

MORE THAN A HIGH

*MOVING FROM SPIRITUAL HIGH
TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH*

Charlie Alcock

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INTRODUCTION

It's over. The excitement you felt at the moment you gave your life to God has faded. The music is silent. The worship band has packed up their gear and headed to the next camp. You're back in school, back in the cycle. You're wondering if what you experienced was even real. You wonder if God has stopped working in your life.

In these times, what you need most is not another hyped, emotional experience, but to be quiet and listen for what God is doing and wants to do in your life. What does he want to accomplish in you? If it is just going to be another year, another semester at school, then what's it all for? It doesn't make sense that God just rewinds time and plays it over again. There's no way that God repeats the same old stuff. He wants to do something fresh and unique in you. He never stops working.

The danger is when we stop working—when we stop anticipating God's work. The secret to staying fresh in your relationship with Christ is found in this word: *anticipation*. Always be expecting and wanting more. Anticipate it. Believe that he has more. He wants to do something fresh. Don't grow old and stale—thinking that you've experienced all that God has to offer. For most of you, you're just beginning your experience with him—your life, your relationship.

It's now that you establish a pattern. It's now that you make the decision, "I'm in it all the way, and I will never, ever, ever settle for anything less. Never. I personally will not quit and get dry, crusty, and old in my relationship with Christ." You have to believe that he has a lot more in store for you. He's got a lot more than you've ever seen. Embrace him.

The question, then, is are you willing to go to the next level? Are you willing to sacrifice to the point that you see him move? For me, that means getting rid of a lot of Charlie to see more of God. I've seen enough of me, and it's not all that great. I bet, at this point in your life, you've seen enough of you. I have counseled many students through the years who looked in the mirror and couldn't stand what they saw. They didn't want to be who they were, and they hated seeing their reflection. I want you to get to the point where you look in the mirror and see Christ's reflection. It's time to make some changes and fight for your relationship with God. I'm talking about a spiritual tenacity that just doesn't quit.

Spiritual highs fade because they're based on emotions. Don't miss what I mean here. Emotions are not bad. They cause us to do things we wouldn't normally do. They cause us to fall in love, to sing at the top of our lungs, and to follow God. But relationships can't be built on emotions. Your experience with God is more than a series of spiritual highs. It's a relationship that bursts into being through emotion, but is sustained by passion, sweat-dripping service, and unwavering faith. It's time for you to take the steps to becoming who God created you to be. It's time to change.

The following chapters will help you walk through the process of participating with God as he continues—and

deepens—his work in you long after the moment of salvation. Please don't go through this book alone. You need the support of a group. The questions at the end of each chapter are designed to help you process in a group setting what you will read. It's important to write down your thoughts and answers in the space provided. Be honest and open as you share.

I pray God's blessing over you as you open your heart to the work he's doing in your life.



***SOMETHING TO
BELIEVE IN***

A few years ago, I was flying from San Diego, California, to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to start a youth camp. I was exhausted. I felt physically and spiritually spent. Now, I've heard evangelists talk about mass revival on plane rides. You know, there were a thousand people on their flight, and the plane was about a half-mile long. Pretty soon, they were talking to five people, and they had an altar call. The whole plane got saved, and the whole city they were flying over got saved. By the time they landed, the air traffic control people were crying and weeping. I knew I wasn't going to experience that this time.

I sat down on this particular flight, sandwiched between two people who obviously didn't understand the concept of personal space. I met them and, luckily, neither one was interested in a conversation. The plane took off, and it was bumpy and shaking for the first hour. All I wanted to do was get some sleep, but instead I started having a weird daydream. I felt like I was speaking to a large group of people, and the message was intense. It was very awkward for me on the plane, because I knew I was starting to cry. I tried to pretend like I was sleeping,

but I felt such an intense conviction. I got a piece of paper and started writing as fast as I could. What follows is that message.

A CREED FOR THIS GENERATION

This generation, your generation, has grown up in an age of deception and lies. You have seen spiritual leaders fail morally and political leaders lie openly. You have been raised in an age of mass media to the point that the lines of entertainment and reality are indistinguishable, and even worse, one and the same. What is seen from ABC to MTV has become, in effect, your window to the world, one that is void of absolutes and morals. Truths once learned in Sunday school are seen as rigid and old-fashioned instead of fundamental and important. This generation mocks a biblical view of freedom, arguing that it strangles individuality. Christians are depicted as stiff, mindless people, closed off to anything new or innovative. Principles that the Church stands on are constantly slurred into positions of intolerance and prejudice.

