

When Everything You've Ever Dreamed Of Disappears

Landry Fields reveled in his identity as a professional basketball player. The perks—the fame, the fortune and the adulation—were all he ever needed to be happy in this life.

But what happens when all you ever wanted—all you ever dreamed of, all you ever worked for—suddenly disappears?

When the New York Knicks drafted Landry out of Stanford University in 2010, Landry had achieved his lifelong ambition of making it to the NBA. He grew up knowing who Jesus was, but had always treated Him as a mere afterthought.

And now that he had made it to the big time, He certainly had little room in his life for the Lord. The life of an NBA superstar—overindulging in alcohol and sexual promiscuity—suited him just fine.

“My family brought me up in church, so I never had an issue believing in God,” Landry said in my “Javelin” interview with him. “I’ve lived a lot of my life as a person who believes in God but lives as if He doesn’t exist. I already had a ‘gospel’ of my own—the promise that love and wealth are the world’s to give to the popular and gifted. I thought I was truly saved, but I’m not sure how God saw that. I didn’t need to trust God because I already trusted another god: the NBA. ... I preached a gospel of cheap grace to make myself feel better.”

In other words, as Landry put it, he was unashamedly “living in idolatry.” He had no problem in breaking the first commandment, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other Gods before Me” (Ex. 20:2-3, MEV).

Throughout his playing time in New York, Landry looked at

teammate Jeremy Lin of Linsanity fame with awe concerning Lin's relationship with Jesus. Yet it wasn't enough to adjust his lifestyle.

But then, as God does with most of His servants, he brought Landry back to reality. And reality was hard for Landry to deal with.

After signing a free-agent contract with the Toronto Raptors that would pay him \$20 million over a three-year period, Landry suffered various injuries and underwent several surgeries to repair the ulnar nerve in his right arm. He underwent constant rehabilitation, forcing him to learn a new shooting form.

A two-year starter in New York, Landry missed 136 games over the next three years with Toronto. The dream had become a nightmare.

On top of that, in 2013, Landry and his girlfriend, Elaine, discovered they were going to have a baby out of wedlock.

So what do when you've hit rock bottom and nothing makes sense anymore?

"That's when God gave me sort of my own Damascus Road experience," Landry said. "I wasn't playing, I had a pregnant girlfriend; everything began to spiral downward. Everything you've ever known and everything everybody has ever wanted or expected from you is going down the toilet. God had to intervene or I don't know what might have happened."

Not knowing where else to turn, Landry called a friend, Carl Lentz, the head pastor at Hillsong NYC and an avid Knicks fan. Lentz didn't pass judgment on Landry, but told him it was time for him to "come home to Jesus."

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"Carl is the only guy that I really trusted with all of this," Landry said. "He drew close to me and loved on me exactly how Jesus would."

Lentz began to disciple Landry, bringing Landry to the full knowledge of Jesus. But Landry's injuries still kept him off the basketball court, and he had to eventually realize that he might not ever play again.

"That's how God works. He never wastes a drop of pain," Landry said in an article he wrote for titled "Injury Interrupted My Idolatry." "God gifted me faith through my suffering. If you're in the midst of suffering—especially if it's long-term, complex or confusing—there are three gifts of faith that grow out of suffering in ways that will last. I'm talking about 1 Corinthians 3:15, 2 Corinthians 7:10 and Matthew 11:30."

- 1 Corinthians 3:15 – *"If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss. But he himself will be saved, still going through the fire"* (MEV)
- 2 Corinthians 7:10 – *"Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but the sorrow of the world produces death"* (MEV).
- Matthew 7:10 – *"For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"* (MEV).

"God dims the light of our life with suffering, so that our hearts embrace a grace that really sustains," Landry wrote. "Not all at once, but day after day, over the course of years, God brought new clarity. The joy that God gives in suffering is a game-changer."

Landry's life has undergone drastic changes since his "Damascus Road Experience." He married Elaine, a believer, and

they are raising their son, James Jackson, to love Jesus. Still hoping that God will allow him to make a comeback in the NBA, Landry is working part-time at his church and serving the Lord. He frequently tweets Scripture and wants God to use his story to inspire others who have lost their dream—and their way.

“I’m not sure what God has in store for me, but I live by Proverbs 3:5 that says, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart.’” Landry says. “I keep clinging to that mustard seed of faith that’s floating beside me.

“If you are going through something painful or difficult, it doesn’t mean God isn’t paying attention or doesn’t care. It means God wants to win you to true faith in him, a better hope in His salvation, and deep humility and joy in His grace.”

Landry Fields—a man who thought he had it all and lost it, but found it all through Christ.

And as I always like to say, “there is that.” {eoa}