

The Successful Loser

Letter from Author Bill Myers

July 1, 2007

Hi, Janet.

My whole life my ambition was to be a dentist. Those who know me couldn't imagine a scarier thing. They thought that obscenely wrong--me, inside someone's mouth for three hours with sharp objects. They feared I might pull some extra things, just to make it interesting. I was the kid who always struggled with boredom.

When I reached high school, I was a bored teen. Bored with life. Bored with my faith. I thought that Jesus said, "I came that you might have boredom and have it perpetually."

Then one day a friend came up to me, "You know what your problem is, Billy, you're only part of a Christian. You know all about Jesus and that your sins are forgiven and that you're going to heaven some day. But you know nothing about him being your Lord."

"Sure, I do. Isn't Lord and Savior like a package deal?"

"Not with you. Your life's like a tiny cup of water and God's life is like a huge pitcher and you have a few drops of his life in you. And that's why you're bored."

"So, what am I supposed to do?"

"I'll make you a bet that if, from this moment on, you promise to always say 'yes' to God, regardless of how scary it is, regardless of how stupid you feel, regardless of how much you don't know what's going on—your life will be anything but boring."

I was young and stupid and had nothing better to do, so I said, "Fine, bet."

And you know what happened? Nothing. For about 3 months. And then things got a little bit interesting.

I'm at the University of Washington, my freshman year, sitting in a theater and watching the fourth movie of my life. I grew up in the back woods of Washington near the Canadian border. We didn't get out much. I had seen *Pollyanna*, *The Parent Trap* and *Pinnocchio*. Now I'm watching . . . *The Godfather*. I'm staring at that screen and watching people get shot and blood everywhere. What's worse than that—the friends I came with are standing up with others at the end of the film and yelling, "Yeah, shoot him again. Yeah, give it to him. Yeah, baby."

I'm looking at these guys absolutely numb. I walked out of that theater speechless and wandered around the campus in a daze. "God," I prayed, "Did you

see how much power was in that movie, how it got people up and cheering while people got killed? Do you know what you need to be doing . . . and thanks for asking . . . you need to raise up people to get involved like that, but doing it for good . . . yeah, yeah, what you need to do is nudge movie and TV guys and . . . ”

“What? Come on, now, this is a serious prayer. You need to get some movie and TV guys and just . . . ”

It's not like I heard God's voice. I didn't get any AngelGrams. I didn't see any burning rose bushes. But every time I told God what he needed, it came back to me that I was supposed to be one of those guys. I thought that was nuts. I didn't even know how to watch a movie, much less make one. I argued with him for many weeks. Then I remembered my promise

Finally, I said, “Fine. I'll be a movie whatever-they're-called.” And I decided to change my major to film directing. However, there was no film department at the University of Washington.

About 8 weeks later, I found myself in Rome, Italy, studying a subject I knew nothing about, in a language I couldn't speak. This was insanity. I've always struggled with my native English, much less something foreign. My speech center never has worked real well. I was much older than the average kid when I even began to speak. Anyway, I was in Italy for a whole year and I only learned one phrase, *Dove e il gabinetto*, which must have meant, “Which way's the bathroom?” Every time I asked for directions, I wound up in somebody's lavatory.

I got through school, got married, moved to Los Angeles to become a rich and famous film director and discovered they already had plenty of those. We nearly starved as we became experts on macaroni and cheese. We had it fried or sauteed in barbecue sauce or dabbled with mustard or horse radish.

It was time to get serious again. “God, I don't know what I've done wrong. I promised to do anything you want . . . well, except writing—you know how my speech center works in my head and that I got Cs and Ds in my one writing class—but I'll do anything else. You just say anything else . . . ”

Then the phone rang. The guy on the other end was a TV producer. He'd seen a play I directed in Hollyweird for free, because no one would hire me, and he goes, “Bill, would you like to write for our new TV series?”

I'm thinking, “God, I just got through telling you. Weren't you listening?” But I asked a very important question at that time in my career. “Do you pay?”

“Oh, yes, twenty five hun . . . ”

“I'll be there,” I replied.

But as soon as I hung up, I realized what I'd done. I'm staring at the phone and going, “Oh, God, I can't write. There's no way.” And I proved it. I wrote the

world's worse TV show. It was so bad that when they showed it and I invited all my family and friends over and now I'm the big hot shot and when we watched it, I picked up a tennis shoe and threw it at the screen. My own show. It was dog food and everyone razzed me. I felt like a fool. But, strange thing. I discovered I like it. I felt this was what I was wired to do.

I wrote five more shows and the producer didn't buy any of them. We're back to macaroni. "God? Are you there, God? Remember my promise to always say 'yes?'"

The phone rings again. This time it's a book publisher. "Mr. Myers, we understand you're a famous TV writer and if you could spend time from your busy, busy schedule and write one book for us, we'd be so very, very grateful."

And I asked the one question that was most important at that time of my career.

And he said, "Oh, yes, 7500 . . . "

"I'll be there," I said.

And then I wrote the world's worst book. It was so bad, by the grace of God it is out-of-print. Later I went to all those online used bookstores and bought up every copy I could find. And when those hotshots do interviews and ask me, "Mr. Myers, tell us about your first book?", I reply, "Next question, please."

But you know what? I kinda liked it. So, I wrote a second book, then a third and a fourth. And for whatever reason, the publisher bought them all. That was more than 100 books ago. That was 40 national and international awards ago, two New York International Film Festivals ago, one C.S. Lewis Honor Book ago. I've been on every continent in the world, except Antarctica. I've been chased by giraffes in Africa. I've been to Mt. Everest—the bottom, not the top. I've been chased by baboons. I've been lost in the rain forest of South America. Doing a documentary on the Amazon River, just as the crew's ready to get into the canoe, my guide says, "Mr. Myers, when the snakes get into your boat, hold very still so that they'll go over your lap and over the side and not stay with you." I write and direct the "Adventures in Odyssey" kids' radio series. And I get to be one of the voices. I'm hot stuff. I'm also a moron. I just haven't bothered to tell anyone.

And the keys to my success? I'm a crybaby, I'm a coward, and I'm a loser, but I keep saying 'yes' to God. No matter how scary. No matter how stupid I feel. No matter how sure I am I don't know what I'm doing.

Thanks,

bill

Bill Myers

Thousand Oaks, CA

#####

BILL MYERS is a popular humorous speaker. He's also the creator of the *McGee and Me!* series, *The Incredible Worlds of Wally McDoogie*, *Project Elijah Series*, and author of adult fiction such as *Eli*, *The Wager*, *Blood of Heaven*, *Soul Tracker*, and *The Seeing*. He lives in California, not too far from Hollyweird, with two cats, two kids, one dog and one wife.

This letter was transcribed from a CD sent to **Janet Chester Bly**, P.O. Box 157, Winchester, ID, 83555, janet@blybooks.com, www.BlyBooks.com