

SHAUN ALEXANDER



Clear Direction and
Spiritual Power
for Your Life



THE WALK



Bonus: The Author Answers Frequently Asked Questions

SHAUN
ALEXANDER
WITH JOE HILLEY

Clear Direction and
Spiritual Power
for Your Life

THE
WALK



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

THE WALK

PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. Scripture quotations marked (RSV) are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

ISBN 978-0-307-73025-1

ISBN 978-0-307-45952-7 (electronic)

Copyright © 2010 by Shaun Alexander

Cover design by Mark Ford; author photo by Eco Dearsman

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

WATERBROOK and its deer colophon are registered trademarks of Random House Inc.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

Alexander, Shaun.

The walk : clear direction and spiritual power for your life / Shaun Alexander with Joe Hilley.
— 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-307-45951-0 — ISBN 978-0-307-45952-7 (electronic)

1. Christian life. 2. Spiritual formation. 3. Maturation (Psychology)—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Hilley, Joe. II. Title.

BV4501.3.A436 2010

248.4—dc22

2010015102

Printed in the United States of America

2011—First Trade Paperback Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SPECIAL SALES

Most WaterBrook Multnomah books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special-interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please e-mail SpecialMarkets@WaterBrookMultnomah.com or call 1-800-603-7051.

I heard the Holy Spirit say,
“This is what happens when you walk
the Walk. Not perfection. I’m not looking
for perfection. I’m looking for order.”

—Shaun Alexander

Contents

Introduction	1
1. The Walk	9

PART 1: The Unbeliever

2. A Wanderer and a Wonderer	25
3. Trials, Traps, and Victories	35
4. Peter Walks into Real Belief	47

PART 2: The Believer

5. Life as a Believer	55
6. Trials, Traps, and Victories	61
7. Peter as a Believer	73

PART 3: The Example

8. Becoming an Example	81
9. Trials, Traps, and Victories	109
10. Peter as an Example	117

PART 4: The Teacher

11. Becoming a Teacher	125
12. Trials, Traps, and Victories	135
13. Peter as a Teacher	145

PART 5: The Imparter

14. Called to Be an Imparter	151
15. Trials, Traps, and Victories	161
16. Peter as an Imparter	173

PART 6: Walking the Walk

17. In Order—Out of Order 181

18. The Year God Gave Me Nine Cities 191

19. God Does the Unthinkable Through
the Unqualified 199

20. The Walk to Spiritual Maturity 209

Discussion Questions: Living in God’s Order 215

Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions About
Walking with God 229

Notes 243

There are Bible heroes who stand out in your memory, typically the warriors, emancipators, and martyrs that you learned about in Sunday school. Or in my case, from aunts and uncles who told me these amazing stories at family functions and get-togethers.

Then there are biblical heroes who were just as faithful in serving God, but their names aren't on the tip of anybody's tongue. Enoch, for example, doesn't attract a lot of attention. He didn't get swallowed by a great fish, nor did he sling a rock at a giant to save his nation. And he never heard a voice talking from inside a burning bush.

But when talk turns to walking with God, you can't do better than Enoch. He is a man who, technically, didn't die. It's true that he left earth and went to heaven, but unlike the rest of humanity (except Elijah; see 2 Kings 2:11), Enoch didn't die first. The writer of Genesis doesn't make a big deal out of it but says only that Enoch "was no more, because God took him away" (5:24).

Aside from not dying, Enoch was known for enjoying an excessively long life. But even that is not the thing that stands out when you read the brief account of the centuries he spent on earth. What stands out is this: "Enoch *walked with God 300 years*" (Genesis 5:22). Think about that. For three centuries, Enoch kept walking with God. And after they walked together, God "took him away."

For Enoch, the last step he took on earth was probably nothing special. I imagine it was a lot like stepping out the front door of his house or stepping over one of his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-

great-grandchildren napping on the living room floor. Enoch's first step into heaven was a step a lot like any other he had taken, because this man already had been walking with God for *centuries*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WALKING

When you read the Bible, you see that God has been big on walking from the start. After Adam and Eve disobeyed Him, they heard “the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). When they hid from God, He called to them. And soon after that, God sacrificed an animal to provide skins as a covering for their nakedness. It is the first record in Scripture of a blood sacrifice being used to address the sin of humanity.

