



FINISHING WELL

by Rob Loane

20 years ago I read this excellent book that I still reread every two or three years – *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* by Eugene Peterson. At the tail end of a chapter on the friendship between David and Jonathan, Peterson writes:

There are many barriers, obstacles, and distractions that seek to discourage and derail us from a well-lived life of “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). **Good beginnings in the Christian life are a dime a dozen, but good endings are far less common.**

Over the past six months I have sat through two Celebration of Life/Memorial Services for friends who I would say finished well – with a legacy of changed lives in their wake. As I pondered the significance of Randy and Kris’ lives, I have been struck by the reality that finishing well as a person is a beautiful, beautiful thing to behold. But I have also been challenged by the thought that finishing well is not simply a matter of course or an inevitability. Spiritual maturity is not like getting on a train just before it leaves the station and expecting to make it to the final stop or destination (a C. S. Lewis metaphor). More than just showing up in one’s seat is required. A deep and trusting engagement with the Spirit’s ongoing work in us and through us is required.

It's not unusual for any of us to begin something wonderful, and it's not unusual for any of us to do things that are quite good. But it is unusual to continue and persevere. The difficulties aren't for the most part external but internal—finding the energy and vision to keep the effort going. Being good and doing good are seldom adequately rewarded: more often they get us into trouble. The world, the flesh, and the devil are in fierce opposition to the Christian way and wreck many lives that start off beautifully....

Eugene Peterson

*Leap Over a Wall:
Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians*

When I was asked recently about *A Way of Life* and why I would encourage someone who is completing or has completed *The Journey* to continue onto **this next step**, I talked to them about finishing well. The vast majority of folks who complete *The Journey* tell us how significant it was for them. 85% say *The Journey* deepens their relationship with God; 89% say it enhances the application of the Bible to their lives; 88% say it reveals the importance of community and relationships as a key ingredient to spiritual growth. For each of these folks the question of next steps after *The Journey* must become – **how are we going to sustain this life of following Jesus over the long haul?**

A Way of Life engages this question of finishing well. Through the lenses of friendship with God, community with others, and participating in God’s mission we ask together:

- How are we going to continue and persevere in the Christian life?
- How are we going to find the energy and vision to keep the effort going?
- How will our lives connect good beginnings with good endings?

We have been saved by grace; we must learn to live by grace. Or as James Houston points out, “If we have been born again, then we must also be taught to live again.” A Jesus way of life—a life that finishes well—is not simply chosen or assented to or acquired, but it is learned with patience and practice and daring and trust.

May we become men and women who continue and persevere in this life of faith...

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