

PERSPECTIVE

Perspective – A flight to victory through relationship with a living Savior

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Publishing Services provided by: Believers Press

Printed by: Bethany Press

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Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-578-14593-8

Paperback ISBN: 978-0-578-14489-4

EPUB ISBN: 978-0-578-14591-4

MOBI ISBN: 978-0-578-14592-1

Printed in the United States of America

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PERSPECTIVE

*A flight to victory
through relationship with
a living Savior*



PETER HOEWISCH



Dedicated to
my eternally faithful and loving Father
—and my relational Savior,
Lord, and Friend.



*With man this is impossible,
but with God all things are possible.*
—Matt. 19:26



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Prelude

THE ROAD TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

A little over a decade ago I was mired neck deep in one of the biggest obligations I had yet to find myself. At least that is the way it seemed. I saw no way out of my commitments. I was in the cross-hairs of something that would perplex anyone in his early twenties.

I was less than a month away from the end of my senior year of college. I had one more semester to follow in the fall, but threat loomed of buckling under the enormity of my situation. The temptation to doubt was chasing me, getting ever nearer. My first three years of school had been packed with affirmations of what I was doing. I had written numerous journal entries declaring my resolute spirit. My parents echoed my heart. Holding tightly to these immovable stones of belief had been easy at the start. That is, until the state of my existence began to morph from words into unchangeable reality.

I had come a long way, and I was too far into flight school to alter my course. The dollars had been spent. What could I do to change that?

By the time of my graduation I had accumulated school loans in excess of six figures. No doubt students now followed a similar road into aviation, facing even greater debt. If I was being led down a path of trust, then to what end? Whether God made provision for the debt would seriously influence my overall determination of

whether my trust had been well placed. It would be years before I fully knew the answer.

Amazingly, God's perfect plan for my life would prove effective in concert with and outside the restraint of the unknowns. I would be unavoidably intertwined with God's infusion of life moments where I would be forced to trust Him implicitly—most often because I had no alternative. Trust would define my growth and the value in that journey would be dictated by the spiritual veracity of each moment.

God would stand powerfully and majestically above all the strain as His faithfulness bridged my weaknesses. In time I would become stronger as a result.

AN INTERACTIVE GOD

Some, perhaps even those who grew up in the church and learned of a faith in Christ, may argue that God doesn't exist—that any claim by a believer that He positively orchestrated or directed a specific event is, instead, pure coincidence. I concede when viewed in isolation or within narrow windows of time that it would appear each could exist apart from the Father's involvement. But as you walk with me through the remarkable encounters of my life, I believe you will be convinced, as I am, that none but a compassionate, involved Creator could have orchestrated these events.

People we encounter in day-to-day life may consider the Lord Jesus Christ impersonal, disconnected, and irrelevant. Many consider Him partially or perhaps completely out of touch with the world and our real lives. That view lends itself to the idea of a universal God, accessible by reason but inattentive to our personal dilemmas. But I have come to know Him as altogether different from that notion. I have experienced Him as personally relevant, even in the smallest affairs of life.

Beginning with my college search and continuing through today, the Lord has taken me down many roads of trial, excitement, and

disappointment. This path was unmistakably His doing. In increasing measure, He unveiled before me a tangible faithfulness that impacted the way I handle every trial and event of life. He showed me how to achieve the victory of success. His faithfulness of the past motivated me to trust in the future. In fact, I would become so accustomed to His working presence that to push through this life with anything less would prove a waste of my full potential and cause me grief.

The Lord's intimacy through relationship would provide me experiences like those of Moses and Paul when He revealed Himself to them in personal ways. These amazing interactions would bring vividness to the Scriptures I already knew and show me how it applies to my life. Combine prayer and the encouragement of other believers, and each component would work in harmony to make Him ever more real to me.

