I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.
C.S. Lewis

Prayer Study #527
BRENNAN MANNING'S *THE RAGAMUFFIN GOSPEL*
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

In the thirty three years since I was first ambushed by Jesus in a little chapel in the mountains of Western Pennsylvania, in the literally thousands of hours of prayer and meditation, silence, solitude in those years, I am now utterly convinced that on Judgment Day the Lord Jesus will ask one question and only one question, "Did you believe that I loved you, that I desired you, that I waited for you day after day, that I longed to hear the sound of your voice?" The real believers will respond and say, "I believed in your love, and I tried to shape my life as response to it." But many of us who are so faithful in our ministry, our *practice* church going, are going to answer, "Well, frankly, no Sir, I never really believed it." There's the difference between the real believers and the nominal Christians that are bounded in our churches across the land. No one can measure, like a believer, the depth and intensity of God's love. And then again, no one can measure like a believer, the effectiveness of our gloom, our pessimism, our low self-esteem, our self-hatred and despair that block God's way to us. You see now why it is so important to lay hold of this basic truth of our faith, because you are going to be as big as your own concept of God. We make God in our own image, and He winds up being as fussy, as rude, narrow minded and judgmental and legalistic and unloving and unforgiving as we are. I've been in churches in Bangor, Maine; Miami; Seattle; San Diego; and St. Louis, and, honest to the God, of so many Christians I meet is too small because He is not the God of the Word, He is not the God revealed in and by Jesus Christ, who this moment comes to your seat and says, "I have a word for you. I know your whole life story. I know every skeleton in your closet. I know every moment of sin and shame, dishonesty and degraded love that has darkened your past. I know your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship, and My Word to you is this: I dare you to trust that I love you, just as you are, not as you should be, because none of us are as we should be.

BRENNAN MANNING
Author of *The Ragamuffin Gospel*