

A Manifesto
for Intimacy and Belonging
(part 1 of 3)

THE END OF THE ROPE

by: chadwick walenga

Contents

Introduction

End of the Rope Option 1

End of the Rope Option 2

End of the Rope Option 3

Join the Tribe

You Are Free

About the Author

Links to Other Writings

Over the years, there have been only several 'big ideas' that have shaped my outlook on my relationships with others and how I interact in various situations.

Well... let me take that back...

More like: 'How I would like to interact in various situations.'

I can't say that I have always been the most assertive person in all scenarios.

But... at least at the core, my ethos has been driven by just a few things.

I understand that seems narrow in scope.

To be honest, though, I am a simple person and find that that works pretty well for me.

It has been in the moments when I have attempted to have too many irons in the fire, that life seems to get away.

When I evaluate the way that I view the world, a few things have always seemed to rise to the top.

The first of these three areas involves
the Sermon on The Mount

I was camped out in these verses almost exclusively, other than the passages that I needed to cover during the undergrad classes that I was taking at that time.

It was a season of shifting, not only for me as a human being... but also as a culture in the wake of 9/11.

It was during this time that I became aware of the power of having the rug pulled out from underneath you.

As a nation...

at least at the outset...

we were on our knees.

The wind had been knocked out of us, and for the first time there was this sense that we were **vulnerable**.

I spent a good deal of time in conversation with my colleagues in school, who would soon become pastors, as to what they felt our response should be to the events of that September morning.

It was through these conversations that I began to really understand what my own vulnerability looked like, especially when I had to admit that I wasn't as strong as I thought I was.

It was in Eugene Peterson's translation of the Sermon on the Mount that I found a place to camp out with the questions that were fresh on my mind.

Questions about not having it all together.

Questions about feeling inferior to those who seemed to have it all together.

Questions about abuses that I saw all around me... whether it was in domestic situations... OR corporate ones.

It was an interesting time to be diving into a text that is so central (or should be) to a soon to be young pastors understanding of Jesus' message.

So much time had been spent studying the specifics of creeds and dogmas.

Looking back, I wish that I could have just had a few years to spend in that one sermon found in Matthew 5.

I can't count the number of times in the years since that

I have gone back to this passage in formal teaching sessions, or in coffee with friends who were struggling to find a way forward.

What I find so powerful about this section of the Scriptures is that it is the key to unlocking the value of the human dignity that we are all endowed with...

and yet through our own attempts at gaining power and security... we lose sight of its value.

Unfortunately, in our desperate attempt to gain some element of control when life gets out of hand, we can go years in our pursuits before coming back to the truth that is tucked away in just the first few verses.

Consider how quickly after 9/11 we as a nation went from humility to might...

now, more than a decade later, we still find our country locked in a battle of military 'strength' that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives...

and for what?

Bringing it a little closer to home, I don't have to pull the curtain back very far on our own battles with powers that be in order to demonstrate that we will stay entangled in personal wars with others that will go on...

and on...

and on...

And for what?

We must examine ourselves in order to accurately assess what in the world we are doing when we get bogged down in an encounter with an oppressor.

It is only in pausing to get an accurate view of who we are that we will be able to explain what we are doing in this fight.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with these simple words:

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule."

I remember the first time that I didn't just gloss over that verse, and it stopped me in my tracks as I was like...

'Yeah right... who likes to be at the end of their rope?'

Natural answer is: nobody.

Being at the end of your rope means that you have...

OR shortly will...

lose control of something that you'd been hanging on to.

Let's face it...

we don't hang on to things
that are of little importance to us.

So, being at the end of this rope that is so valuable to us
is hardly a place that I would be called blessed.

But, if you spend some time sitting with these words...

you'll soon uncover how this false sense of security quickly becomes something that we are willing to die for.

Anything that we are willing to carry out that far is something that has control of who we are...

how we view our selves.

And that my friend...

is...

not...

good.

Therefore... being at the end of something that has
control over us...

so much so that we are willing to hang on for dear life...

Is something that needs to go.

The way that I see it, when we are at the end of our ropes, we really have three options:

1. Climb back up the thing.
2. Hang on by a thread.
3. Let go.

Let's unpack these a bit farther.

Climbing back up is a popular choice for many of us.

Chances are good that if you were hanging on to something that was this important, and suddenly found yourself about to lose an element of control, you are going to decide to get a good and tight grip in place again before it's too late.

And so you will invest a great deal of energy to pull yourself back to a position where that grip can firmly be established...

and you...

are...

in...