The more we read in the Bible about walking, the more we realize that it's best done with someone else. It's not easy to walk alone. It's not even easy to stand alone. The writer of Ecclesiastes points out that “if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (4:10). When Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray on the night of His betrayal and arrest, He begged His closest friends to keep watch with Him. He knew He would soon be walking into the most painful ordeal anyone has ever faced, and He didn't want to walk there alone. Sadly, His disciples failed Him and fell asleep.

God, however, is a faithful Walking Companion. It's no accident that Scripture often characterizes the life of faith as a life of “walking with God.” A number of biblical luminaries, Enoch included, are described as people who walked with God. Noah was an early Believer who walked with God (see Genesis 6:9). Abraham was called the friend of God (see James 2:23). In Psalms and Proverbs we read promises of blessing (see Psalm 84:11 as one example) and sure footing (see Proverbs 10:9) directed at those who

walk uprightly. Jacob, after spending a night wrestling with an angel, was given a new name (Israel) and a new limp (see Genesis 32:25, 28, 31). He was able to walk afterward but with a noticeable catch in his step. From then on, as Jacob moved through life, the way he walked called attention to his time of wrestling with God.

Moses, the greatest leader and lawgiver of the Jews, spent a lifetime learning what it takes to get from Point A to Point B. He walked with God through Egypt's halls of power, then across obscure hills, where he tended sheep for forty years, and then across the Sinai wilderness for another forty years as he led the Hebrews from slavery to freedom. Moses completed eighty years of hard walking *after* he was deposed as prime minister of Egypt. He was familiar with fame and power as well as anonymity. Moses walked with God for decades and was known as the meekest man on earth (see Numbers 12:3).

Noah walked with God and built an ark that rescued the human population and the animal kingdom from a worldwide flood. At God's direction, Abraham walked out of his home country and, with his wife, gave birth to the new nation that God was creating. Moses, after herding sheep and then returning to Egypt, freed approximately two million Jews from bondage. And as we noted already, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years and disappeared into heaven without a trace.

Ark builder, father of a nation, the meekest man on earth, faithful companion of God, and a tenacious wrestler who walked away from a bout with God bearing a limp. They knew what it meant to walk with God, and the things they learned as they walked are the same things you and I need in our lives. If we hope to find a life that rises above doubt and confusion, that is enriched by order and clear direction, and that enjoys the presence, blessing, and power of God, we need to first learn how to walk with God.

THE POWER OF THREE WORDS

To hear people talk about it, you'd think the phrase "walking with God" contained only two words: *walking* and *God*. Preachers love to talk about the walking part. "You gotta keep moving ahead." "God can't steer a parked car." "You're losing ground unless you're moving forward." "If you don't keep walking, you'll never get anywhere." And my personal favorite: "Two-thirds of *God* is *go*."

Also there is always a preacher or Bible teacher who reminds us that walking, by itself, won't get things done when it comes to the Christian life. The biggest key to the life of faith is God, of course.

When a Christian thinks about walking with God, it's clear there are many variables included in that walk: when, where, how, and who can come with you. No matter what you do or the goals you have, God is our most important Walking Partner. And there is a very practical reason why this is important. Your Walking Companion determines the destination of your life. Walk with God, and you'll live in His will. But walk with money and possessions, and you might get them or you might not. But one thing is sure: you'll never be satisfied with them, and you'll crave more.

Walk with the pleasures of the flesh, and they might excite you for a moment. But the ending is the same. Walk with recognition and accomplishment, and you might get a certificate to hang on your wall. But just like money and the pleasures of the flesh, fame and accomplishment leave after the excitement fades. Then you will be left wanting more.

So decide now that you will walk with God, and you'll learn more about the things of God and what He wants for your life.

