

How Will I Answer God?

"Weeping may endure for the night,
but joy will come in the morning."

~ Psalm 30:5

All great works for God/Jesus
are first done in the individual soul
of the worker. YOU.

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Chapter 1

Going through the motions

For most of his adult life, Tim was very selfish. I was working a lot of 12 hours shifts and was not into faith in God that much. I did not take the boys to church. I guess I thought I was a 1960's flower child. Tim was very good at sports but, he was too much into *himself;* he wanted what he believed at the time to be the finer things in life: high-end cars, name brand clothes, women, etc. He thought drugs made him 'cool' and *they* would not hurt anyone; he did not care if drugs really *do* harm people, or if his own actions hurt someone, as long as he got what he wanted and had fun doing it.

Tim joined the Army right out of high school and got married before going into the service because he got his girlfriend pregnant. Tim did not graduate high school. Because he and his first wife *had* to get married, during his senior year of high school, he quit. When he came home from the Army, he had not changed much; he was still self-absorbed. He got a job as a prison guard, but later lost that job because of his drug use. Tim was using drugs regularly and decided to sell them as well. He could not get a job in Lima, Ohio, so he moved to Columbus, where he began working in credit card equipment sales.

During this time, he met a stripper who was just as much into herself as Tim was into himself. So he divorced his wife

and married the stripper. He did not pay child support, as ordered by the court, or pay his bills, because he and his second wife spent their money on the things *they* wanted.

Does it look like Tim's parents did a good job raising their son? Probably not; because I too, was too much into myself. However, through all of this, I still loved my son *very much*.

I thought that if I made enough money and bought the boys whatever they wanted, it would make me a good parent. Wrong. I listened too much to child specialists and not enough to God.

In 1996, the U.S. government deregulated Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). A year later, I started a small business selling and maintaining ATMs. Tim came to work for me. One of Tim's duties was to write checks and pay the bills. As the business was growing, he started making a good salary, but that was not enough for him. He was taking extra cash from my business by writing checks for whatever he personally wanted or needed. The responsibility I gave him was eventually taken away. Needless to say, this created conflict between Tim and I, and his feelings were hurt when I took that part of the job away. Tim started putting less effort into his work and that put more work on me. Tim and his wife moved into a new home they could not afford. They expected the ATM business to pay them whatever they needed to support their lifestyle. When it didn't, they decided to make extra money by starting a nude workout site on the internet while pretending to work in the ATM business.

They had everything in place but could not get approval to accept credit card payments on the website, so the site was shut down and the money that was put into it was lost. Alas, no problem; he still had a job in the ATM business.

At that time, I was involved with two men in a branch of the ATM business that involved large sums of money. Tim stole ninety-seven thousand dollars of their money through our business connection in order to pay his excessive bills. Consequently, I was suspected to also be involved with my son's poor decisions. I had to pay a large amount of money in attorneys' fees to keep *myself* out of jail.

Chapter 2

Tim's first pivot point

Tim was sentenced to one year in prison. He served his time and was released upon full completion of his sentence. Tim's pivot point took place during his incarceration. God was able to get his attention and he started to turn his life around. During this time, and even after he was released, we did not see or speak to each other for roughly three and a half years.

One winter day, I received a call from Tim's ex-wife. She told me Tim was living in downtown Columbus. She said he was not doing well and he was on the verge of homelessness. He was living in a home without heat or power but she didn't know exactly where. Signe and I talked about his situation and we agreed that I should go find him. Since I had ATM customers in the downtown area, I asked around to find anyone who knew Tim and if they see him, to ask him to call me. I could not leave my son in those conditions, no matter what he had done.

After a while, I received a call from Tim. I told him that I wanted him to come and stay with us at our home. I also told him we could work things out and discuss the problems we had between us. He took me up on the offer.

When he arrived, and over the ensuing weeks, I could see a major change in Tim. He was very close to God. God really got Tim's attention in prison. I did not know the events that took

place in that plan, but God *truly* had my son's attention. Tim knew the Bible better than anyone I had ever known. Tim would answer questions with verses from the Bible in the Old or New Testament. He was quiet and humble. Believe me, I know he wasn't a saint; he had his faults, as we all do, but this was a major change from the old Tim I knew. I saw through some of his actions; he was still a work in progress for God, as we all are, but he had changed.