'control'...

again.

Here's the question that you need to ask yourself, though:

if you...

in all of your strength and control powers...

ended up at the end of the rope one time,

isn't it possible that you are going to end up there again?

How much of your life are you willing to spend keeping control of this thing?

(How about the second option?)

Hanging on by a thread is that space where you know that you've lost control of this thing, but you want to make it looking like you haven't.

Fingertips are bleeding.

Your face is showing the strain of barely hanging on.

However, you aren't going to let anyone see that.

No way.

Truth is...

when you are barely hanging on...

most people who are paying attention in the slightest way can see it, and they don't believe you when you tell them that everything is 'ok'.

You know it...

they know it...

and it's frustrating for everyone.

It's sad, even.

And then... there is letting go.

This is the least popular of the three choices.

Who likes to let go of something that means so much?

Nobody.

It's got to be done though.

To do so requires a realization that you aren't as strong as you think you are...

and this thing... (whatever it is)... is killing you.

It may be killing you from the outside.

More often than not, there is an internal death that is taking place that is slow.

Sometimes, you just have to be sick and tired of being sick and tired long enough to take your hands off the 'rope' of control.

You gotta do it.

But here's the tricky part...

if you thought that the effort to just keep a grip on that rope was painful, you haven't experienced anything yet.

I know that this is not encouraging.

You see, there is a moment in the release that brings to the forefront a tidal wave of emotions and thoughts that hit you like a ton of bricks the moment you free your hands from their grip.

It is very real... and we don't like it.

Here's the next verse in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you."

Good, bad, OR otherwise...

whatever it is that you were holding on to so tightly was...

dear to you.

That is a fact.

It may have been a relationship that was quite healthy...

OR an addiction that was destroying your body.

People may have been very supportive of it...

OR extremely critical of it.

What 'the rope' was is of little consequence.

The reality that it was such an important part of your life that it defined who you are as a person is what needs to be examined...

and is the tremor that begins the tidal wave of thoughts and emotions that you are about to feel.

You are about to begin asking yourself questions like:

How could I have let this have so much control over me?

How am I going to find a new normal for life without this?

What are other people thinking about me
for being so stupid?

and the list goes on and on.

This is a very real experience for everyone who has ever had to let go of some thing...

OR some one.

It is not pleasant, and should be taken very seriously by all who will be close to you.

This is especially difficult if you are leaving something or someone behind who was clearly destructive.

There will be those around you who don't understand why you are struggling so much with 'saying goodbye...'

You see...

deep inside, you are dealing with loss:

the loss of someone who was important to you...

the loss of your own dignity...

the loss of time spent...

The temptation is going to be to escape the pain and quickly grab on to another something or someone that will break the vulnerability of your free fall.

You'll desire to 'get control' of something quickly, even if just for a moment will become consuming.

The free fall is the most uncomfortable place to be for someone who is letting go of something or someone that they held so dear...

but you must get through it.

It'll only be a matter of time before you find yourself
embraced by a faithful love that promises to catch you.

You are not alone.

The most important lesson that we have to learn from
the release...

free fall...

and the catching of us part of the process, is this:

Rather than being someone who must always embrace another...

We are actually meant to experience life as those who are embraced.

This is quite uncomfortable for many of us, and we have a thousand and one reasons why we avoid being able to open ourselves up to this.

Truth is, we need to know what it means to be embraced by someone who's heart only loves us, before we will ever truly be able to embrace another with that same kind of love.

It is within this embrace where healing begins...

and we move on to the next verse in the Sermon:

"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought."

When we are embraced by love...

and spend time there...

we learn true contentment.

You begin...

with time...

to discover who you are apart from anything or anyone
that has control over us.

It is here that you gain, possibly for the first time, what it means to be a person created with dignity.

It is from this place that you can truly begin to build an appetite for living free.

It is here that you learn to love and be loved.

To know and be known.

It is here that you discover what it means to belong.

Join the Tribe

To continue this discussion on Intimacy and Belonging, please visit www.yadaom.wordpress.com and be sure join the mailing list.

You can also join us on [facebook](#).

OR... how about [twitter](#)?

Your story matters... can we hear it?

You are Free

To share part I of this Manifesto to anyone you would like.

All I ask is that you don't sell it.

About the Author

Chadwick loves Amy, his kids,
bonfires and wine.

He lives in White Cloud, Michigan.

He loves to play guitar, cook and go for drives.

You can connect with him at facebook or twitter.



Links

The YADAOM Blog

The CHADWICKANDAMY Blog