The word in the middle

As you walk with God, don't overlook the word in the middle of the phrase "walking with God." Noah and Enoch and Abraham, Jacob and

Moses, and a much larger cloud of witnesses knew that God calls us to walk *with* Him. When you explore this way of life, you realize how easy it is to miss that link, which is that God invites us to walk *with* Him. The preposition is important.

We all need to pay close attention to the position of the walker (you and me) relative to our Companion (God) as we walk with Him. Read the Bible, and you'll see men and women, old and young, walking *with* God. Ruth walked out of her familiar homeland. Esther walked into the forbidden court of the king. Stephen walked in front of the religious zealots who were ready to stone him. The Samaritan woman walked to the well to draw Jesus a drink of water.

So don't stop walking. And when you walk, don't walk away from God or ahead of Him or lag behind Him. Walk *with* God. Jesus told His disciples that He would no longer call them servants, but friends. "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14). "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Jesus trusted His friends with the knowledge of God, the teachings He had received from His Father. Good friends trust one another, talk together, and walk together. Much of the teaching that Jesus is referring to, the teachings He imparted to His disciples, was done when they were walking together from Galilee to Jerusalem and elsewhere.

YOUR NEXT STEP

If you ask people to tell you the biggest questions they have about God, it's best to wait until they get past their initial issues. Often they will begin with "Why would a loving God allow suffering?" and "Will the pagans living in remote regions of the world who never heard about Jesus have a chance to get into heaven?" But then they will start to talk about the

issues that are most personal to them. They will raise questions that they live with every day, things like:

- Why doesn't God speak to me?
- Why isn't God helping me figure out what to do with my life?
- Why is God's direction in my life so unclear?
- Why is it so hard for me to trust God with my life?
- Why am I here, and what am I supposed to be doing?
- Why is it so difficult to do the right thing?
- Why does my life feel empty?

At some point we all have asked ourselves, or God, most of those questions. The questions aren't a problem; it's the answers we settle for that can trip us up. We know we need to walk with God, but it's easy to misplace the emphasis. We tend to think it's all about how perfectly we walk or how fast or how far we can walk. We think of it as a contest or competition, something we do to impress God with our righteousness and commitment. The truth is, God isn't looking for perfection, and you'll never be able to walk fast enough to impress Him.

Remember the overlooked preposition *with*. For many of us, walking *with* God gets twisted into running ahead of God, or dragging our feet when we sense God wants us to change our life, or arguing against where God wants us to go. None of these has a thing to do with the type of walking that Noah and Enoch were known for.

When you walk with God, you don't try to elbow Him out of the way so you can concentrate on your own agenda, and you don't attempt to talk God into taking a different path—one that is more to your liking or style. Instead, you walk *with* Him, and that is what will give your life a rhythm, plus God's direction and order. It's a life full of power and unknown moments that you will gladly embrace.

WALKING WITH GOD OR RUNNING A RACE?

Maybe you're a Type A individual who has trouble sitting still. You eat dinner while standing up. You watch the late news while reading CNN online and tweeting about it. You set up business appointments over the phone while applying mascara as you drive to work. You go through your e-mail in-box while you return phone calls and read text messages. Maybe the idea of walking with God sounds like the most boring life you can imagine. Walking is slow, while your life is on the fast track. So who has time for it? Plus, didn't Paul say a lot about running the race?

He did, and no one ran the race better than Paul. He also knew the race lasts a lifetime. Enoch finished his race after three hundred years of walking.

We need a Pacesetter, because there is so much that comes at us in life. Jesus called His disciples friends, and they walked together. Abraham was known as God's friend, and Abraham walked out of his old life into a new life that God had promised him. Noah built a huge ship on dry land, far from the nearest body of water that could accommodate it. Moses was the number-two man in the government of the most powerful nation on the planet, and his next career move was to watch sheep in a Middle Eastern backwater.

Mary got pregnant before she was married, even though she'd never had sex. Jeremiah was abandoned in a cistern. David killed a giant and later lived in a palace, but he also was hunted by a homicidal king. Solomon asked for wisdom and received it; Job lost everything he had and then gained God; John the Baptist lost his head; and John the apostle knew the tender love of Jesus.

