronicles 23.3,

**2 Chronicles 23:3 (NIV)**

**the whole assembly made a covenant with the king at the temple of God. Jehoiada said to them, "The king's son shall reign, as the LORD promised concerning the descendants of David.**

And finally, after Athaliah, the wicked Queen, is put to death, between the King, the priest, the people and God.

**The law of God**

Now, what we read in v. 16 and in similar verses in the Bible,

**2 Chronicles 23:16 (NIV)**

**Jehoiada then made a covenant that he, the people and the king would be the LORD's people.**

is one of the earliest statements of what we in the modern world call,

## The “Rule of Law”

By the “Rule of Law” we mean that every citizen in the country, including the king, the emperor, and the president are subject to the law. The Rule of Law stands in complete opposition to the idea that the ruler, whether it is the king, the emperor, the president, or whoever, is above the law, that they rule by divine right.

Now, this idea of the Rule of the Law, including the king and the president, is subject to the law goes back to the Bible, back to the time of Moses. Here is what we read in Deuteronomy 17.18-20

### **Deuteronomy 17:18–20 (NIV)**

**When he [the King] takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.**

Now, this is an amazing statement in an ancient document because if you look back at other ancient societies, whether in Egypt or in Rome, or even places like modern Japan, the king or the emperor was seen as divine. The king wasn’t subject to the law, the king was the law. Whatever the king decided was the law. But building on the Bible, on what Moses taught in Deuteronomy and in verses like 2 Chronicles 23.16, a Christian named Samuel Rutherford wrote a book back in the 1600’s called,

### **Lex, Rex by Samuel Rutherford**

The law is king. And this reversed the traditional Rex Lex, the king was the law. The law was king became the foundation for the American form of government. John Adams, our second president enshrined this biblical principle, the law is king, in the Massachusetts Constitution that he wrote. He said:

***We’re establishing a government of laws and not of men.***

Let me bring this down. Right now, if you look out at the world, you can divide the world into two types of countries – one type of country in which the rulers of the country are the law. They’re not subject to any law. They are the law. We see this whether we’re talking about communist rulers, or a dictatorship, or Islamic mullahs. On the one side you have countries in which the ruler is the law and on the other side you have countries in which the ruler is subject to the law and the law can hold the ruler accountable. What keeps citizens in a country free, whether the country is run by a

president, an emperor, or a king is this basic principle of government is the Rule of Law. The law is king and goes back nearly 3500 years to the Bible. People have no idea how indebted they are to the Bible for the basic structure of the society that we live in.

These are the good years. The young prince has been protected. He is living subject to the law of God. And then he reopens the temple of God.

### **The temple of God**

Here is what we read in 2 Chronicles 24.4-10,

#### **2 Chronicles 24:4–10 (NIV)**

**Some time later Joash decided to restore the temple of the LORD. He called together the priests and Levites and said to them, “Go to the towns of Judah and collect the money due annually from all Israel, to repair the temple of your God. Do it now.” But the Levites did not act at once. Therefore the king summoned Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, “Why haven’t you required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax imposed by Moses the servant of the LORD and by the assembly of Israel for the tent of the covenant law?” Now the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the temple of God and had used even its sacred objects for the Baals.**

**At the king’s command, a chest was made and placed outside, at the gate of the temple of the LORD. A proclamation was then issued in Judah and Jerusalem that they should bring to the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God had required of Israel in the wilderness. All the officials and all the people brought their contributions gladly, dropping them into the chest until it was full.**

If we look back at the history of Israel there is a continual problem in people supporting the work of the temple. At different times in history God speaks through one of his prophets and says to the people: Why are you not bringing your tithes to the temple to support the work of the temple? Is there anything more important on earth than that people would be brought into relationship with God?

