

CHAPTER NINE

Who Are We, Really?

I shut the door behind me and walked over to Elizabeth. "What do you think?" I asked.

"He's interesting," she said. I could see from the light in her eyes -- something I haven't seen in a long while -- that hope had returned.

"Do you think he's for real?" I asked carefully.

"I don't know for sure. Something about him is very convincing."

"A scripture about Jesus comes to my mind," I said, clearing off the table. "It says, *He taught as one having authority, not one of the scribes.* John seems to teach with an authority or knowledge behind what he says that is unlike any teacher I have ever heard."

"It goes beyond that," added Elizabeth. "I definitely felt something when he touched me. I swear I think I can stand up." She nudged forward in her chair. "Take my hand," she commanded.

"You aren't going to try to get up are you?" I said walking toward her.

"I feel like I can stand. Pull me up," she insisted.

"I don't know," I said giving her a fairly limp hand.

She grabbed and pulled. Her pull made me pull back until she was standing upright.

"I don't believe it!" I exclaimed. "You haven't stood in months."

"I think I can walk!" she exclaimed, as she took a step. Then she took another, letting go of my hand. Next she walked slowly across the room and rested against the wall. She radiated like an Olympic winner at the finish line.

"It's a miracle," I shouted.

"John said I would have increased strength for a couple days," Elizabeth cautioned, walking back and forth slowly across the room. "Since this is temporary, I think we should go for a walk while I have the strength."

"Do you think you can?"

"There's one way to find out," she said. "Get our coats, and let's breathe some fresh air."

Sometimes, there was no way of saying no to Elizabeth. I had to at least humor her. I got the coats. "Why are you so determined to take a walk?" I asked.

"There was something in John's voice as he was leaving. Remember what he said -- something like walking helps you to arrange your thoughts. He said something about putting my thoughts and fears in their right place so they would no longer be destructive."

Then Elizabeth took my arm and walked out the door and down the steps with a strength and determination that amazed me. Soon, we were walking down the street at a brisker pace than I had thought possible. "Let's head toward the foothills where we used to go," she suggested in a childlike voice.

I couldn't discourage her at this point. We lived only a few blocks from some beautiful foothills that we haven't been able to explore since the illness. We headed toward them and to my pleasant surprise Elizabeth seemed to have the strength to continue.

"It's so good to be able to walk again," she breathed in, deeply. "I have never felt so good in my life. Even the air feels like it is charged with life."

"Just think of all the walks we could have taken together but didn't," I said. "You know I've never thought of it before, but I can see how walks can take your mind off your troubles. Just look at the beauty of this place! How can a person be fearful or worrisome while walking through it?"

"I think I can see how John was right," said Elizabeth. "For several years before my illness, and perhaps even more so after my illness, I have had my attention on my problems and my fears. Even when I seemed to be taking it easy my concerns were still there gnawing at me. If my brain has needed a rest I can see how it didn't get it. On the other hand, it seems as if your brain doesn't get any rest either."

"You can't always tell what is going on inside by looking or even living with someone," I replied. "I think I am successful at keeping unwanted fears and thoughts from affecting me continuously. Even when I have little time or am under a lot of pressure, I set aside periods of time where my undesirable thoughts and fears are diverted. They are not suppressed, but sort of like in hibernation." Then it was like a light was turned on in my head. "Perhaps it would be more accurate to say it's like I have created a place for them and have put them there. That's kind of the way John put it, isn't it?"

"Yes," she nodded. "He said something about sending our thoughts and fears to their right place. That's a little the way I feel now, like my unwanted thoughts and fears are in storage behind some locked doors somewhere. Right now, while we are walking through these beautiful hills they have no power over me. This is the first time since my illness I can remember feeling this way."

"Maybe this means that you are healed," I said hopefully. It was too good to be true, I thought, but miracles do happen.

"I don't know. John said I would have added strength for a few days. It's like some other will besides my own is keeping those symbolic doors locked and making me safe for a period of time. He said I could be healed if we solved the first three keys. Maybe we should take this quiz program of his seriously. You said something about the importance of getting the question right. Tell me the exact wording again." We sat down on some rocks to rest.