I think at this time Tim idolized TV evangelism and high profile preachers. I believe he thought he could be one of them. But God had a different plan for him, and that was not in *His* plan. I was worried about how long Tim would retain his belief in God, because a lot of people who are incarcerated find God, but when they leave prison, many of them leave God there.

I really did not have to worry, because my son held on to God all the way to his death. He told me about the time he was in jail and lost the feeling of the presence of God; he was terrified. But three days later, the feeling of God's presence was back. He said that no matter what it took, he never wanted to lose that feeling again.

Tim got a job selling cars, found a place to live, and things seemed to be going in (what I thought) was the right direction. Unfortunately, he lost that job when the place he worked for went out of business. At this time, Tim was also a volunteer worker with the prison ministries and was working with street gang ministries. He was also volunteering at the food pantry for the homeless.

Chapter 3

Tim's second pivot point

I think Tim's relationship with God became much stronger when the church that ran the food pantry stopped Tim from preaching because of his stance on free will. Free will to Tim was simple … you always have the freedom to make a choice, but God already knows what your choice will be. God would then use that choice through his plan for you. Tim knew what God wanted him to do: help people. He became very involved with the homeless.

Tim had started having trouble with his vision, balance, and memory. He did not tell me about these ailments. One day he ran out of gas in his van and I went to help him. When I got there, he tried to hide his face by turning his head in a different direction from where I was standing; but I saw the marks on his face and asked him what happened. He had lost his balance, fell, and scraped the whole side of his face while walking to get some gas. He told me about his symptoms, so I took him to the hospital. The doctors didn't find anything. The next day he was taken to OSU hospital by a friend from the pantry. It was through these events in November 2009 that we learned that Tim had Multiple Sclerosis.

The diagnosis was a devastating blow to Tim, myself, and the whole family. He had no insurance, but we were working

through the diagnosis of MS to be able to get some direction toward helping him obtain medication and doctor care. Through all the tests, and everything that was done to him, Tim never lost his faith in God.

At that time, I did not know the lesson God was teaching us. When I think about it now, I think when Tim was diagnosed with MS it was a precursor for what was coming in August. Tim's time on this earth was short; I just did not know how short it was. Sometimes, there are way too many human and material distractions, challenges, and problems in our lives for us to be able to see the truth. Or, perhaps, God did not want to reveal His plan at that point.

Chapter 4

My first pivot point

On August 21, 2010, I received a difficult call from a friend of ours who served with Tim every Saturday night at the homeless camps. He had found Tim's van near an area where homeless camps are found. The van was locked up, with his Bible (which he was never without) still inside. The other volunteers present called the police, but the police really can't do much for at least 24 hours after you report a missing person.

I had a big knot in the pit of my stomach. I knew this was not going to turn out for the good. God was speaking to me through my inner feelings; however, I was just too stubborn to hear him. I did not go out that evening to look for Tim, even though everything in me said to go where his van was found. Instead, I made plans with the group of volunteers from the food pantry to go out the next day to look for Tim.

On Sunday, August 22, 2010, Signe and I were on the way out the door to meet with the volunteer group to look for Tim when our friend Tom called to tell us Tim had been found. He was dead. Tim left behind two children and four grand kids. He had been hit by a train. Signe and I rushed to the location, but the police would not let me go to my son. The best we can figure is that Tim must have been taking some things to the homeless, and while walking across the train tracks, something

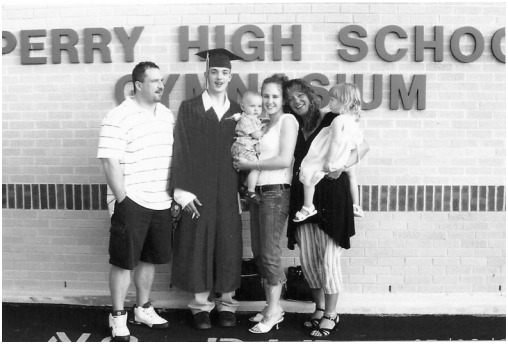
happened and he fell back into a passing train. Perhaps it was his MS. The impact threw Tim about 35 feet into the weeds, where no one could see him. I cannot tell you what really happened, but I believe it was God's time to take Tim home. That was the worst day of my life. I had lost my mother in 1993 and my father in 2002, but the hole left in my heart that day from the loss of my son was by far the worst.