Walking might seem slow, but it's the biggest adventure you'll ever undertake.

GOD'S ORDER FOR YOUR LIFE

God told us in advance how He will work in our lives, and while the details vary from one person to the next, the general pattern is always the same. God leads us, teaches us, and deepens us through five stages of spiritual maturity. He works in us even before we trust Him with our lives, speaking to us while we are still Unbelievers. He keeps walking with us when we become Believers to teach and train us so that we can grow to live as Examples. He works with Examples to build them and disciple them to one day explain to others why they live the way they do. That is when Examples grow into Teachers. God then calls some Teachers to become Imparters, doing the miraculous work of Jesus on earth.

As we walk, we will encounter unexpected adventures, and we'll get involved in things we never dreamed we'd be doing. We'll walk through things that are painful, confusing, difficult, inspiring, miraculous, and glorious. At times we will walk with God in obscurity, through long periods of preparation. Later we will walk with Him in times of high visibility and heavy responsibility. If it sounds daunting and like more than you're prepared for, remember the key. Always the key is to walk *with* God.

In this book we will study God, who is a God of order and who promises to bring purpose, power, and direction to our lives. And we'll study what the Walk looks like. As Moses found out, sometimes walking with God means being an infant left in a willow basket floating in the Nile. Sometimes it looks like serving as prime minister of the number-one world power. At other times it looks suspiciously like sitting alone in a field, staring at sheep.

If you are living at God's pace and according to His order, your life will take on a rhythm that no other life can deliver. God is not out to make you famous. Instead, He wants to make you a success at hearing His voice and doing His will. Let's begin the Walk.

The Walk

All through history, people have asked,
“Is there anything not possible?”

—SHAUN ALEXANDER

Sweat drips from my nose as I lean over, hands on my knees, and gasp for breath. I look across the huddle at the left tackle. He’s a high school all-state pick; he’s a college all-American; he’s an all-pro offensive lineman in the National Football League (NFL). Our eyes meet, and I grin at him. He nods back as if to say, “Follow me.”

To my right is the fullback. Blood trickles down his forearm, and mud covers his jersey, but he doesn’t seem to mind. He’s my running mate and my protector. He leads the way, opening holes in the line and throwing his body against linebackers, safeties, and defensive ends who try to stop me. He catches my eye and winks as if to say, “Let’s do it.”

Moments later the quarterback leans into the huddle. “All right. We need two yards for a first down. Green, power right, check, shift right, F left, ninety-seven OT on two.” This is a play where I follow the fullback to the right through a hole between the right guard and the right tackle.

As we break the huddle, I see the crowd stand to its feet. At the far end of the field, the American flag flaps in the breeze. The crowd is cheering, watching, hoping. Seven yards behind the line of scrimmage, knees bent, cleats digging into the turf, I ease into position.

And then everything slows down—the American flag on its pole, the crowd, the players on the field. As if in slow motion, linemen settle into their stance, planting their hands in the grass. Tension fills the air. Something big is about to happen. The quarterback barks the signals, firm and decisive. “Set. Hut!”

Suddenly there’s a loud pop as our linemen collide with players on the defensive line. Up and down the line of scrimmage, groaning and growling, players wrestle like gladiators. As the quarterback drops back, I step to the right. In the next instant I feel the ball slap against my stomach. I clutch it with both arms. My legs are moving, my mind racing. Read it. Read it. Hit the hole or cut back. “Cut!” I plant my foot and explode through the line.

Ahead of me, the fullback crashes into a linebacker. The slot receiver sprints toward the safety. As they collide, the safety flips into the air.

The crowd gasps.

With the safety out of the way, I move to the left toward the sideline. From the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of the crowd on its feet. Fans are waving their arms and screaming, but all I hear is the *whoow, whoow, whoow* of my breath as I sprint down the field.