"It was not just 'WHO AM I?' but 'WHO OR WHAT AM I?'"

"And what answers did you give him that he said were not correct?"

"He didn't quite say they were not correct but implied that my answers didn't mean anything. Apparently there's some core answer I'm supposed to come up with."

"Tell me the answers you gave him that were not it."

"First I said I was a human being."

"Well, when I look at your office I sometimes wonder about that," she smiled.

"You are feeling better, aren't you?" I quipped

"What else did you say?"

"I said a spirit, a soul, a son of God. None of these were it."

"Well, you would think our essence would be some type of spirit or spiritual. Why did he say this was not it?"

"He said that saying I am spirit does not mean anything. He asked me to define spirit and I couldn't say anything intelligent."

"So he wants you to say something definite about who you are, and if you do not know what spirit is, it means nothing to say you are spirit?"

"I think it's something like that," I answered.

"Have you done any more thinking about who or what you are?"

"Some."

"What have you come up with?"

"Not much. How about you? Can you come up with anything?"

"Well. I always find it's good to just rattle off whatever comes to mind, make a list and see if anything makes any sense."

"I've pretty much rattled off my list," I said. "Let's go through your list, perhaps from a woman's perspective."

"Smart man. Turn it over to a woman when you reach an impasse."

"OK. Let's see what you've got."

"WHO or WHAT AM I? Let's see." Elizabeth stood up and we started walking again. "In addition to what you've said I could add that I am my thoughts, my feelings, my personality... I am what I look like. I am female. Did you know that many women define who they are by their home? That the home is an extension of themselves?"

"I think you mentioned it to me. Your list sounds as good as mine. Somehow I don't think we have the answer though. Let's write our thoughts down when we get home and I'll present them to John in our next session."

"I guess that's about all we can do."

"There's one more thing I think I will do."

"What's that?" she asked.

"I'm going to have breakfast with Wayne tomorrow. He's been a good friend for years and an amateur philosopher. I think I will ask him the question."

Elizabeth glanced at me anxiously. "Didn't you say John told you not to tell anyone about this yet?"

"He told me not to tell anyone about him. He didn't put any restrictions on how I can come up with the answers."

"Well, don't do anything to screw this up," she said, squeezing my arm. "He said if we master the first three principles I will be healed."

"John said to listen to his exact words and his exact words did not forbid me from tossing this by Wayne."

"We haven't done that great so far. Maybe Wayne will give us an idea or two."

The next morning I met Wayne at our favorite cafe. Wayne was an old friend about my age who had his own business. He ran a yard care business and did a little of everything for his customers - pruning, mowing, pest control and so on. He looked like a regular homespun guy and usually wore a cowboy hat. You would never think by looking at him that he spent any time thinking about the meaning of life. But he loved to get together with me for breakfast at least once a week and just talk about philosophy, religion, the new age, politics, meaning of life or whatever. We both had respect for each other as two thinkers who looked a little deeper into the meaning of things than the average person. This morning I was hoping he would be at his philosophical best.

"How's your week been?" I asked him as the waitress seated us.

"You don't want to know," he said with a painful expression on his face.

Even though Wayne was a great philosopher he had not quite perfected the art of distilling his intelligence to the point of running his business smoothly. It seemed like every time we got together he had a horror story of some costly action one of his employees took. Several months ago one ran off with about \$10,000 worth of tools just a couple days after Wayne bailed him out of jail. Just last week one of them showed up on his doorstep with his wife and kids because they were evicted. The reason? He spent his rent money on drugs. Wayne was beside himself on that one.

Even though I felt bad that my good friend had so many business problems I was always curious about what happened this time. I could never just let it slide. "OK Wayne. Tell me the story."

"I drew Skip a diagram - a map of the yard so there would be no mistake. Last time he told me that I wasn't clear enough, so this time I drew him a damn map!" Wayne almost spat out.

"Wasn't Skip the one who pruned the wrong tree of some fussy customer?" I asked.

"Yep. He promised it wouldn't happen again as long as I was clear with him so I drew him a diagram of the yard with an X marking the spot where the birch tree was located. The instructions were simple. Take out the birch tree where X marks the spot."

