

Andres Ayala
Dr. Ron Walborn
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In the book *The Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get Close to God* by Wanda Walborn, the reader is challenged and invited to take deeper steps in understanding their relationship with God and how that impacts their relationship with self and the larger community around them. Wanda takes the reader through personal steps of freedom and reflection as she reflects on spiritual truths mixed with personal stories helping the reader begin to take steps drawing closer to a God who so desperately longs to be in relationship with His creation.

As I read through Wanda's book and reflected on how this would impact my present ministry context, I realized how deeply the truths she is pointing out hit. As someone who began ministry at such a young age, around 16, it is easy to get caught up in what I do rather than who I am. As I read through Wanda's book, I could not help, but be challenged to reflect more on the person God has created me to be and His deep longing to be in relationship with me. In talking about this journey, Wanda writes, "This version of relationship focuses on what we get from the relationship, rather than who we are with on the journey. The spiritual journey is not what we do or don't do for God. The spiritual journey is about traveling with the One we love to experience life together within each present moment."¹ It is so easy to get caught up in the day to day busyness and business that needs to get done and find myself overwhelmed with a performance based love in the ministry I do rather than knowing that my identity and worth is found within the presence of Father who so deeply loves me. Wanda then challenges the reader to become friends with themselves to see themselves and accept themselves who they were created to be. She encourages the reader to become friends with themselves out of an effort of knowing who

¹ Walborn, 31

they are before attempting to please people and reaching for a mask in order to entertain and fit in with those around them.² This was a powerful encouragement for someone who has struggled with people pleasing his whole life and learning that if I continue to do that, it will ruin the relationship I have with myself, God, and others. It puts a facade up instead of truly being who God created me to be and allowing those in my community and life to love me well.

Over the past few years, I have spent a lot of time attempting to invest in myself and my relationship with the Lord by going through counseling, talking with mentors, and reading books. As I read Wanda's book, I felt a deep affirmation. It was as if Wanda was screaming, "Keep going! You're taking a lot of these steps already." There are not many things I would critique about her writing, but rather things I appreciated as I read. The themes of allowing the Lord to come and heal some of the deepest places of our souls stuck out to me the most especially as Wanda spoke about the attachment theory and connecting it to a baby's longing and desperation to be taken care of. As I read that section, I could feel the desperation of the baby and before she began to compare this to our need of the Father, I began questioning whether or not I act in desperation for the Father to move in my life or have I gotten myself to a place of dependence on self and occasionally those around me due to a disappointment, hurt or pain.³

Ultimately, this book causes me and any reader to really reflect on where we have placed our identity and worth. This impacts all that we do, "A loved person is secure in his or her identity. A loved person lives out purpose and destiny with joy. A loved person brings others long for the ride, knowing the Father will accept them too and make room for them at the table."⁴ When we are able to know the Father's love for us, it will change how we do ministry and those around us. This is incredibly important as I lead myself and the students entrusted to me.

² Walborn, 43

³ *Ibid*, 19-20

⁴ *Ibid*, 23

Bibliography

Walborn, Wanda. 2020. *Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get close to God?*
Franklin, TN: Carpenter's Son Publishing. https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B08HJHRM2F&ref_=dbs_t_r_kcr.

With integrity, I have read this book (circle one):

Thoroughly and Entirely____%

Quickly but Completely 100 %

Thoroughly but NOT Entirely____%

Quickly and NOT Completely____%

Not at all

Signed: Andres Ayala