

Learn to live *with* God instead of *for* God.

On February 17, WaterBrook Press will release my book, *RUNNING ON EMPTY: Contemplative Spirituality for Overachievers*.

My good friend Brennan Manning ended his Foreword with these words, "To the harried and the unharried, I pray this book will minister to your heart in the profound way that it has blessed mine."

I hope you enjoy reading the following portion taken from the Preface. I also hope you'll get a copy when it's available. If you find it meaningful, perhaps you'll recommend it to your family and friends.

Nearly two decades ago a fifteen-minute conversation changed my life. I was attending a conference and had signed up to meet with one of the speakers for something announced as "spiritual direction." I didn't know what spiritual direction was, but I did know that I enjoyed dropping the names of the well-known Christian authors and speakers I would occasionally meet. I didn't expect anything significant to happen during such a brief encounter in this spiritual equivalent of getting a baseball autographed. All I wanted was a superficial conversation and a personally signed copy of his new book so I could brag that Brennan Manning and I were friends...

He began asking questions about a part of me I had not considered for quite some time. "Tell me about the condition of your soul," Brennan asked. Then he waited for a response. I was clueless. How could I tell this stranger about a part of me with which I was so unfamiliar? To squirm free from the silence, I began babbling about the most maddening aspect of my life: the frantic, out-of-control, frenzied pace I couldn't seem to escape. I told him about my fatigue and emptiness. I described how

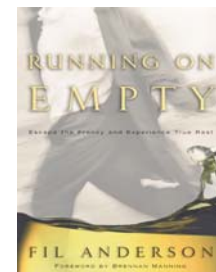
overwhelming my life was, even on the very best of days. After listening for a while, he made the statement that changed my life: "Fil, you seem dreadfully close to losing touch with the Jesus you so desperately want others to know."

Never had words pierced my heart as these did. This stranger had looked inside me and was exposing a truth about myself to which I had been totally oblivious. Later, when I was alone, I wondered, *was this Jesus speaking into my life?* For quite some time I'd had a gnawing sensation that certain things in my life were out of control. But there had been no time to analyze the problem, its cause, or what might result if I couldn't rein in the chaos. In the process of going in four different directions at the same time, constantly striving and always busy, I had lost my soul. Then on that day at that conference, speaking with this holy man, I began to hope I just might have some worth beyond being busy so others would notice my achievements.

The chapters of this book lay out in vivid, painful detail my struggle with busyness. They expose the lie of busyness as the world's most effective strategy to keep us estranged from God. They explain common and dangerous blind spots: Why am I unable to say no when asked to take on a new responsibility that I know will spread me too thin? Why do I have such a need to be needed? Why do I resent the steady assault on my time yet live in constant fear that there will not be enough to do to keep me busy?

Somewhere along the way I discovered that hearing the confessions of others had a way of putting me in touch with the hidden things in my own life, things that needed to be confessed. So in many ways this book is a work of confession. I hope my story will speak to your story. Hear my confessions about my struggle with busyness and

discover for yourself the soul-shaping truth and bone-deep hope that you have incalculable worth to Jesus and to those whom God has put in your life. Follow me into the hidden harbors of the heart, where fear, loneliness, and resentment drop anchor. Celebrate with me the ways the Spirit of God can blow through our lives with hurricane force, breaking us free from the distorted images of inadequacy that need to be healed. Hopefully, you will find that force of God's Spirit that longs to blow through your life—removing the debris of whatever hinders you, freeing you to live in the center of your true place as the object of God's relentless love.



I HAVE BEEN RIPPED APART BY THE RELENTLESSLY COMPETING DEMANDS OF MY JOB AND HOME, WIFE AND CHILDREN, FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO PERSISTENTLY ASK FOR MORE THAN I'VE EVER FELT CAPABLE OF GIVING. MY HOPES FOR THE FUTURE HAVE BEEN HAUNTED BY THE BLUNDERS IN MY PAST. MY DESPERATE LONGING TO GET MY LIFE RIGHT HAS BEEN DOGGED BY THE NAGGING FEAR THAT IT WILL NEVER, EVER HAPPEN, GIVEN THE OBVIOUS FACT THAT I AM HOPELESSLY FLAWED.



