



Despite the frenzy and fullness of our lives, now and then, God catches us in a willing moment where divine grace awakens us to a love we can hardly believe is real. And at that moment, we are mysteriously set free from our shame and pride to claim this love for our own.

But opening our hearts to Jesus' love works differently than we might expect. Our achievement-focused perfectionism isn't effective here.

We can fervently pray, read, study, tithe, and attend gatherings, winning the esteem of others for our passion and knowledge. But the moment we stop "pedaling," our spiritual lives coast to a halt. We've made it all about us. Sometimes in our excitement and drivenness, we worship our experience of Jesus rather than Jesus himself.¹

I suggest you become familiar with the feeling you have inside when you make a resolution or strive to cling to something. You can call the feeling up inside you right now: the tight sense of grasping, the "I have to" attitude that borders on guilt or desperation, the tense and forceful atmosphere of need. Get to know the feeling well, so that whenever you feel it you can stop what you're doing, take a breath, relax, yield a little, and let your real self turn to the real God.

Substitute prayer for resolution, hope for expectation, fidelity for compulsion. Seek to encourage yourself instead of manipulating yourself. Cultivate your receptivity to the little interior glances instead of grasping for them. Live, love, and yearn with unbearable passion, but don't try to make it happen and don't try to hold on when it does happen.²

Question

How might Jesus describe the relationship he shares with you? Prayerfully ask him.

¹ See, "Excerpts from The Dark Night of the Soul by John of the Cross" in *Devotional Classics*, eds. Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith, 34.

² Gerald May, *The Awakened Heart*, 138.