

When God Interrupts Your Devotional

So you know the, “How are you doing?” question we all ask each other? It’s like a part of the American greeting ... “*Hi, how are you doin’?*”

We hear it from the salesperson when we walk into a store, from the cashier who’s checking out our groceries, from the person we pass in the hallway at work, from the person we shake hands with during the Sunday morning meet-and-greet at church, from the girl on the other end of the intercom at the Starbucks drive-thru.

We hear it from people we know and from people we’ve never seen before.

“Hi! How are you?”

This question has always been peculiar to me, because of course I’m not going to *really* answer that question to the guy I’ve never met who’s scanning my bread and milk.

And really, most don’t ask because they *want* to know the answer. We’ve just meshed it into a part of our “hello,” somehow. Sometimes we even ask it in passing, giving the responder just enough time to deliver the standard, “I’m good,” and then we keep going on with our business.

But sometimes, this question is pretty loaded. Have y’all ever had those instances when a good friend (who really *does* want to know the answer) gives the how-are-you-doing question, and when she asks it, you immediately feel a lump in your throat or start tearing up? Because it turns out, you’re not doing so good, and though you could pretend with your grocery checker, a good friend sometimes has a way of popping the façade.

Not so long ago, I sat down at a restaurant with my husband. When the waitress came by with menus, she came with the *hi-how-are-ya* greeting. And for a few seconds, I began to consider—*what if I really told her?* What if I told her that the last few months had been the most challenging of my life so far, that I cried lots of days, that I missed my dad more than I could've imagined ...?

Well, I didn't tell her (and I wouldn't necessarily recommend you spilling your heart out to your waitress either). I spouted an "I'm doing OK" and then took the menu she offered me.

But what it did get me thinking about was just the simple reality that I couldn't get away with that "I'm OK" answer with God. His eyes peer right through any of my pretenses.

And He wants the real me.

But at times I've found myself mechanically moving through my routine during the day—even my "routine in God." Sunday through Saturday, I pick up where I left off in my Bible reading, pull out my prayer list, and go for it. (For the record, I think having a Bible reading plan and a prayer list is a really great idea—it's a practical help in staying faithful to give God that sacred time, it's a tool to engage with His heart, it's a road map of how to use that space in our day wisely and not wastefully.)

But there are days, here and there, when the best way to walk closely with His heart is to actually step off the map we've made.

I remember a day in these recent months when I was plowing faithfully through my list of prayer requests ... but my heart was in some other place, *somewhere*, bleeding. I opened my Bible to pick up where I'd left off the day before, and my eyes glazed over the pages as my mind wandered and my heart numbed to the storm inside.

Right in the middle of my going-through-the-motions, I felt the Lord whisper to my heart—*Pause your routine with Me for a minute. And let's have a real conversation.*

He wasn't after my outward motion. *He wanted my heart*, right where it was in that broken, bleeding moment.

He wanted a heart that would come to Him in authenticity and in brokenness. A heart that doesn't shove down the real answer to the how-you-doing question, doesn't attempt to pick up its own broken pieces or hide its cracks—but comes unkempt. Imperfect. Vulnerable. Bare. *Real.*

And so I pressed pause on my routine. I unveiled the secrets of my heart to the One who already knew them, but who wanted interaction with me, ***because He's an intimate God.***

As a daughter before her Father, I told Him how I was doing, *really*. I told Him what hurt, I told Him what I didn't understand. I brought Him my questions, my wrestles, and my disappointments. I released my tears before Him and poured out my buried aches.

I spilled out, cried out, and bled out.

Sometimes, it's in our hardest of seasons when some of our most precious and marking memories with God are made.

They are the times when deep desperately calls out to deep—when I search deep into His heart, determined to discover something, *anything*, that would sustain my soul ... and He reaches His hand into the deep of mine, loving to reveal.

Our aches are escorts into the heart of the Father, the heart of our Healer, the heart of our God.

Our wrestling questions are invitations to discover, mysteries meant to send us on a treasure hunt.

And ultimately, in the searching of Him, and in the discovering of Him, we end up falling more in love with Him.

We've got to get real before God.

And sometimes we've got to press pause on the schedule, and come before Him, a child before her Father—without all the right, put-together words, without an agenda, without a set routine. *But simply with hearts raw, desperate and hungry.*

Let's invite Him into those messy places we have a tendency to hide, let our heart spill out those unrefined questions and topics that we would rather bury.

Ask God your questions. Ask them in humility. Come to Him in your ache, in your confusion, in your bleeding.

Just come. For holy wrestlings awaken thirst, unearth our desperation, send us searching ... and lead us into a deeper knowing of Him.

Let your deep cry out to His deep, and *be you* before Him. Unveil your heart to God ... and just watch as He unveils His to you.

For these raw, heart-exposed, how-are-you-doing moments before Him are extraordinarily intimate.

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