Now, in this instance, the leaders of God’s people, the Levites, were negligent. They collected the temple tax, but they didn’t use it for what it was collected for. Here is what we read in 2 Kings 12.5-6,

#### **2 Kings 12:5–6 (NIV)**

**Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, then use it to repair whatever damage is found in the temple.” But by the twenty-third year of King Joash the priests still had not repaired the temple.**

Many charities collect money for really noble causes and almost none of the money goes for the cause that they're raising money for. There is a charity called The Kids' Wish Network. It is basically a cheap imitation of the well-respected Make a Wish Foundation. The Kids' Wish Network is involved in relentless fundraising. Over the last 16 years they've raised \$110 million for sick children through its corporate fundraisers. According to a Times review of charities, it scored as the worst charity in the nation. They paid the founder of the company nearly \$5 million in fees over the years. They squandered almost every penny of the \$110 million they raised. And virtually nothing goes to children.

The Cancer Fund of America has collected \$98 million in donations over the last decade. Patients have received less than \$1 million of the \$98 million raised. All the rest has gone to the fundraisers and the executives of the Cancer Fund of America.

I've had a basic principle for all of my charitable giving in the last 30 years. The basic principle has been this: show me your ministry; open up your books; what you are really doing with the money that you raise, and then I will show you my wallet. Don't tell me about the noble cause; show me what you have done, what the reporting mechanism is, before you ask me for my money. You have a responsibility as a steward of the money you have, not only to give generously, but to give wisely, to check out the places you are giving to.

I want to give you a report concerning an offering that Vineyard Columbus took up on Palm Sunday 2009. Palm Sunday 2009 we were in the depths of the Recession. Hundreds of people in our church were out of work. Many people didn't know how they were going to put food on their tables. So I spoke to you here in the church and I said, listen, this is a time where Vineyard Columbus really needs to come together as a family. If you have a job, you are one of the well-off in this Recession. I want you to pray and come back in a few weeks with an offering so that we can take care of all of the people who are part of this Vineyard Columbus family.

Within a few weeks you gave \$630,000 for the Recession Response offering. Here is what we did with that offering. We opened up the Northside Food Pantry that has fed 75-100 families, week-in and week-out, for the last three years. We also hired onto our staff Bill Canonico, an employment specialist, who assisted people to find jobs, Kent Irwin, a financial specialist, who counseled people regarding their finances, and Christine Childers, a social worker, who assisted people to access benefits from the government.

With that \$630,000 we were able to take care of nearly 1500 individuals and families, many of them on multiple occasions (not including those fed through our pantry).

You talk about getting bang for your buck! We found hundreds of jobs, counseled hundreds of people, and assisted hundreds to find social services.

I'm going to ask you to give again. If you care about the work of God here in Central Ohio, I don't believe that you can make a better investment with your money than to give to Vineyard Columbus. Make a decision to give, even if you are on vacation this summer. Here are some ways for you to give:

- **Regular tithe: cash or check in weekly offering basket or mailed to Vineyard Columbus. If you give cash, please put in an envelope with your name for charitable deduction purposes.**
- **Electronic Regular tithe: on line via [vineyardcolumbus.org](http://vineyardcolumbus.org) or you can set up with your financial institution as an on line auto pay.**
- **International Worker (Missionary) support: cash, check or electronic (ways of giving are the same as #1 and #2 above).**
- **Poor boxes: boxes are located in main auditorium. You can drop cash or checks - donations go directly to help the poor unless otherwise stated.**
- **Food: Donations at the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue or North Side food pantries and/or bins located inside entrance doors at our main campus.**
- **Vehicles: Donations are either re-purposed for needy qualifying people in our congregation or recycled.**
- **Infant Items: Donations to Value Life ministry to serve women in crisis pregnancies.**
- **Appreciated assets: such as stocks and bonds can be donated without the donor paying capital gains on the transfer.**

Well, let's look at,

### The bad years

#### **2 Chronicles 24:17–19 (NIV)**

**After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. They abandoned the temple of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God's anger came on Judah and Jerusalem. Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.**

Here we read about what I would call the

### **The co-dependent king**

Joash has no root of faith in himself. Everything is external. He has no never personally apprehended God for himself. Everything about his faith depended upon Jehoiada, the priest. But once Jehoiada dies, and once Jehoiada was out of Joash's life and the supports were taken away, Joash's faith crumbled. I call him a codependent because like all codependents Joash is addicted to externals. He fears loss and rejection by other people. He is always looking for validation from others. What does everybody else think? What does everybody else want? There is no root of faith in him.