In fact, these experiences have led me to believe in the Lord as the only viable answer to this life. His principles and guidelines I now realize are there for my protection. He's saving me *from* myself. He wants to work in me greater than the ramifications I'm otherwise hostage to in my own flawed ways. He would be an unloving Father if He did not guide me to achieve my greatest potential. Worse, any god without some principled standard of character would be uninvolved, dissociated from my life and this world. To see God as uninvolved yet seek Him in life's trials is like yelling in a room of other yelling voices. One won't be heard since his heart is not relationally connected to God. However, if the Lord knows me intimately and guides me through the unknowns, then there is neither limit to what He can do nor to my potential.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

If I can demonstrate my examples of following the Lord as beneficial, then it should be taken as evidence by all that the Father can

be trusted. I learned that I miss opportunities if I'm not listening to Him and obeying what I know He expects me to do. As with a human relationship between a parent and child, a lack of obedience interrupts communication and relationship.

I ponder the whole of my life like the ascent up a high, snow-capped mountain. Three hundred feet into the climb I look behind me. All I see is a brief portion of the trail I've journeyed as it disappears amid the thick grove of pine trees. I'm unable to see the peak as much as I've lost sight of the valley where I began. As I cross the tree line and approach the heights of the mountain I begin to see the panorama of where I've been as well as the unspoken wonders to come.

In the same way, overlooking the breadth and life history of God's involvement in the individual moments, seeing the whole of His plans, invokes a broader perspective. I find hope on the mountain heights. My desire is for you to be emboldened by seeing the Lord accomplish this work in me, to capture a glimpse, to experience the exhilaration in that life, and to watch *your* faith take to similar heights.

Stay with me now, as I take you back to my beginnings, to help you understand why these tests of my faith loomed large and impacted my journey so significantly. Perhaps a look into the earliest days will shed light on my adventurous search for life and how the Lord played a pivotal role at every turn.

One



EARLY ADVENTURES

It is in a boy's nature to search for adventure and bravery, sometimes even if he battles internal fears. It is here he begins to define himself. He must dare himself, build his courage, and then boast to his peers of the man he is becoming. I was an especially inquisitive little boy.

I loved life and soaked up every detail of my environment. From eating the living room plant to scoping out every last square inch of the white toddler blanket draped over my head, I always seemed to find more undiscovered realms. Curious George was not the only one who allowed his inquisitive nature to lead him astray.

The memories of my exuberance, daring, hesitance, and fear are still fresh. I recall playing with friends on a precarious ice-covered creek bed during a Michigan winter. The sense of accomplishment was palpable as a friend and I engineered and built an igloo on his front lawn. I also recall the feeling of danger as we sat inside hoping it wouldn't collapse.

Emotions of boyhood might and prowess intertwine with memories of snowball wars waged behind snow bunkers we built on either side of his driveway.

In those same years I would face isolating challenges—learning to jump off a diving board, for example. I stood at the edge looking into the deep, blue waters, frozen stiff. I wanted to show I had

courage, but shame filled my conflicted spirit . . . until the day I finally achieved victory.

In later years I spent hours charting courses through the deepest woods while suffering the ill effects of my pioneering. Whether it was the agony of being covered in poison oak or coming face-to-face with a startled Water Moccasin, my eagerness for adventure seemed only a normal part of becoming a man. Gaining a bloody nose after a fall off a fence seemed somehow worthy of commemoration.

Yet, not every experience of my youth became a shining moment. I was often teased because of my accelerated growth and tall, slender stature. I repeatedly had stones thrown at me by my grade-school peers after stepping off the school bus. I was punched by someone who days before had called me *friend*. Bullying was common then, as now.

For me, their impacts reverberated deep into my search for belonging. Sometimes shameful reactions were my uncontrolled response, as when I hit a pre-Kindergarten classmate after becoming fed up by his teasing. Most of the time, however, I did nothing. More harmful was the catapult into a faltering self-confidence. I desperately wanted, no, *needed* identity.