"And he took out the tree from somewhere else?" I guessed.

Wayneshook his head and gritted his teeth. "The stupid son of a bitch took out a birch tree

from the east side of the lawn, not the west side where I had the X."

"So there were birch trees on both sides of the lawn?"

"Yes, but I had the X marked on the West side."

"If your diagram was not clearly marked maybe he looked at it upside down and thought east was west." Good old Wayne doesn't get mad when I analyze his problems like Elizabeth does sometimes.

"That's what he claims, but only an idiot would have read the map that way. I had the roses marked on the West side by the correct birch. That was just one of the ways he should have chosen the right tree."

I thought to myself that I might have turned the map upside down had I been an employee, but my friend was aggravated enough without me adding fuel to the fire. "So what's the owner going to do?" I asked.

"We had to go back and take out the right tree for free and plant him three new trees and he still isn't happy. He's talking about taking us to court, but I think he just wants to blackmail us for all he can get. The last time I talked to him he said that if we mowed his lawn for free for all of next year he may not take legal action. I felt like telling him to take a hike, but I suppose we'll wind up mowing his lawn. That damn Skip! You'd think a guy could read a diagram."

"Maybe next time you ought to actually show him the right tree in person," I offered gingerly.

"I don't have time to hold everyone's hand," Wayne said, shaking his head.

Then at least you'd better mark East, West, North and South on your diagrams."

"Hell, that wouldn't do any good. Some of these guys don't know which way is up, let alone where West is." Wayne took a big gulp of water.

This conversation seemed to end where it does each week. Wayne had a major problem with one of his guys and there was no way to prevent it and there is no way to prevent it from reoccurring. I was glad I was not asking him for business advice. Philosophy yes, Wayne was as good as anyone I knew, but business did not seem to be his talent. Nevertheless, I did admire him for keeping at it despite all the setbacks. He did seem to be getting a little more savvy in the real world.

"I have a philosophical question for you," I said, changing the subject.

"Anything to get my mind off my guys," he said. "I told you I didn't want to talk about my problems."

"OK. Here's the situation." I bent forward and asked in softer tones so as not to be overheard. "Let's say that you have a vision and God appears to you."

"What does he or she look like?" Wayne asked with a smirk.

"It doesn't matter. Just suppose God appears to you and offers you a deal."

"What kind of deal?" Wayne seemed to be shifting his attention from his problems to his philosophical mode.

I thought carefully. I couldn't tell him about John. "Let's say that God tells you that if you can

answer one simple question He will give you three wishes."

"I could use three wishes. I would take a stab at it. Why not? What's the question?"

"Here's the question: 'WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU?' Now here is what the answer is not. It is not a human being, a son of God, a spirit or soul. So if God says that none of these common answers are correct, what could it be?"

"This is an odd line of questioning for you," Wayne said, looking at me suspiciously. "Are you sure you didn't get hit on the head and see the Big Guy?"

"No. Nothing like that." I tried to sound nonchalant, but I didn't know whether or not Wayne guessed something was up. "Just been doing some thinking. I want your serious answer here. How would you answer the question?"

"OK. I'll play along. Not son of God, not human, not spirit, not soul. Well, Jesus said something interesting about who we are that is in none of those categories."

"That might be helpful. What did he say?"

"He said we are gods."

"That sounds like Mormon teachings." I've studied quite a bit about different religious teachings and so has Wayne.

"Yes, the Mormons have a slant in that direction, but in addition to them there are billions of people on earth with some type of belief that man is a god of some sort. Most of the Christians believe this doctrine is heresy however."

"But you are telling me that Jesus actually said it in the Bible? How does the actual wording go?"

Wayne took a sip of coffee and leaned forward. "I remember clearly three words he said. *It was Ye are gods.*

"

"Jesus called us Gods?" I asked in hushed tones. I remember the Bible calling us Sons of God, but Gods? Do you remember where that scripture is?"

"I'm pretty sure it's in the gospel of John."

"John?" I sputtered, spilling several drops of coffee on my lap.

"Careful there," Wayne grinned. "Are you sure you didn't have some vision or something? You look pale." He looked carefully at my face.