Like every codependent, Joah's basic approach to life is my good feelings about who I am comes from being liked by you, or receiving approval from you. So when the people come with all their ideas, Joash listens to them. Joash is a person who acts one way at church and completely differently at work, or in the dorm, or when he is with his family. When he is around people of faith, he is full of faith. When he is away from people of faith, he is a chameleon, blending in with the local environment.

### **The Apostate King**

But he is not only a codependent king, he becomes the apostate king. Here is what we read in 2 Chronicles 24.20-25,

#### **2 Chronicles 24:20–25 (NIV)**

**Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the LORD's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'" But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's temple. King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah's father Jehoiada had shown him but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, "May the LORD see this and call you to account." At the turn of the year, the army of Aram marched against Joash; it invaded Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the people. They sent all the plunder to their king in Damascus. Although the Aramean army had come with only a few men, the LORD delivered into their hands a much larger army. Because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their ancestors, judgment was executed on Joash. When the Arameans withdrew, they left Joash severely wounded. His officials conspired against him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they killed him in his bed. So he died and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.**

Joash walked away from God. We see that in v. 18, 20 and 24. Joash is the portrait of a person who walks away from faith.

Why do people walk away from faith? Why do kids raised in the church leave the faith in their teen years, or their young adult years? Why do some adults walk away from the faith – spouses, siblings, friends?

There are lots of reasons. Let me suggest to you from my own pastoral experience four reasons why people walk away from faith.

### **The reasons people leave the faith**

Number one – they have no root of faith in themselves. Everything about their faith is external. Like Joash, it is all about the people they're hanging around with, the other kids in youth group, the other teens in Young Life, the fact that the rest of their family goes to church. But there is never any personal laying hold of Christ for themselves. There is no personal conversion.

Here is the second reason people walk away from the faith – lifestyle issues. Christian faith and Christian morals are incompatible with the way the person has chosen to live. I've watched this over and over again. Folks say that they have intellectual issues with Christian faith. But their intellectual issues often come after their moral issues – they're living in a way that is incompatible with God's Word. And this usually concerns one of three things – money, sex, or power. They want more money, or they want to spend their money in a way they think God doesn't want them to. They want to have sex in a way they think that God doesn't want them to do it. Or they want to exercise power in a way that they think God disapproves of. It is almost always money, sex or power. Their lifestyle is incompatible with Christian faith.

The third reason people walk away from faith is that they are not equipped to deal with the intellectual challenges that they face, especially when they go off to college. People don't know that there are really good and thoughtful responses to the myriad of challenges posed by philosophers, or sociologists of religion, or modern psychology, or science. Many people feel overwhelmed when they hit university and their childhood and childish answers for tough questions are not sufficient for the adult-size questions that they're dealing with.

And finally, I've seen many people walk away from faith because they've been hurt; they've experienced disappointment with God. Something that they desperately wanted didn't happen. They've experienced a broken heart in a love relationship, or the loss of a loved one, an unhealed body; they were unsuccessful at work, or in school, or an unanswered prayer.

But basically, what I've observed is that people walk away from faith for one of four reasons. They haven't made their Christian faith personal. There is a lifestyle issue.

They're not equipped to deal with the intellectual challenges that they're facing. Or they have been disappointed by God.

The other day I read a book that was filled with intellectual challenges to Christian faith. I put the book down and I took a blank sheet of paper and I wrote down fifteen reasons why I continue to believe in the faith of all the attacks on faith. I thought to myself: why don't I walk away from faith? Lots of other people do. Why do I continue to believe?