The last time I saw Tim was August 20, 2010, at about 5:30 in the evening. He was at my place picking up a few things that Signe had gotten for him. I believe Tim died that Friday night, because he was not at the food pantry on Saturday morning where he faithfully volunteered. He would never miss that!

The next few days were very busy making funeral arrangements for Tim. I asked the director at Newcomers Funeral Home if I could see Tim, for closure, and he said it would be a mistake. He said the body was in one of the worse conditions he'd ever seen at their funeral home. He said it was not a pretty picture after so much time in the elements. It was best that I remember Tim as he was.

I didn't have much time to think; an open casket was out of the question, and then there was the decision to have a normal service or a cremation. That was my next tug of war: I knew what the Bible said about God raising the dead; I had to make the correct choice. I asked a number of people of faith, but no one wanted to take a stand on that question or even give me a

faith-based answer. My questions were: how, if a person is cremated when they die, can God raise them again, and is cremation a Christian option? I needed to know. Tim's children, Tyler and Heather, came down to help with the arrangements of the services. They live in Lima, Ohio, and I do not get to spend much time with them. We do talk on the phone, however.

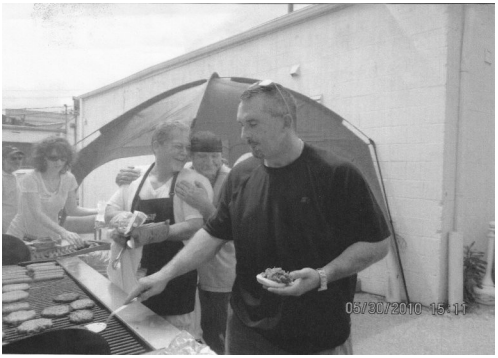


Picture of Tim & Family

It is at this time that I met Pastor Dan Franz. I asked him my questions about cremation. He proceeded to ask me some questions about my belief in God. Did I believe God created everything? If I believed God created all, then did I not believe that God could raise a body from ashes? Did I believe Moses and Abraham were still in bodies? Dan had lifted a 100-pound weight from my shoulders. At that point, I was at ease with the decision of cremation. Dan Franz presided over the funeral services. There were so many people at the services for Tim I was in amazement and speechless. It got to be standing room only, so many people loved this man.

Then there was the cleaning out of Tim's apartment and getting things to people who wanted them. I learned a lot about my son in those weeks following his death. I never knew how many lives he had touched, how many lives he had helped change for God, how many people loved him and whom he loved.

In Tim's work with the homeless, he never judged a book by its cover; they were humans that needed help and not just a statistic. He was there to give comfort and whatever else he could do. I met a man for whom Tim bought a tent, so he would have some kind of cover from the elements. A lady named Angel had found a place to stay, but did not have a way to move her things, so Tim helped her move with his van. I learned about these stories and more. There are so many stories to be told about gangs from the streets and the prisons he visited; so many people from the streets and at the Fruit of the Vine Pantry who



Tim cooking at the Fruit of the Vine Pantry. This photo was taken on the memorial day just before Tim passed away.

were devastated by the loss of their friend.

Many people knew Tim as “the numbers guy” for what he did on Saturday morning at the Fruit of the Vine pantry. People would come to the pantry on Saturday morning and when they got there, they would pick up a number. This was the way the pantry gave out the food and supplies. Tim would call out the numbers because he had a big, loud voice; therefore, they started calling him the “numbers guy.” They knew his name, but I guess that’s what they wanted to call him. There are many more stories; someday I would like to hear them all. We had a second service, at the pantry, for Tim, to allow more of the homeless to say goodbye to their friend. Again, it was standing room only. Two men from a motor cycle gang showed up with a



Cross planted where Tim was found.

seven-foot cross for everyone to sign. They then took it and buried in it cement by the tracks where Tim was found.

What was he doing that day, there by the tracks, all by himself? Well, he was doing what he would always do in the last part of his life: taking something to someone in need. How many people would go that extra mile?

Again, Tim was not perfect; he had his faults, as we all do. He struggled with his desires of earthly things, but he never wavered in his trust in God. Once God got hold of him, Tim was not letting go.