Rather than finding many valuable connections to those my age, I regularly felt like an outcast or at least odd enough that I didn't fit in. I retreated, deducing I was better off alone. This wasn't altogether bad, as I'd always possessed an independent nature. My past only fed my tenacious and decisive search for meaning. In the years that followed I continued to strain to find the person I was supposed to be. Little could I have understood then that the Father would use this severe independence and isolation as a powerful instigator in my pursuit of Him.

This was me during my prime, receptive ages. There is a reason I remember those budding years. Those moments left an indelible mark. What I saw through the eyes of youthful imagination—later to be harnessed and played out on life's stage with vigorous invincibility—affected how I would engage my world.

Two



A PROPOSAL OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

So, how did I find the Lord to be relational? One of the ways was through watching Him do the impossible. Often, though, He waits for my own resourcefulness and logic to prove fruitless before He steps in and says, “You can’t do it. But I can.”

I saw Him work this way when I was seeking a college and a career path to follow. In January 1999 I was months from concluding my high school education as a home-schooled child from grades seven through twelve. Along with my parents, I began to explore possibilities. It became an intense time of praying and pursuing the Father’s will and His best desire.

Meteorology captured my attention. I spent many hours closely watching severe Texas weather. I even wrote a high school research paper on tornadoes. I was engrossed *and* enthused in the science.

My home-school supervisor was quick to recommend a school deeply set in the green hills of southern Missouri, College of the Ozarks. It was also a tuition free, Christian institution designed as a work-study program. Ninety percent of the students who attend receive Federal financial aid. The other ten percent do not. I had no savings set aside. Additionally, my parents’ ability to contribute was limited because my dad had been unemployed for two years. So, this school looked like quite the appealing and logical choice.

We took a several-day trip to Branson, Mo., to view the college.

Shortly after we began the tour of the campus the female guide asked my course interest. Without hesitation I enthusiastically answered, “Meteorology.” Like a young boy watching his first bike demolished behind his parents’ car, I was crushed when she told me they had no such program.

She then suggested we all go to a hilltop on their property. This became one of those God-moments when He intervened and unfolded His creative plan before my eyes. I can’t describe the awe of the next few moments atop that plateau. The school had their own, functioning instructional airport. In an instant I was captivated by the notion of flying. I didn’t know there were colleges with an instructional airport. This idea was such a foreign concept. I had come to appreciate flying, but for me to consider being in the *front seat* of those amazing machines had been beyond my imagination.

We stayed in the campus hotel that evening. Thoughts raced through my mind. I could apply myself to flying. I already had a love affair with the weather. Pilots need that. Mechanics had nearly formed an addiction as I maintained my parents’ cars during high school. Check off another need. A personal inventory taken earlier had even recommended the field of aviation. How had I not made this connection before? Then, I remembered going forward in church to offer myself to ministry. God could answer that in being a missionary pilot. Aviation offered *all* of these facets—wrapped up in one amazing career.

As I prayed and deliberated more that night, I started wondering whether the Lord might be leading me into missionary aviation. In that capacity I could function as both mechanic and pilot. I was as pumped about this vision as a sports player is before a game. You know the final score is yet to be decided, but you have every expectation of winning.

With this newfound enthusiasm for the world of aviation and the financial needs that could be met through that school, I submitted an application to College of the Ozarks. But when I received a

response, it was marked denied. I was disheartened. Wasn't it an obvious choice? How could the Lord disapprove of any of it?

WHAT COULD GOD HAVE IN MIND?

This was the season of my life where I learned a key truth that would become a refrain in later years: the Lord had better plans.

It was time to pray and search with more focus. A few months later my parents met with friends from church. When they learned of my innate hands-on inclination, they suggested we look at LeTourneau University in Longview. It was an easy two-hour drive, nestled in the heart of the piney woods of east Texas. I hadn't known of the school. But in May 1999 on a humid Texas day we ventured east for a campus visit.

