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by Roger Lamb, Disciples Today — Tuesday, 19 August 2008
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There's one thing that nearly everyone who grows up in the church lacks. It is so elusive that we often do not even see it until we face storms in our spiritual lives. Sometimes people will see us and wonder why kingdom kids tend to be so lukewarm, complacent and ungrateful. All too often we are like spoiled little children. We know all of the right things to say; we know how to do just enough for people to not challenge us, and we feel a completely unfounded sense of entitlement to God's blessings. The sad thing is that we rarely even notice our spiritual state, and in those moments that we do, we are at a loss to explain why. We lack gratitude.

God took me to the other side of the ocean to teach me this lesson. In the fall of 2004 I moved to Oxford, England to study. I came ready to serve the church and build new relationships, but after only a few months the church disbanded. I found myself spiritually alone for the first time in my life. I didn't have people to support and encourage me, to challenge and teach me. All I had was God. For a time I tried to remain faithful on my own. I even visited denominational churches just to get some kind of spiritual nourishment, but no one was teaching discipleship. I searched for some fellowship, but all I found was hypocrisy and false doctrine.

I would like to say that at this point I became overwhelmed with gratitude for the people who God had placed in my life, but in all honesty I threw a spiritual temper tantrum. I felt that God had brushed me to the side and that he no longer cared about my situation. So I rebelled. I got involved in all kinds of sin. I grew hard-hearted and no longer cared about God.

However, God did not leave me. He was testing me and my convictions. He showed me what I lacked. I found that I had let my spiritual life be defined by my environment. I had fed off of the convictions of my family and friends without having to fight for it myself. I had decided to become a disciple when I was ready. I had enjoyed so many of the benefits of discipleship all of my life that becoming a disciple was more like coming of age rather than being pulled out of the muck and the mire. I had seen it as my birthright. It wasn't until I was without hope that I could appreciate the hope offered to me in Christ Jesus.

Thanks be to God that he allowed me to repent and to give myself to him again. He showed me what I lacked and made me complete. Jesus offers all of us, whether you grew up in the church or not, exactly what we need in order to follow him. Today what do you lack? What do you need to give up? What is holding you back from following Jesus? Do not walk away sad; embrace the chance to repent, and see what amazing things God will do in your life.



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Confessions of a Kingdom Kid: Finding the One Thing I Lack

by Josh Walker, Atlanta, Georgia — Thursday, 14 August 2008

Ministries >> Teens — While growing up in God's Kingdom provides tremendous opportunities, it also presents the challenge of learning how to love and depend on God. One Christian shares his breakthrough in finding the one thing he lacked in following Jesus.

Read Mark 10:17-31. ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me."

In many ways I see myself in this rich young man. No, I don't have great material wealth, and I only wish I could say that I have kept all of the commandments from my childhood. However, something about this story resonates within my soul.

I am a "kingdom kid." The only thing I ever knew of Christianity was what I saw in the lives of the disciples around me – Sunday morning services, Friday devotionals, Bible talks, midweek classes and family quiet times. I was immersed in a spiritual kingdom that I neither discovered nor worked to build. I grew up in a pillar teen ministry. I spent summers at church camp. I took part in all of the activities that you could name.

I didn't have a culture that I was being called out of; I had a culture that I was being called into. My relationship with God was handed to me on a silver platter. I never had to choose between Jesus and "home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields." All I had to do was to decide when I wanted to submit to God's will.

Much like me, this young man had been raised in the richness of God's grace. He knew the commands of God, and had followed them. He had the right doctrine; he was a part of the right group; and he knew that eternal life was found in Jesus. In fact the only difference between us is that I didn't walk away sad. I followed happily, because it was right, because God was worthy of my life, but also because it was made so easy for me.

For those of us converted at an early age, we rarely have to face a difficult decision to follow Christ at the point of conversion. Often times we say "Jesus is Lord" in all conviction, faith, and sincerity, but it's not until much later that we find out what that actually means.

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