Tim once told me he wished he could be as good a father to his children as I am to mine. Well, my son, I hope I can be as good a man as you were to all life on earth and beyond. I thank God every day for the 43-plus years he gave me with my son.

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For several months after the services for Tim, a haunting, gut wrenching question kept tugging on me: "How will I answer God for not going that Saturday evening to find my son?"

I know I could not have changed the outcome of Tim's death, but I did not *try* to find him – one of God's children (which we all are) – when I had the opportunity to go look for him that first evening we knew he was missing. HOW WILL I ANSWER GOD for leaving one of his children lying on the side of those tracks for an extra 10 to 12 hours? That question haunted me, day and night. I now have the answer in which I can respond to God with the truth.

I had to search deep within me for that answer – the truth – but it was there, and God knew it. He kept that question on my mind until I found the answer – the truth.

I was upset with Tim because I had to provide so much for him to survive; money, the van, food. I guess you could say I was not a happy giver. It didn't even dawn on me that because of Tim's past record, he would have a hard time finding work. I now think that perhaps God did not *want* him to find a good job. He had other plans for Tim. In his final days Tim had been working with a friend doing home repair, but the work was slow and sporadic. This irregular income, and his volunteer work, and his poor job record, kept him dependent upon Signe and I. And … close to us.

For most of my children's lives, whenever they got into trouble, I always rushed in to help. I did not want them to be hurt or fail. I was not teaching them correctly, was I? I was enabling them to go through life with no accountability. I was told many times by Signe and others to stop coddling them, but I just kept doing it.

At the time of Tim's death, I'd rationalized that I was putting a stop to the coddling. I wanted to let Tim stand on his own. I was angry. I did not want to let Signe down anymore, even though she was asking me if I wanted to go find him. For once, I wanted to be a strong person and show everyone that I would not run in to help my son because he was capable of taking care of himself. This is the main reason I did not go that evening, and that is the reason God grabbed me and put that question on me. I was still too much

into myself, but God kept the pressure there until I faced the truth. I just sat and did nothing. Well, I guess I showed everyone. However, it turned out to be the wrong time to take a stand. I let my son lie on the side of those tracks. I let Sig down. I let Tim down. I let myself down. Most of all, I let God down.

I should have known Tim was afraid of losing the closeness of God. I should have known he was depressed from the MS. I should have known Tim was very lonely. I should have known Tim would not come to me, because I was very opinionated and was not open to change. I should have gone to look for Tim. If God wants to get your attention, he has many different ways of doing it. God had decided to shake me up real good.

I will always love and miss my son, but I now understand God taught me a lesson through Tim's death. I am not saying God took Tim's life just to teach me a lesson, but that He has a plan for each of us, and many times, those plans intersect and overlap.

Look inside yourself, and if you are not afraid to face the truth, you can become a better person. Just ask yourself, How will I answer God?

Then came the idea: God had put that question into my mind to help me look for that answer – the truth – so why should I not put the phrase out there to help others as well? I added (but again maybe it was God that added), FOR EACH ACTION I TAKE - HOW WILL I ANSWER GOD, hence F E A I T—H W I A G. It could remind each one of us every day to *think before we act* (or

fail to act). We should not ask that question *after* we do something rather, we should be asking it *before*.

When you ask yourself the FEAIT-HWIAG question, make sure *the answer is from the heart* and do not kid yourself because deception will not work. That is the reason God locked that haunting, gut-wrenching question, "How Will I Answer God," in my mind and in my gut. It was for me to find and face the truth and to let as many people know to think of Him before we act.

I believe God inspired me to come up with the idea of putting that phrase on a wristband. I knew I didn't have room to spell out each word, so I made it FEAIT-HWIAG. This works out great



because it makes us read out the phrase in our minds. Thus, it makes us think of God. And when we consider God, our choice of action may be different that it would otherwise.

Chapter 5

October 21, 2011 – My second pivot point

I had wristbands made up early in 2011 and had given out some of them, but as the months went by, I again became self-absorbed as I worked in my ATM and other businesses, letting that difficult lesson lay dormant in the back of my mind.