Winter 2004

Fil's Winter Ministry Schedule:

January

3 Westminster Men's Breakfast, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, NC

15-18 Speaking at Northern CA/Nevada/Hawaii Regional Young Life Committee/Leader conference at Woodleaf, Challenge, CA

23-24 Directing Young Life VA Regional Prayer Retreat at Rockbridge, Goshen, VA

*Beginning January 14 through March 17, Fil will be teaching a class focusing on his new book, *RUNNING ON EMPTY* on Wednesday evenings at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC

February

6-8 Speaking at Young Life Washington Metropolitan Region Committee -Leader Conference in Bethesda, MD

19 Book signing at The Salt Shaker in Wilmington, NC

20-22 Speaking at Regional Crown Financial Ministries Retreat

27-29 Westminster Presbyterian Sr. High Ski Retreat

March

2 Book signing at Barnes & Nobles, Greensboro, NC

5-7 Speaking at Bethel Presbyterian Men's Retreat, Charlotte, NC

12-14 Directing Spiritual Renewal Retreat for North Carolina Methodist Conference Youth Workers, Arapahoe, NC

19-21 Speaking at Columbus, GA Young Life Family Camp at Sharp Top Cove, Jasper, GA

Generous Response to Request for Financial

Support

Journey Resources has been a dream come true for Fil and those who believe in his unique gifts, faithfulness to God, and calling to serve. The gifts and pledges that have been offered have been a tremendous source of confirmation and encouragement.

We are still in need of additional gifts and pledges. If you were not currently contributing to Journey Resources, would you consider partnering with us? Your gifts would be gratefully appreciated. No level of support is small enough to be considered insignificant. We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to those who have given and continue to on a regular basis.

Let us remind you that cash and stock gifts may be made to Journey Resources and are tax deductible. An envelope has been enclosed for your convenience.

A Note from Fil

I regret that it's been so long since we've written. We genuinely think of you as companions and partners. It's our hope that you would look forward to hearing from us and find our newsletters helpful as you continue your own journey with God. We love hearing from you: give us a call, send us a note, or drop us an email.

The work on my first book has been one of the most challenging and enriching experiences of my life, thus far. Thank you for the encouragement many of you have offered me.

Truly, I've never been more joyful, grateful, and aware of God's kindness. Often, I find myself overwhelmed by the privilege of doing the things God places before me.

Speaking at conferences and retreats, meeting one-on-one with the folks God directs my way for spiritual direction, guiding spiritual retreats,

writing, and continuing to be involved in the lives of adolescents at Westminster Presbyterian Church here in Greensboro brings me unspeakable joy.

On a more personal note, I have often asked you to please pray for my family, this ministry, and me. Thank you for your faithfulness and kindness in bringing these things to God. In addition, I have asked if you would be willing to make Journey Resources known to your church and others who might benefit from our ministry. And finally, I've requested that you please pray for our funding needs. These remain my requests.

In the preface to *A Touch of Wonder*, a delightful book written by Arthur Gordon, there is a prayer I prayed every time (and continue praying) as I sat down to write:

LORD OF ALL THINGS, WHOSE WONDROUS GIFTS TO MAN INCLUDE THE SHINING SYMBOLS KNOWN AS WORDS, GRANT THAT I MAY USE THEIR MIGHTY POWER ONLY FOR GOOD. HELP ME TO PASS ON SMALL FRAGMENTS OF YOUR WISDOM, TRUTH AND LOVE. TEACH ME TO TOUCH THE UNSEEN, LONELY HEART WITH LAUGHTER, OR THE QUICK RELEASE OF TEARS. LET ME PORTRAY THE COURAGE THAT ENDURES DEFIANT IN THE FACE OF PAIN OR DEATH; THE KINDNESS AND THE GENTLENESS OF THOSE WHO FIGHT AGAINST THE ANGER OF THE WORLD; THE BEAUTY HIDDEN IN THE SMALLEST THINGS; THE MYSTERY, THE WONDER OF IT ALL... OPEN MY EARS, MY EYES, UNLOCK MY HEART; SPEAK THROUGH ME, LORD, IF IT BE YOUR WILL. AMEN.

Will you join me in praying that God will use *Running On Empty* to apply the warm embrace of God's love?