The preview of LeTourneau was unlike my experience at College of the Ozarks. It wasn't the layout of the campus, the people, or what they had to offer. No, it was a sense of something inexplicably special. I still remember the feeling I had after arriving in the school's parking lot. I hadn't yet stepped foot out of the car and I could have sworn I had been there before. After inquiring of my parents, they said I had not.

Through some discussion, I came to identify this as one of my first, real encounters of His soothing peace. I couldn't explain this depth of rushing calm through any logic. On the contrary, my temperament typically is nervousness when considering anything new. There could be no other explanation but that I sensed the Lord's presence on that campus that day. He had gone ahead and was readying me to attend.

After touring the campus and the airport facility several miles south at East Texas Regional, it seemed the Lord was about to initiate the first challenge to my faith and trust. Everything about LeTourneau was great. The culture was instantly welcoming. Most appealing was their pure and humble focus on Christian values.

They didn't force students to accept Christianity, but they did intertwine faith with studies. This permitted an atmosphere conducive to spiritual and educational growth.

I stepped forward in faith and applied. I was ready to give my spiritual ship its first sea trials. We knew financial aid would be a significant hurdle; but, if this was the impossible task the Lord was accomplishing, He'd make a way. Tuition was in the neighborhood of \$18,000 for a single, two-semester school year, and even more if I flew. We were discouraged by the cost. We didn't know where we would acquire that kind of money. Taking on debt was not our family way. Living within means exercises the stewardship the Lord desires. We believed He was aiming to enact a *greater* standard through asking us to trust Him.

COULD GOD OVERCOME THIS HURDLE?

Despite the prospect of loans, I still recall a personally specific directive from the Lord. He wanted me at LeTourneau. It was a peace that washed over me, as if He were saying, "Do what I have asked you to do. Do not worry about the debt. I *am* sufficient. I *am* more than able, and will take care of the debt in My way and in My time. I *am* going to prove Myself to you." I was blessed with more affirmation when my parents each felt a settled spirit about LeTourneau.

Weeks passed. Between excitement and fighting my human unsettledness, I was wondering what the holdup could be. Then the call came. The admissions office notified me that I had been awarded scholarships and grants in the neighborhood of \$8,000. This cost reduction proved to be the glimmer of His promise we needed. My father, mother, and I had no question the Lord had confirmed our steps. Knowing He would go ahead of us we proceeded with the application process.

I opted to enter their flight program. Only later did I discover it was one of the most well-respected flight programs in the United

States. In fact, several years into my college education my brother, Mark, relayed to me a conversation between him and a Southwest Airlines pilot and coworker on a flight. Of all the pilots coming on board from the civilian sector, LeTourneau and Embry Riddle were the most appealing. LeTourneau had a rigorous flight program whose successful completion surpassed the FAA's high standards of excellence. I would be able to vouch for that in a few short years.

Even though I was only beginning to embrace this new, challenging relationship with my Father and Lord, I recall possessing a strong desire to be able to share with others what I had already learned about His active and faithful provision in my life.

I didn't see much of the "lessons learned" until months and years later, but as I witnessed about it, the clarity came as I pursued God continuously in prayer. My circumstances seemed impossible to overcome.

Even with the large grant and scholarships, the huge financial obligation that ensued seemed an impossible hurdle to me. I was confident God wanted me there. I wanted to believe He could do the impossible. That's why I kept seeking Him. I knew it was His voice and command, but I wanted to be sure I was hearing correctly and from the right source. My commitment to obey and follow His leading to LeTourneau was only the overture to my test, and it centered squarely on my trust. It was apparent to me I was supposed to be learning to fly at LeTourneau. What I had yet to discover was how far I would trust that "notion."

A whole new array of struggles coming in the years ahead would force my return to Him asking, "Are You *sure* this is what I'm supposed to be doing?" This question was quick to be asked in my first semester, Fall 1999. It was going to be a *big* one.