

## FINDING HEALTHY PLACES AND HEALTHY FRIENDS

by Bob Young

For me, one of the most difficult aspects of the Christian walk is learning how to maintain passion and momentum in the context of my own spiritual life and ministry. How do I follow God enthusiastically and energetically in the place where he has me at the moment? I have found that identifying and spending time with like-minded brothers and sisters is one of the keys. Do you have like-minded faith companions? Who are they?

I have always liked attending preachers' luncheons and lectureships. It is a great experience to be a part of a gathering of Christian leaders and to hear stories of how others have committed their lives to serving God and others. Hope and encouragement abounds. It is easy to become directionless in life. We need positive environments to ask the hard questions about our direction.

A contemporary song asks, "Why do I stay where it feels safe when you keep calling me to come out?" This is too often the story of the faith journey of the churches I know. We Christians stay where it feels safe. Churches do not venture out of the comfort zone. In fact, it is unusual and refreshing to find someone or a group of "someones" who are genuinely missional, risking and caring. Especially in the US church, we like to stay where it feels safe—or at least where it feels known and we assume it is safe—but these places do not always help us grow. They look like pretty places, but in truth they are not environments that nurture life. The death might be slow, but the environment is nonetheless hostile.

So our tendency is to stay where we are. We feel like we are running if we leave. Or that we are selfish to consider what is spiritually healthy for us. Or that we need to strengthen ourselves to learn how to get through adversity. Or that relationships are more important than the fight for what we need in order to survive. Eventually we struggle with the question, "Am I really called to be a light and voice into these places if they are slowly sapping the spiritual life out of me?"

Are you in a healthy place to cultivate your spiritual life and walk with God? Are you blessed with healthy relationships? Can you grow good things where you are, or are you barely struggling to survive spiritually? What direction should you go to be faithful to the gifts and calling God has given? It is not really safe to stay somewhere just because it is known and comfortable and expected. We must seek life-sustaining environments. As we seek direction, we need those who will challenge us to work through the hard questions and find the healthy places. Who are your understanding companions on the faith journey? Thank God for them today.