### **The reasons I continue in the faith**

Let me tick off very quickly some of the reasons that I continue to believe. I didn't put on my list a lot of the defenses for Christian faith that you would find in a standard apologetics book, though I believe many of those defenses are sound – evidence for the resurrection, fulfilled prophecies, proofs for the existence of God. But here are some of my more subjective reasons for continuing to believe, in no particular order:

- **People I admire the most are Christians**

You know, when I look at the world, the people that I meet that I admire the most, who are self-sacrificial and generous and humble and honest are Christians. My heroes – CS Lewis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lincoln, Wilberforce, Bono – they're all Christians.

- **Because I believe in and love the way of Jesus**

I really do believe that the way of Jesus is a better way to live. I love the way of forgiveness taught by Jesus. I love the way of mercy taught by Jesus. I see no one else teaching humility, a teaching to be utterly quiet about your giving, in the way Jesus did. I love Jesus' inclusiveness, his welcome of anyone and everyone. I believe in the way of Jesus.

- **I love Christ's care for the marginalized**

When I think about the way that I think life should be lived, I think people should care about the weak and the sick and the dying and children and prisoners and immigrants.

- **The resurrection gives me an answer for death – my death and the death of loved ones**

- **I feel whole and right when I worship**

Something inside of me says, "yes, this is what you were made for. You were made to love and praise your Creator."

- **There is no other place on earth that I find the kind of community that I find within the church**

I've traveled all over the world and I have been with people's whose backgrounds are radically different than my own – poor farmers in India, women with AIDS in Africa, folks living in huts along a tributary of the Amazon River – I have been all over the world with people who are so different than me in culture, in education, in race, in life experience and I have found that Jesus breaks the walls down and enables a Jew from New York with a law degree from Ohio State to have instant connection with a farm worker in India. No other place on earth offers that kind of community.

- **I hate the alternatives**

Jesus once asked his followers, “Are you all going to leave me, too?” And Peter said, “Lord, where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life.” What's the alternative to following Jesus offered by the world today – politics, consumerism, individualism, isolation, hedonism? Who has something better than Jesus?

SLIDE

- Being a Christian has made me and others better people

The only way I would be able to master the dark forces inside of me of ambition, pride, anger, lust and greed is by turning my life over to Jesus. And I've watched Jesus make other people better as well. I have seen thousands of people's lives transformed after coming to Jesus. I know of nothing else that gives people the power to overcome grudges, drug addiction, self-abuse, sexual abuse, grief, or the myriad of other problems we humans face than faith in Jesus.

- **I've had too many experiences with God**

I've had too many experiences of the Holy Spirit, too many experiences of God's love to write off Jesus now.

- **Christianity diagnoses the world's core problem and answers that problem better than anything else.**

It is obvious that there is something wrong with the world. The Christian answer makes sense to me – we're sinners. We're alienated from God, from each other, from ourselves. And the answer that Christianity provides that it is not self-help, but grace, makes more sense to me than anything I've ever heard about.

Finally,

- **No other way of life is available to everyone the way Christian faith is.**

Christian faith is available to toddlers and to the elderly. It is available to the learning disabled and to Ph.D.'s. Christian faith works for the poor and for the wealthy, Democrats and Republicans, women and men, people of every race, color, national and religious background. Brothers and sisters, if there is someone in your life who has walked away from faith, continue to pray for them. God's promises are true; the yes of grace is more powerful than the no of unbelief and rebellion. Let's pray.

## Walking Away From Faith

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Rich Nathan  
June 23, 2013  
Family Mess 2 Series  
2 Chronicles 22-24

- I. The good years
  - A. The promises of God
  - B. The law of God
  - C. The temple of God
  
- II. The bad years
  - A. The codependent king
  - B. The apostate king
  
- III. The reasons people leave the faith
  
- IV. The reasons I continue in the faith