



## Introduction

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**M**any sources contribute to what we know and what we think we know about God. If you're like me, you were taught what to think about God from sources you trusted as unimpeachable, like religious authorities and their churches. Sadly, in some cases we found out later that we were bamboozled. Don't you just hate it when you have been bamboozled?

So when you want to know more about God, as that great line from the 1984 movie *Ghostbusters* plaintively asked, "Who you gonna call?"

After reviewing the spiritual adventures, detours and wild goose chases I have taken thus far in life, I have to conclude that there have been many times when I have come to know God in a more personal and intimate way without any help from religious professionals. Again, if you're anything like me, you believe that many spiritual growth experiences come from improbable sources.

One eye-opening revelation about my relationship with God came from a line in the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The movie is a silly spoof of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and their search for the Holy Grail. This kind of silly and irreverent humor often conveys profound wisdom (sometimes it doesn't!).

In 1976, when the movie was released, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* didn't appear on the approved movie list of the religious swamp where I was treading spiritual

muck (neither was *Ghostbusters*, but I saw it on a plane. Who was I gonna call? I was trapped. I had to watch it!).

Later, when *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* was released on DVD, I rented a copy. By that time, God had helped me come to the painful and somewhat humiliating conclusion that I needed to stop taking myself and my religious stuff so seriously. At the same time, God was mercifully helping me realize that God's grace was what I really needed to be taking seriously.

I just had to see *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* because of one scene a friend told me about—and it turned out that one scene was priceless. In this scene God calls out to King Arthur, and merely hearing God's voice causes the king and everyone with him to fall to the ground in absolute fear. God gets upset and says, "Oh, don't grovel. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's people groveling."

King Arthur starts to apologize by saying, "Sorry..." but God interrupts him. "And don't apologize. Every time I talk to someone it seems like it's always 'sorry' for this and 'forgive me' for that and 'I'm not worthy' for something else."

I think the English comedy group Monty Python, who produced the movie, hit on an eternal, divine truth—the relationship God wants with humans is not characterized by people groveling at his feet. The Bible tells us Jesus calls us his friends. Jesus is looking for friends who will walk with him and beside him, not people who, out of fear, cowardly trail far behind him or bury their faces at his feet.

Sometimes when I talk with people about the relationship God offers them, their eyes glaze over, and I can see that I am losing them. There are times when I can almost hear them saying, "You are supposed to be a religious expert. You are an author. You are a pastor. You should be telling me what God wants me *to do*." People don't expect me to talk about the message of grace and relationship because it's not what they expect from a religious professional.

People don't expect religious experts to talk about relationship with God. Doctors fix our medical problems. Lawyers take care of our legal dilemmas. Starbucks will give us our caffeine boost. Golf pros correct our swing. So we expect religious pros to lecture us about the religious stuff we are doing or not doing. We expect religious experts to correct us. We