By then the cornerback has taken an angle on me and is closing fast. He cuts into my lead with every step. I run harder and harder, calling on every ounce of strength in my body, past the forty-yard line, then the thirty, and the twenty. The cornerback is closing the gap as my foot crosses the ten-yard line. I can hear him behind me and just to the right. I can feel his eyes boring in on me and know that every muscle in his body is pushing to knock me down.

At the five-yard line he dives, reaching with both hands to make the tackle. His arms brush my cleats. I stumble, put my hand on the ground, then stumble again. All the while I tell myself, *Pick up your head*. As I stagger to the right, I lift my chin. My feet come under me, and I sweep

into the end zone for a touchdown. A sixty-yard run on third-and-two. Now that's what I'm talking about!

The roar of the crowd echoes in my helmet as I turn to celebrate with my teammates. Then up the field I see the trainer and members of my team running toward the thirty-yard line. A player is lying on the ground, writhing in pain. I jog up the field and join the players who are gathered around him. I can see that his leg is broken, twisted at a sickening angle.

"Get the cart," someone orders. Others sigh with resignation, knowing an injury like that could take a player out of the game for the remainder of the season, perhaps even for good.

Then, without hesitation, some of us kneel beside our injured teammate. We lay our hands on his leg and begin to pray, invoking God's healing presence and power. We agree together, just as Scripture says, "Lord, let Your will be done here on earth, as it is in heaven. There are no broken bones in heaven" (see Matthew 6:9–10). As we pray, the player's shattered bone moves back into place, perfectly aligned and as strong as before. Our teammate looks up at us, his eyes wide with wonder.

How would you express the feeling of having your broken leg repaired by God while you're lying on a football field?

By then the crowd is silent, many standing with their hands to their faces in a look of amazement. They start to murmur, and the look on their faces says they have never seen anything like this. Even those of us who prayed for our teammate to be healed watch in awe as he trots toward the sideline. I turn to the others, look at them, and point to—

Just then my eyes popped open, and I stared at the ceiling. My heart was pounding. "It was just a dream," I whispered. I glanced at the alarm clock and rubbed my eyes. "But couldn't it really happen, just like that?"

I have dreamed that dream many times, wearing the different uniforms of the teams I've been a part of in high school, college, and the NFL, and I have realized that I'm not really me in that dream. I represent

a Christian who believes in God's power and lives in such a way that God is free to work through his life. The dream illustrates what God can do through a life that is fully yielded and obedient to Him.

Still, I ask myself, is it possible? Can God do today what He did long ago through men like Moses, Elijah, and the first-century apostles? Is it possible for us to experience His miraculous presence to the same extent they did? I think it is. Scripture certainly suggests that it's possible. But how?

LIVING YOUR DREAM

Football has been more than a dream for me. I began playing as a young boy, back in Florence, Kentucky. With the help of coaches, my parents, and many others, I developed skills as a player and earned a football scholarship to the University of Alabama. There, I played for Coach Gene Stallings and Mike Dubose with the Crimson Tide. After college I was drafted in the first round (nineteenth overall) to play for the Seattle Seahawks.

My sixth season with the Seahawks was my breakout year. I set a number of team and NFL records¹ and was named the NFL's Most Valuable Player. At the conclusion of that season, we won the National Football Conference championship and went to the Super Bowl. Although we lost to Pittsburgh, that season was one of my best ever.

As I began my seventh season in 2006, I looked forward to building on what we'd accomplished the prior year. I trained hard and came to the season's first game with great expectations. We opened that year against the Detroit Lions.

Sometimes life-changing events come to you with a sign written in huge letters that spell out "Your Life Is About to Change." Other times the moment slips by with little or no recognition. That game against

Detroit was one of the latter. I didn't realize its significance until months afterward.

During that game a defensive lineman fell on my foot, pinning it in place between his body and the ground. He had shot through the line toward me, and as I cut left to escape his grasp, one of his teammates met me face to face. All three of us fell to the ground. This seemed like a normal play: you get the ball, you run, you get tackled. Pads crash, bodies hit the turf, the whistle blows, everybody gets up and tries it again. That's football. That's normal.