Then God grabbed my attention again. For no specific reason, I started crying on and off and could not stop for a week. It came to a head on Friday, October 21, 2011. That morning, I went to the gym to work out, but I was there only 5 to 10 minutes before the tears started to flow, so I left. Friends who saw me that morning tried to call, but I could not talk without crying. I tried to work, but nothing changed; the tears kept coming.

That evening, standing in my kitchen, I started asking God questions: Where do you want me to stand? What do you want me to do? Do you want me to sell my ATM business? Do you want me to sell my candle business? I asked questions ... but I felt nothing from God. Then I noticed the wristband on my arm, FEAIT-HWIAG. I had left the one thing that helped me learn a lesson and gain some peace from Tim's death on the sideline. I had let God down once again.

My next question to God was: "Have I not been doing what you wanted me to do with FEAIT-HWIAG?" All the pressure

of the week and the crying went away when I asked God that question. I had not acted on what God had given me, and He wanted to get my attention, again! He wanted me to face that I had not only lost my son, but I had not done anything with the lesson He had given me through that loss. I had let Him – and Tim – down by not telling this story to as many as I could, so that others will keep that question on their minds: "FOR EACH ACTION I TAKE – HOW WILL I ANSWER GOD" and for that to be a constant reminder for me and everyone. People should ask that question before any action (or non-action) is taken. Maybe the question will tell you not to do anything, but it will remind you of God as you consider your actions and choices.

You can ask God for forgiveness and he will give it to you, but when you accept God's forgiveness in your heart, you must also flush everything you asked God to forgive out of yourself. To do this, you must *forgive yourself*, learn from it, and move on. Do not dwell on it. If your sin is against someone else, you might want to go to them and ask them for forgiveness. Clear the air and make amends between you and others and you'll clear the air with God, your father. Most especially, clear the air between you and your children (or your parents) because I can guarantee that you will not know if the time you have—today—will be the last chance you have to clear that air.

This is what I feel is represented by the full circle of the band on which FEAIT-HWIAG is printed. One, you ask God

for forgiveness; two, you flush that guilt and sin out of you; and three, you forgive yourself. Then you are back to the starting point. But if you ask yourself, "for each action I take – how will I answer God," you might not have to go around in that circle, which is much easier. A simple question about an action I chose not to take led to all this: to know what I should do to give me a feeling of inner peace from God's love.

Chapter 6

The lessons learned

My amazing journey with God has had many lows and some highs. God has taught me, through the loss of my beloved son, there are many lessons to be learned in life.

We must learn to give thanks to God, even in the darkest of days, and to ask for forgiveness from God when it is due. He will give it! You must flush your sins, and whatever you dislike about yourself, out of your system. I have learned that when I ask God for forgiveness, and then I flush the junk – the sins, the guilt, the misgivings, regrets, doubts and despair – from my life and my heart, I can forgive myself. I can start to like/love myself.

After all these discoveries, and because of my new relationship with God, I have found that I am not a bad person now, even though I was at one time. I have learned that because of God's plan, love and hate cannot exist side by side on the same plain. Therefore, love and hate cannot live within you: you must choose either one or the other. When I flushed out the sins and the things I did not like about myself, I learned to love myself; to truly love myself as God does. It was something Tim had found out long before his death. I know this from a story Tom told me about a time when he and Tim were cooking out on the grill. A bunch of wasps were swarming around them. Tim simply said, “Look at the beauty, the color of what God has

created." He truly had love in his heart.

We need to stand with no human or material support, only God's support; no crutch. You could lose everything, but if you are leaning on your love for God, you will be all right. Look for the lesson in everything that happens in your life, good or bad. You might not have what you think you should, or what you think you want, but you will have what God knows you *need*.

We also must learn that we are the only ones that can change our own lives around. God will help if you ask, but you must be the one to accept his help. FREE WILL. Do not think you can sit and wait for someone else to do it for you. You, and only you, have to want it and you have to do it. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot force it to drink. You can know of God, but no one can force you to believe in and fully trust your life to Him. You have to want the change in yourself, and it does require work on your part.

We need to learn to love real love, not just show an appearance of love. We need to love our fellow man, no matter what race or religion they are. I hope you can learn the same lesson from this story that I have learned by living through it: to love God with all your heart, your soul, your being. Love yourself as God loves you and love your fellow man as God loves him.