The core of this generation has crumbled in this age of deception and lies. History will remember it as one of great individualism and creativity. But we have clearly lost our way. The truth is that there is pressure to go and to do even if we don't know why, when, or where. When it comes to your relationship with God, you are generally tired, spent, and unable to dive in. And here's the killer: when you're unable to dive in spiritually, you feel guilty. Guilt prevents you from accepting God's grace and his love. I don't think another generation has had to deal with the amount of guilt you do because of what


you are exposed to every day. It's so easy to fall. You know it. I know it. I don't need to give you any illustrations. It's intense. And guilt is a major tool that Satan uses to keep you from becoming passionate in your relationship with Christ.

Everything you see and hear in the media or elsewhere is a call for independence. There is no real understanding of the fundamental truth. Independence for the sake of independence is the resounding chorus. This cultural cry for freedom provides the opportunity, but it doesn't care about your safety. You are jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. The world doesn't care what happens to you when you fall to your death. In fact, you are forgotten the moment you jump. The world is only concerned with the thrill and satisfaction of jumping—and the promise, the energy, the good time, the party that comes with it.


Without Christ there is no purpose. It's easy to experience God fully and then go back to school and act the same as everybody else. Trusting in him, relying on his strength, has to become the cause you fight for. To be like Christ is the challenge. He is the one who gives you distinction, identity, purpose, and place. And above all else, he is the only one who gives you everlasting life, something this world cannot compete with. It doesn't have it. It doesn't understand it—the call to be authentic, to be real, to be free, not in our ability to create or to manipulate, but in complete faith, believing that only through total abandonment will he produce in you the life you seek. You must let him have control. Trust in him with what you want, with what you have, and with what you hope to be. He will develop you into the person he created you to be.

Your responsibility is to stay focused on Christ. You have the only thing culture cannot produce or recreate. So you must sing it, pray it, believe it, stand on it, and be lost in it. For in being lost, you are humbled to the point of full surrender. It is at that point that you are truly found. How crazy is that? You are truly found when you are lost in Christ. You know what freedom is? Freedom is full surrender. You know what the biggest sin was? It was Lucifer wanting to be like God. All sin is connected to selfishness. And all freedom is connected to *selflessness*.

We think freedom is doing it our way. True freedom is being able to walk out into the world, knowing that regardless of what happens, you are connected to Almighty God. True freedom is knowing that the temptations you face no longer have any power over you.



You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but are in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.



—Romans 8:9–10

Are you experiencing true freedom?

It's time for Christians to be countercultural. We've become a selfish generation that sees everything based on our own wants and desires. For way too long, I've been at the front of that pack, and it doesn't produce anything—except failure. And after tons of failure, people you know—and maybe even you yourself—will walk away from Christ. Dying to self, dying to desire, dying to hopes, dying to dreams. What's it going to cost you to stay passionate? You need to get to the point where you're not afraid to be exposed. You're not afraid to say, "Listen. I'm wrong here, and I've failed here." It's hard to be exposed. I've been in an accountability relationship with a group of friends for years, and it's tough. It's very, very difficult to say when you're wrong. After you've walked through that time of fear, and you deal with the situation, there's a peace and an authenticity—it's liberating. It's freedom. I want you to know freedom.

But listen, there is a cost. You might have to throw some stuff away. You might have to say no to stuff you really want to do. You might have to redefine your relationship with your girlfriend or your boyfriend. There might be a lot of stuff that you have to do that might cost you friends. I don't know. But if you want to know freedom, it's a small price to pay. So let's take a journey; let's keep moving forward. God is not finished. Let's be a part of something that's bigger than we are.

3. Are most people okay with you being a Christian, or do they judge you more than others?

4. What do you value most in your life? (You can answer this question best by looking at how you spend your time.)

5. How can you make more time to focus on your relationship with God?

6. What is true freedom?

7. List some things that you will have to sacrifice to follow God.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlie Alcock is a youth ministry veteran. Since 1988, he has led local churches in Virginia, Indiana, and California, and is currently serving as a youth ministry professor and director of youth ministry events at Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU). While at IWU, Charlie has stayed connected to the local church as a staff member and on the team at Cypress Church in Dayton, Ohio. Charlie is an author, active speaker at camps and conferences, and has a podcast with his ministry mentor called “Good Days with Eddy and Charlie” that is focuses on youth ministry and those who lead it.