But on this play my left foot got sandwiched between the ground and the lineman's three-hundred-pound body. As I trotted back to the huddle, I could feel the pain.

For a football player, physical pain is a way of life. Since I began playing organized football as a young boy, I have taken the field while nursing sprains, strains, and aches in almost every part of my body. That day against Detroit I didn't think about the pain. But the pain in my foot never went away. I continued to play that day and carried the ball nineteen times for fifty-one yards. The pain was a distraction, and I failed to gain the yardage that I expected of myself, but I wasn't too concerned.

After the game team doctors told me I had a bone bruise. That's a medically nonspecific term for "You got hit hard, and the pain goes to the bone." I spent time with the trainer but continued to play. Two weeks later, in a game against the New York Giants, the bruise became a fracture, and I was out most of the season.

Doctors told me to stay off my foot, so I spent a lot of time reading. One of the books I read goes deep into the reality of spiritual warfare.² While reading *The Call* by Rick Joyner, I realized that God works in an orderly fashion; He is a God of order. And as I listened to God, I saw that some things in my life were out of order.

MEETING THE GOD OF ORDER

I've been a Christian since I was ten years old. Loving Jesus has been the center of my life. As important as football has been, it has always been second to following the Lord and allowing Him to work His will through me. As I read Joyner's book, God spoke to me about how He uses order to bring about His will.

Through the remainder of the NFL season, I continued to do exercises to rehab my injured foot, preparing to return to the game. All the while God was speaking to me about the importance of His order. He doesn't do things haphazardly. As the Scriptures tell us, God is not a God of confusion or disorder (see 1 Corinthians 14:33). And much more than simply an interesting idea, God's order became something I felt compelled to apply to my life.

With the Holy Spirit as my Guide, I allowed God to review my friends and relationships, and I started to put people—and especially business relationships—into their proper places. I stopped associating with some of the people I had considered friends and began associating with others I had been neglecting. I discontinued some of the business deals I'd been involved in. At the same time I began to pay closer attention to the things I said, particularly the half truths I would sometimes say in casual conversation or in encouraging others.

I finished that NFL season well. My second game back I had a forty-carry, 200-yard game on Monday Night Football. The Seahawks won the division and were headed to the play-offs. We lost in the divisional play-off game against the Chicago Bears in overtime. I gained 120 yards combined and scored two touchdowns in our losing effort. After missing several games and coming back to finish the season, I was excited about the next year.

The following year my foot was healed, and I looked forward to play-

ing a full season. I performed well through training camp and the pre-season games. Then, in the first game of the regular season, I bobbled a pass. As I dove to catch it, I fell on my arm and broke my left wrist. Team doctors put my wrist and hand in a cast, and I continued to play, but the cast did little to protect my broken wrist. The weight of it actually caused additional pain, and I struggled to get past that injury. Additional injuries nagged at me for the remainder of the season.

For the fifth year in a row the Seahawks went to the play-offs. We won the division title for the fourth consecutive year. I was happy for the team, but personally I had a year that fell well short of what I expected. The bruises, strains, and broken bones were adding up, and I wondered if they were a signal. Was God using the pain in my body to prepare me mentally and emotionally for a shift to a new stage in my life?

As the following spring approached, I sensed something was going on with the team. Changes were in the wind, but I didn't know what the changes might bring. Then, as the time for spring conditioning camp approached, the Seahawks' managers called me. "We're making changes. We want to take a different direction. We're releasing you from the team." And just like that, I was out of the NFL.

Aside from my desire to love and serve God, football had been the primary focus of my life. It was the means God had used to lift me from the small town of Florence, Kentucky, to a life that few athletes ever experience. But I never lost sight of the fact that God—and not the Seattle Seahawks or the University of Alabama or Boone County High School back home—was the One who was blessing me. God is the Source of all goodness and beauty, all truth and love, and it was His favor that took me to the places I'd gone, even to the discouraging day when the Seahawks let me go. I had things I still wanted to do as a football player, but I said, "God's will be done," and went home to find out what that would mean.