Trust your heart and your gut, not your brain. Your brain will sometimes lead you in the wrong direction because humans sometimes think they are a lot smarter than they actually are. If

I had trusted my gut that Saturday night, I would have gone to look for my son. I didn't have peace in my heart because I didn't listen to that feeling telling me to go look for Tim: I didn't listen to God. When we accept God in our heart and lean on him, we find peace in our hearts. Once you have His peace in your heart, you will never forget or want to be without it; it changes everything. You might be surprised to find out that you will *want* to help others and not sit back to let others do it for you.

When I talk about helping others, it does not always have to be with money. Stop and think about how you feel when someone smiles at you, or just asks how you are. How do you feel if you need a ride or if someone goes out of their way to help you get something you need? Again, no money is involved, just one human treating another human as God would wants us to do. When you get rid of the negatives within you, you will be able to see and feel what God put in your heart. Once you find this, it will not matter what race or religion that person belongs to, you will treat them differently. You will not care if they have money or not.

Now, this is not to say you will not run into people in the world that really don't care about you or your problems. If you think about it, you can usually tell if someone truly cares when they ask you how you are doing. Your feelings inside will tell you if they care, but try to think how good you will feel if you don't let it get to you. You can just smile and thank them

anyway. Do you know how this affects people? They go away wondering what you are up to, and you will go the other way feeling peaceful and smiling.

I am not saying it is wrong to get angry, because we all get angry sometimes. Just do your best to not *feed* the anger. When you become angry, do some soul searching and then move on; don't dwell on it because you will only feed it.

Learn to start each day with a forgiving heart. Learn to accept whatever God brings your way with gratitude and thanks for what He has given you. Learn these lessons and become a watchman for God; tell people your story and what you believe in. If they accept it, great! You may have helped that person become closer to God. If they do not accept it, do not dwell on it, move on to the next person. We will not change everyone's heart for God. We can only help people who will make a free-will choice to accept God. That choice is always up to them.

I pray that this helps you as much as it has me:

For Each Action I Take – How Will I Answer God?

F E A I T - H W I A G

So trust in God, and before every action you take (or don't take) ask yourself how will you answer to Him for the decision you are about to make. The One who made you is there for you at all times if you just ask Him. He will be there to judge you

and He will hopefully bring you home with Him at the end of your days here on earth.

It took some time, but I now know the feeling that Tim was so afraid of losing, and that feeling is the presence of God in my life. It is a very calming, peaceful feeling. Once you obtain it, you will never want to lose it. Thank you son.

~ **Bill Leach**

bill@HowWillIAnswerGod.com

In memory of my son,

Tim

Rest in Peace.

10/27/1966 – 8/20/2010

Epilogue

A very pointed summary

I know you have heard someone say, “we will help you,” and in most cases, they mean it. That is to prop you up a bit. However, you'd best come to the conclusion that you, and only you, can change you. You have to want it. We can all lock arms, hold hands, and sing “Kum Ba Yah,” but if you do not change from the inside out, you have nothing. God will help you and forgive you, but you'd better buckle up, because the biggest part of the job is on your back. Remember, when you stand in front of God for judgment, no one is going to be there holding your hand. God will never put more on your plate than you can handle. Just look inside, flush out the garbage, and get that fresh start with life and God. Change the inside of yourself and you change the world. If each one of us changes ourselves from the inside out we change everything. What ever you get or accumulate here on earth does not mean a thing. (Show me a casket or a hearse with a luggage rack on it.) You are going to go out from this earth the same way you came in: with nothing. You will only have your good and bad deeds to take with you. So flush the bad, get right with God, and leave anew the same as you arrived.

Feel the peace and love of God

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body,
but cannot kill the soul, rather
be afraid of the ONE who can destroy both
the soul and body in hell."
~ Matthew 10:28

With gratitude

Thank you, Signe, for standing by me through this journey. I know sometimes I have been a pain in the backside. Through this time, I have learned to love you more for who you are. You are a person with only my best interest at heart. I know God brought you into my life for me to love and so I may learn the lesson of truthfulness.

To the Glory of God.



A son and a father’s journey in the highs and lows of life.
A father’s love for his son, through the good and the bad, and how God works through them, even in tragedy. How God turned Tim and how Tim's death turned me.