"Here lately I'm not sure of anything," I said lamely "You really think Jesus said that in the book of John?"

"Like I said, I'm pretty sure. John the Beloved himself recorded that. He was definitely the best New Testament author. Keep in mind though that most Christians don't think he was seriously telling us we are gods."

"So, what do you think? Do you think we're gods?"

"Look at it this way," said Wayne. "God is supposed to be everywhere, right?"

"That's what they say."

"You occupy some of that space they call everywhere, don't you?"

"Yes."

"So, is God in the space you occupy?"

"If He is everywhere, then the answer is yes."

"That means that God is in you."

"Yes again."

"So would God be in your heart, brain, liver and even your cells?"

"Well, they are all part of everywhere. If God is omnipresent then I guess He would be in every atom of my body." I was catching on to Wayne's reasoning.

"So if God is in every atom of your body you are made of God. It follows then that you are God. If it's in you through and through, then it's you."

"So, do you think that is true? Do you really think we are Gods?"

"Hell, I don't know," Wayne said, leaning back in his seat. "I'm not even one hundred percent sure that there is a God. Sometimes I'm not even sure I am here on earth. Maybe everything is just a great dream and when we wake up there's nothing there. Or maybe when we wake up we are in some place that makes sense. Better yet, maybe we'll wake up on a south sea island full of beautiful girls to take care of our every need." Wayne grinned at this thought. Poor guy hadn't had a girlfriend in a long time.

"Very interesting thinking, but that scripture you mentioned interests me the most. I'm going to look it up when I get home," I said excitedly. "I faintly remember reading it, but never thought of it in the context that we could actually be gods." I couldn't wait to get home!

"Don't take it too seriously and expect me to worship you," Wayne smiled.

I cut our conversation short and sped home and started researching the book of John. Finally I found the scripture in chapter ten:

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

John 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

John 10:36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

After a little research I realized that the "law" that Jesus mentioned was the book of Psalms. Jesus seemed to be saying that those who received the law of God or scriptures were called gods. Just maybe...maybe that was the answer. We are more than human. We are gods. I will admit however, it seemed odd to think of myself as a god, but apparently the answer that John

wanted was not just your standard Sunday school formula.

I took the Bible in my hand and found Elizabeth in the family room, "Sweetie. I think I may have the answer."

She looked up. "Don't tell me Wayne came up with something for you?"

"Actually, he did. It's a bit off the wall, but it just may be what we're looking for."

"OK. Let me have it."

"We are gods!" I exclaimed. I could hardly contain my excitement.

She didn't look impressed. "Wayne would come up with something like that," she said, looking back down at the book in her lap.

"Wayne didn't really think of it. Look here in the Bible." I moved toward her. "Jesus said it. If Jesus said it then that's got to be who we are."

"Let me read it for myself," Elizabeth said, taking the Bible out of my hands. She read the whole chapter.

"I remember this scripture" she said after a while. "I was having an argument with a Mormon once and he quoted this and told me that our destiny was to be gods. I was a little rattled and called the Bible Answer Man on a radio station."

"What did he say?" I asked curiously. I didn't know she called radio stations about philosophical questions.

"He said we misread the scripture, that the original Psalm was making fun of man because of his frailties. It is a little bit like one person putting down another by saying, *You think you're hot stuff don't you?* The one guy doesn't really think the other is hot stuff. He's just making fun."

"So, this scripture is explained away with the idea that God is making fun of us?"

"That's basically what most people I have talked to seem to think."

"Let me have that Bible again," I said. I carefully read over Psalms eighty-two and John chapter ten. "I don't know. I've read it over carefully and I think Jesus was really saying that we are gods. "Look", I said, kneeling beside her. "He used the statement as a defense for saying He was the Son of God. In other words, If those who received the law are gods, then why make a big deal out of a statement from Jesus that He is the Son of God?"

Elizabeth looked up at me and smiled. "You realize, don't you, that there is one way to find out.

It dawned on me. "Yes. Yes," I said, "we can ask a man who knew Jesus personally. In fact, he's the man who wrote the scripture!" I laughed. This was unreal!

"He should be working at his bell ringing job right now," said Elizabeth. "Why don't you go ask him?"