A NEW WAY OF WALKING

Over the next few months, I wrestled with a new direction for my career and my life. During that time God challenged me. “Meet Me at five in the morning. Let’s talk for an hour, every day.” That was a wonderful invitation. The Creator of the universe wanted to spend an hour with me every day. I was excited about it, but there was a problem. He wanted to meet me in the morning. At five o’clock.

Reading the Bible has always been important to me. When I was younger, I read because that was what I was told to do. Later I realized Scripture was a powerful tool God could use in my life. Once I understood that, I began to read and study every day. I prayed every day, too, some days almost constantly, but I heard the voice of God speaking to me more when I read the Scriptures. So I was eager to meet with Him every day, even though I am not a morning person. “See Me at nine; see Me at ten” —that would be easy. But at five in the morning, I’m usually sound asleep. Yet this was God issuing an invitation, and I had to respond.

The first ten days were tough. They were like two-a-days at training camp in July or August.³ I set the alarm, pushed myself out of bed when it rang, and found my way to a quiet spot in the house. Although I was excited about the new venture, it was rough.

Days eleven through fifteen were better, but I still was grinding it out. And then, about day sixteen, things began to click. I found myself praying, “God, I want You to be in me and on me.” I didn’t know where that prayer came from; it just rose up within me. Later that week I found a verse in the gospel of John that said,

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world

cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.
But you know him, for he lives *with you and will be in you*.
(14:16–17)

Jesus was asking His Father to send us a Gift, and none of us could have imagined a bigger, more life-changing gift. Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit, who will live “with you and will be in you.” I began to get excited, not just about the idea of the Holy Spirit living in me and on me, but by the fact that a prayer, consistent with what Jesus had already said, had come from deep within my spirit. The reference in the gospel of John, “with you and...in you,” isn’t an exact match to the words I had been praying, but it was very close. “With you and in you; in me and on me.” After I saw that verse, getting up early in the morning to spend time with God wasn’t such a chore.

As God and I continued our morning visits, He began to break that concept down for me. “In you” — the knowing, inner sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit that says, “Go this way; say these words.” The Holy Spirit living inside us guides our life and affects what we do and say on the outside.

“On you” — the miraculous, powerful presence of God made obvious and tangible to others through signs and wonders. As we follow Christ and learn to obey Him, God works in us and uses us in the lives of other people.

During the next few days alone with God, I came to a fresh realization that Jesus really lived and walked on earth. He actually died on the cross, rose again, and sent the Holy Spirit to us. In the process my prayer life took on new energy and importance. When I prayed, the same Spirit whom Jesus sent to His followers was in me and on me. To say I felt a tingling sensation all over sounds a little over the top, but that’s the best way

I can describe how I felt. Every cell in my body seemed alive and awake, an experience I'd never had before. My spirit was quickened to the freshness of Scripture.

That new sense of being alive in Christ wasn't confined only to my prayer time early in the mornings. When I prayed for others in meetings or in private, I began to "know" things and "see" things about them. I would picture the person I was praying for, and I'd see some great things and sometimes awful things. At times I would see some very intimate things about the person, but always it would be an insight into what that person needed at the moment. God was giving me these insights, and I was compelled to act. One moment it would be a word or scripture that seemed appropriate and fitting. The next it would be something that had just happened to the person I was praying for, something I had no way of knowing about. And at times it would be something so obvious that it sounded trite. But regardless of how it sounded to me, I did my best to obey God and deliver His message to the person.

At a meeting one night a woman asked me to pray for her. As I touched her hands, I knew in my heart I was supposed to tell her, "Jesus loves you." That sounds like such a cliché, you could easily say, "Very profound, Shaun. The Holy Spirit had to tell you that? Everybody knows Jesus loves us."

Yet I knew in my heart the issue wasn't about theology or slogans or how perceptive it made me appear. The issue was whether I would say those words at that moment to that woman. Would I obey the leading of the Holy Spirit—that still, small voice speaking to me inside—and trust that God knew what He was doing?

