

chapter one

CHASING

In order to properly figure out what we are chasing and discover how to chase something well, we need to understand what it means to chase. My favorite definition that I have found goes like this: “to follow or devote one's attention to with the hope of attracting, winning, gaining, etc.”^{vi} In this definition, there is an action (follow or devote your attention) and there is a purpose (attracting, winning, or gaining).

Take a few minutes and think about what you follow or devote your attention to. That could be anything from a sporting team you are on, a lady's luncheon you speak at every week, or a new boyfriend/girlfriend. Basically, where do you spend your time and energy? Then, ask yourself why and what is the purpose of each particular chase. Turn to the Chasing Workbook in the back of the book and jot these down now, or feel free to grab a notebook. They will be essential to working your way through this book and learning how to become a better chaser. If you don't want to write in the book, the workbook is available at www.whatarewechasing.com.

As I write this book, I am learning and being encouraged as well and am constantly trying to be a better chaser. Below I will list a few things that I was chasing, why I was chasing them, and tell you a little bit about myself. Hopefully, you can see where I am coming from and how I have implemented the principles outlined in this book as we go through each chapter.

1. CAREER

This was the number one thing I was chasing when I was hit with the question, “What am I chasing?” I work as a Creative Arts Director for New Heights Church in WV, co-own a record label and music company, and own and run a recording studio out of my home. Seventy-five percent of my work for the church and label/studio is done from inside my home studio. This, in itself, has posed a significant problem in being intentional about what I chase, but we will get to that in a later chapter.

The reason I was chasing my career was to provide a better future for my family and currently support them. Sounds good right? While providing a better future for my family and making money to pay the bills is a great thing, it's not the most important thing and should never be what I spend the majority of my time and energy chasing. Chasing your career, job, or finances is a quick way to come face to face with exhaustion and frustration. It can also be so unrewarding and unfulfilling, which you will shortly discover is very important.

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God's desire is for us to be fulfilled by chasing Him, not all the other things we chase. While much of the exhaustion and frustration we experience from our failed chases is mostly bad, there can be healthy exhaustion and frustration. As you'll soon discover, if you haven't already, chasing after God can lead to those things, even chasing after Him properly. But even through that exhaustion and frustration, God will bless, and you will experience that reward and renewing of your spirit. Let's look at a few verses from Proverbs 10.

“Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death...The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin...The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it...Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding...The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish...”¹

2. FAMILY

I've always known that family was important and before getting married, I promised myself I would chase my wife, lead her well, and pray and read scripture with her daily. While the latter part sounds easy and, honestly, takes 10-15 minutes every day, I found it to be one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do, and I still struggle with it. Though setting aside the time to do it is important, it's not only about the time; it's about the heart. If you are chasing other things that are causing you to be exhausted and frustrated, your heart (desire) is not going to want to spend that little extra time leading your wife or family. You can lead a frustrated family (and I promise, if you haven't seen it yet, you will), but you can't lead a family frustrated. And because I was chasing my career, I was constantly frustrated and failed to chase my family well.

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3. GOD

I was saved when I was nine and have always, to different degrees, been pursuing my relationship with God. Growing up in church and having a good Christian family made it very easy to be surrounded by God and the things Christians were “supposed to do” (read the Bible, pray, etc.). But, that made it very easy to focus on others and never truly get involved and focus on MY relationship with God. And, I've found that working for a church creates the same scenario. It's incredibly easy to fall into the rut of being happy with your relationship with God, and dare I say it, content. While having a

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good relationship with God and being happy with your walk is great, we should never be satisfied with it, and it's taken me this long to realize that.

There's a big difference between being happy with your relationship with God and being satisfied with it. I love my walk with God and it truly makes me happy, but I should never get content or feel satisfied. We should always desire to know God more, learn more about Him, and become more like Jesus. Unless we are wholeheartedly chasing after God, that can be a very difficult task.

Now, onto why I was chasing God. I feel like I've always desired to chase God for the right reasons, but He never made it to the top of my chasing list. It always seemed to be one of those things that I said I would get around to and never did. That's why being intentional and purposeful about your chases is so important. If you don't direct your heart and develop a clear focus and vision of what you are chasing, you might as well be chasing the sun and running off into the distance as the credits begin to roll.

4. FACEBOOK

Yes. It's possible. I was chasing Facebook. Every free moment: Facebook. During an ad on Netflix: Facebook. Waiting in line: Facebook. Toilet: Facebook. Every free moment I had where my brain was not focused on something, I reverted to...Facebook.

Why are we so attracted (well...more like addicted) to Facebook?! Is it the constant status updates from our friends or celebrities we love? Or maybe it's the joyous feeling of having a new message, only to find it's a message from Facebook letting you know you've gained a new "friend". Or maybe, the calming massaging our thumbs experience while swiping up and down. Whatever it is, my soul craved it. Deleting the Facebook app on my phone was the first step I took in becoming a better chaser. We will look more into that in chapter two.

If you're like me, it can be a rude awakening when you honestly consider what you are chasing and the reasons behind it. As I sat there at LIFT conference (see introduction) and asked myself the question, "What am I chasing?", I was ashamed to be truthful and accept the fact that I wasn't chasing the right things, or at least not with the proper focus and energy. I had spent the last two years of my marriage convincing myself that what I was chasing was important, but I never felt like I was getting anywhere. I always felt tired and that my efforts weren't enough to build a Godly relationship, lead my family well, or create a career that I was happy with and one that supported my family. And when I realized why I continuously felt this way and took the proper steps to fix it, it was almost an immediate change. I am so excited to be on this journey with you to a lifestyle of rewarding and purposeful chasing!

