



Tonia Woolever on:

What Motivates Me to Write

A. W. Tozer wrote to relieve an unbearable burden of the heart, a burden fueled by what he called “the languishing church around me.”¹ I write for much the same reason. I’ve seen too many for whom Christianity-as-usual has become the emperor who has no clothes, or something they sustain with much effort, like the old showman running madly from one pole to another spinning his plates: “Keep your faith up! Memorize scripture! Confess only success! Never miss church! Give more!” — plus their perpetual struggle to work themselves over in character and habits. A noble effort, successful for some strong-willed souls, but never for me.

I came to God reluctantly, when the pain of a failed life overtook my fear of becoming one of those joyless religious people laden with rules and no freedom to enjoy life. When a pesky Christian befriended me and kept saying “Jesus loves you,” I began to consider God, though not because I felt like a sinner who needed to be saved. My motives were purely selfish: I craved a satisfying, nurtured life, and a hero upon whose shoulder I could rest my head.

However, I refused to talk myself into believing God loved me. One day I shook my fist at Him and said, “If you’re really real, then make me feel your love.” Amazingly, He answered my challenge the next morning, his love washing over me in an unmistakable, intensely personal way. I rested my weary heart on that shoulder.

John’s gospel captivated me with promises of abundant life and personally knowing God’s voice. The Psalms and authors like Tozer, J.I. Packer and John Piper reinforced my first impression that knowing God intimately was available to all Christians, not just a super-spiritual few, and that one should experience deep pleasure in knowing God.

At times, I didn’t know how to know this invisible God, but ran to him in my helplessness, not away; he always met me in my weakness. This God carried me, I did not have to carry Him. Looking back, I see that the transformation of my life and character had little to do with strength of will — I’m as weak as they come — it was the inevitable fruit of a life shared with God. My

one job was to believe in his amazing offer of intimacy, extended to every child who comes through Christ to call Him Father.

Over 25 years as a pastor's wife and counselor have given me a front row seat to the lives of believers in every flavor of Christianity, enough to know that the scarcity of transformed, satisfied, joyful disciples of Christ knows no ideological boundaries. I want to change that. I want convince others that I'm no one special, that we all can find ourselves somewhere in the middle of his promise that "They will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." I'm looking for the audience who longs to connect with the God I've come to know, to those still living a beggarly Christian life supported by misinformation, distrust and fear.

I won't be communicating from a platform of success, but from the trenches of life where God has hunkered down with me, when I didn't know how to love my husband, when I couldn't quit smoking, when people break my heart, when the consequences of my old sins come knocking. I want to reveal the delightful God I've come to know, to help others build their own unique, satisfying life with Him, a life that he calls "entering rest."

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¹The Divine Conquest by A.W. Tozer, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1950