

## ***Looking for the Life-Light***

Our home is quieter than it's ever been. I say that, not knowing whether it's true, but because it seems so. Our children are grown and gone. Our dog died this year. Plus, Lucie and I don't make a lot of noise. We begin most days silently praying together. Then we exchange kisses before heading into a busy day in a noisy world. Most evenings we arrive home from our work feeling satisfied and weary.

Truthfully, I like this season of my life. And in a particular way, I've especially enjoyed mulling over Christ's birth again this Advent. Years past, the opportunity was oftentimes swept away in a flood of hustling and bustling activities. Familiar traditions and superficial diversions dulled my senses, rendering me incapable of listening for and hearing God's voice speaking deep within. And even when I managed to avoid the holiday trappings I still missed the point.

But I'm more hopeful about the outcome of the kind of Advent that I've felt drawn into this year. That it'll be a season of sincere and intentional interior preparation. That, in turn, it'll open me more widely and connect me more deeply to the brilliant "Life-Light" that entered the world that first Christmas. That as I reflect on his first coming; how he lived, died and rose to live again, my slumbering

spirit will be reawakened and my heart taken more fully captive by the astonishing reality that God loves me beyond my wildest dreams. And that being seized by the power of God's unbridled affection I'll also be compelled to wonder about the future, Second Advent—the coming of God's kingdom on earth and to hear the calling voice of God for me to do my part in the building of that kingdom.

After all, the "Life-Light" that descended as an infant into our world of conflict and landed in the feeding trough of a barnyard animal is much more than first meets the eye. It's not merely a soft, twinkling light, but a raging, consuming fire. This "Life-Light" is brighter, clearer, more penetrating and powerful than any light that has ever shown. This "Life-Light" shines with such intensity and force that wherever it appears it scatters the proud, humbles the mighty, feeds the hungry, and sends the rich away empty-handed (Luke 1:51-53).

Yes, it's Advent again. It's a season that's full of expectancy as we await the arrival of God. And I'm beginning to feel like a child playing a game of "hide and seek" and I'm listening for God to begin counting down until finally again he announces, "Here I come, ready or not!"

The question is, "When God calls; will I be listening? And if I hear his call, will I be ready and willing to answer the call?"

*The Word was first,  
the Word present to  
God. God present to  
the Word.*

*The Word was God, in  
readiness for God  
from day one.*

*Everything was  
created through him;  
nothing—not one  
thing!—came into  
being without him.*

*What came into  
existence was Life,  
and the Life was  
Light to live by.*

*The Life-Light blazed  
out of the darkness;  
the darkness couldn't  
put it out.* John 1:

## The School of Spiritual Formation and Care of the Soul

Journey Resources and Potter's Inn is once again offering this five day event at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center April 11-15, 2012 in Stoneville, NC. We urge you to take advantage of this unique opportunity. The School is for pastors, missionaries, and leaders in churches and Christian organizations.

The rhythm of each day will be spaciouly designed, providing time for lively discussion, thoughtful teaching, quiet reflection, rest and study. Participants will meet in small groups and one-on-one with a spiritual director in the afternoons.

Topics will include:

- Spiritual formation and how it occurs.
- Exploring our personal story of spiritual formation.
- What is the soul and how do we care for it?
- How does marring, failure and wounding shape the soul?
- Recognizing spiritual disciplines as soul exercises.
- The essential nature of silence and solitude, spiritual reading and journaling, Sabbath keeping and worship.
- Developing a personal rhythm of spiritual practices that is realistic and sustainable.
- The church and spiritual formation and the care of the soul.

Please visit our web site at [www.journeyresources.com](http://www.journeyresources.com) for further information. "Early Bird" registration is due December 31.

## Fil's Reflections on 2011

This past year has been full of remarkable opportunities for Journey Resources. God has opened doors in strategic places and people's lives have been impacted across the United States and beyond through these various means:

### ~Preaching & teaching~

Last month I spoke to 2,000 delegates at The Mandate in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The Mandate is one of Europe's largest men's conferences. The event's theme was "Strengthening the Core: Personal Transformation From the Inside Out."

The enclosed article appeared in the November issue of *SORTED*, a dynamic magazine in the UK. I hope you are encouraged by the message it delivers.

In addition to the numerous invitations Journey Resources receives, I continue to assist St. Mark's Church in Burlington, NC with their ongoing spiritual formation opportunities.

### ~Writing~

My books *Running on Empty: Contemplative Spirituality for Overachievers* and *Breaking the Rules: Trading Performance for Intimacy with God* continue to attract the attention of readers.

I write a monthly online blog in association with *CONVERSATIONS: A Forum for Authentic Transformation*. "Looking for the Life-Light" (opposite page) was one the site's top posts this year. Please look for my monthly contributions by going to: [www.conversationsjournal.com/cat](http://www.conversationsjournal.com/cat)

### ~Encouraging compassionate action rooted in prayer~

Local and global opportunities continue to enable me to serve the world's poor, sick, and suffering and those following Jesus' call to aid them.

### ~Spiritual direction~

I maintain monthly one-on-one engagement with numerous individuals for the purpose of helping them grow in their relationship with God.

## Partnering with Journey Resources

The Board and I remain intent on Journey Resources being as self-sustaining as possible. Fees for speaking engagements, retreats and book sales enable us to meet nearly half of our financial obligations. The remaining balance comes from generous people like you.

If you are not presently partnering with us and are able to help, we would be most grateful. All gifts to Journey Resources are tax deductible. No level of support could be too small to matter.

You may make a donation by returning your gift in the enclosed envelope, by visiting our web site [www.journeyresources.com](http://www.journeyresources.com) and using an existing Paypal account or credit card. Or, if you wish to establish a monthly draft, please notify us and we'll gladly provide you with the needed information.

One of my heart's most sincere desires is to continue offering the message of God's relentless love, grace and mercy for years to come. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for partnering with us in whatever