CHASING MAKES YOU TIRED

Have you ever played a game that involved chasing, such as tag, or had a sibling that did something so atrocious you had to chase them down and let ‘em have it? Though both of these things can be fun, there’s no doubt that they make you tired. You run and run and run until hopefully you catch them, and then you spend the next few minutes breathing heavily and gaining your energy back.

Chasing things in life yield the same results. The more and longer you chase something, the more exhausted you get. And in both instances, since you are only one person who can only be in one place, you can, for the most part, only chase one thing at a time. There are some occasions where you can chase multiple things at a time, but the primary goal is to find a healthy balance of switching between what you are chasing and giving them their proper time and effort based on their priority.

Now, back to the game of tag or chasing your sibling. Without the reward of catching them, you will become even more exhausted and frustrated. Theoretically, whether or not you catch them is not going to determine how tired you are. I mean, if not catching them requires more running, then yes. Obviously, that would make you tired. But the sheer fact that if you run the same distance with the same effort, whether or not you catch them will not physically have an effect on the amount of lactic acid in your muscles. It’s a mind game. When you catch them, you get excited and filled with adrenaline in such a way that you may not notice how tired and worn out your muscles have become. That’s the beauty of the reward. When we constantly chase after God and are focused on that reward, or prize, as Paul puts it, we won’t notice the other things in life that typically wear us down when we aren’t focused on Jesus.

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- Philippians 3:12-14

The problem I’ve faced over the last several years is that I’ve been chasing things that I rarely, if ever, “gain” on or “win” at and seldom see a reward. The result? Exhaustion and frustration. In order to be successful chasers, we have to chase things that are rewarding and renew our spirit to keep chasing.

THE REWARD

Who doesn’t like a good reward? It makes us feel good about ourselves and affirms that we have accomplished something. Likewise, when we work towards something and expect to get a reward for doing so and then don’t, it can cause a lot of problems in our life. Depending on the significance of what we were expecting the reward to be, it can lead us to exhaustion, frustration, anger, jealousy, depression, or even worse.

Have you ever heard the saying “the cake is a lie”? Basically, it means that the reward that you were expecting was a lie and you didn’t get anything. I’ve used the saying for years and never considered its deep implications to the principles in this book until I started writing this paragraph. Whether or not you’ve heard or used that saying, let’s just agree that it sucks to not be rewarded when you’ve worked hard for something and you were expecting a reward.

A rather recent instance of this really got to me, and you’ll see why. The record label that I co-own makes a lot of purchases around the \$300-500 range, including anything from CDs or other merchandise for our artists to studio rentals. There was a charge for around \$400 that somehow got listed under the wrong account and ended up being a fraud charge. Once we discovered this charge, we contacted our bank and they, reluctantly, said they would fix it. I’m guessing their hesitation was that it wasn’t a super recent charge. Either way, they said they would fix it. Thankfully, the money appeared back in our account a few days later. We were happy the issue was resolved and continued business as usual.

Fast forward a month or two and the charge appears back in our account. Apparently, the money the bank originally placed back in our account was a “place holder” until they could better look over the situation. Well, they weren’t able to claim it as fraud and couldn’t get a refund from the store where the purchase was made. So, that left us without our expected reward. And what was even worse was that we had it and then they took it away! Whether or not that was a fault on their end or our end for not noticing it immediately, we have made sure to not let it happen again. The cake was definitely a lie.

Before we move on, let me clear up what I mean when I say reward. It doesn’t have to be a trophy, gift, or money, even though it could be in some cases. It can be anything good or beneficial that comes out of what we are chasing. For instance, when chasing God, a reward might be peace or wisdom, and when chasing your family, it might be having a family that worships together or something as simple as keeping your spouse happy.

As we chase things in life, the reward is what keeps us going and gives us the drive and desire to keep chasing. I’m sure there have been plenty of things in your life that you were chasing that never produced a reward and so you gave up. No worries, I have too. It’s our natural instinct to quit something that’s not working. God designed us this way for a reason. If we never grasp that and keep chasing-quitting and chasing-quitting, we will live a miserable life.

Thankfully, God has given us an incredible chase that produces the most perfect reward: Himself. When we understand that and, most importantly, take action on it, every other thing we chase in life becomes easier, because we are filled with the perfect reward that is more than enough to extinguish any exhaustion and free every frustration.

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If you're like me, you read that last paragraph and thought, yes! That makes sense! But I'll be the first to tell you, it's not as easy as it sounds. If it was, there would be no need for me to write this book, and we would all have healthy, growing relationships with God. Luckily, we aren't on this journey alone, and God has given us His word, His Holy Spirit, and other believers to help us along the way.

Why is the reward so important? The actual reward itself isn't necessarily the important part. Yes, in certain situations, the reward is very important and necessary for a proper chase, but what drives each chase is the sense of progress or accomplishment. When we are rewarded during one of our chases, it motivates and gives us initiative to continue chasing or to start chasing something else. If we can become chasers that are excited about chasing, there's no limit to what we can do and accomplish!

My guess is you've probably got things in your life right now, other than God and family, that you are chasing, and you are desperately longing for their reward. I've got good news and bad news. The bad news? In the next chapter, I'm going to tell you to stop chasing those things, or at least drastically pull back to get a better view and cast your vision. I know that may be difficult and you might not think you can. But, trust me. The good news far out ways the bad in that, through this book and your journey to become a better chaser, you will be better suited to chase those things while living a less exhausting and frustrating life.

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notes

1. See www.dictionary.com/browse/chase
2. See Proverbs 10:2-28