It seemed a little awkward, but I smiled at her and said, "You know, I think I'm supposed to tell you, 'Jesus loves you.'" As I said those words, tears came rolling down her cheeks, and she received a tremendous release

of the Lord's presence in her life. I don't know anything else about her, and I said nothing else to her that night. But God knew exactly what she needed. For her, hearing those words opened a door inside that allowed God to minister to her. That's the presence of the Holy Spirit in you and on you.

Another time, my cousin Ben had some friends over. I told them about the prayer time I'd been having and about how real God's presence was, not only during morning prayer time, but throughout the day. Later in the evening Ben and his friends and I gathered and began to pray. As we did that, I felt led to go around the group and pray for each person individually.

The first one I prayed for was a guy named Cory. Then I moved to Ben. After him I came to a guy I had never met before that night. As I started to pray, I felt certain I should touch his eyes. When I touched him, I knew the Holy Spirit wanted me to tell him, "You will sleep again." I knew nothing about him, and I had no idea what those words meant, but I said them just the same. I admit that was strange, but I went on praying for his life and future.

When I finished praying for each person, I asked Cory to stand up. I laid my hand on the top of his head and prayed for God to touch him from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. Cory smiled and sat back down. We laughed a little about it, and then I asked Cory what he felt. He said, "Honestly, I didn't know what I was supposed to feel. But when you touched my head and started praying for me, my feet felt like they were on fire."

Afterward, as everyone was leaving, the young man in his early twenties whom I'd never met before that night—the one I had told, "You will sleep again"—took me aside and said, "You were right-on with that prayer about sleep. I haven't been able to sleep much in weeks."

THE SPIRIT IN YOU AND ON YOU

When I was a young boy, I saw a movie called *The Last Dragon*.⁴ You probably can still find it in a rental store or on the discount shelf at a big-box retailer. The star of the movie was Leroy Green, a man who never fully believed in himself as a kung fu master. But one day he had to defend the love of his life against a man named Sho'nuf. One of the catch lines from the movie is "Who's the master?" As they fought, Sho'nuf kept asking Leroy, "Who's the master?" With Leroy backed into a corner, Sho'nuf moved in to deliver the knockout punch. As he did, he asked again, "Who's the master?" At that moment Leroy reached up and caught Sho'nuf's fist. Holding it there a moment, he replied, "I am." And with that a glow came over him. He began to kick and punch with more power. He won the fight and the love of the girl. He became the master that was always inside him. It took his being involved in that fight for him to find it.

The Last Dragon is fiction, but there's truth in its message. God offers each of us an anointing in Christ. That anointing is available to every Believer once we find out who we really are in Christ.

My early morning prayer regimen continued for about sixty days. Each day I awakened at five and spent at least an hour with God. During that time the Holy Spirit brought to mind the ideas about God's order that had occurred to me when I read *The Call*. I realized that my new experiences with the power and majesty of God's presence in me and on me had to do with the order God follows when He works in our lives. I marveled at how God had begun a conversation with me two years earlier, then had come back to finish it as if the conversation had never been interrupted.

I heard the Holy Spirit say, "This is what happens when you walk the

Walk. Not perfection. I'm not looking for perfection. I'm looking for order.”

In the following chapters we will explore that order—the order of life, the stages through which we grow on the way to spiritual maturity in Christ. God can and does use anyone for anything at any time. But in the broader sense of where He begins with us and where He is taking each of us, there is a divinely appointed order, and there is a progression to the way He works in our lives. God meets us when we are Unbelievers. He speaks to us and reveals Himself, and we become Believers. As we grow in Christ, we become Examples, and then Teachers. And in the lives of many of Christ's followers, God calls them to do the work of Imparters. They do the miraculous work of Christ on earth, just as the first disciples did.

The five stages and their sequence are important: Unbeliever, Believer, Example, Teacher, Imparter. Skip a stage in the maturity process, and error will creep in. Get ahead of God, and things will start to go wrong. But follow His order in your life, and you will see amazing things happen.