

Chapter Five:

A God Worth Seeking

One of the fascinating aspects of the Bible is the sheer intrigue that it inspires within us. To say that the Bible is a unique book is like saying the Eiffel Tower is a unique structure, or the Taj Mahal is a pretty building. Such pithy comments simply do not do justice to the subject at hand. The fact is: there is no other book of religion or literature comparable to the Bible. Even religious books which claim similar status cannot come close to competing with the clarity, thematic uniqueness, and lucidity of the Bible—not to mention the sheer drama and fascination it contains.

No other book makes such profound and life-altering claims as the Bible does *and* supports those claims with historical and irrefutable evidence. Miracles and supernatural intervention are corroborated by physical proof and a host of eyewitness accounts. The credibility and remarkableness of its sacred text do not rest upon one or two fantastic miracles, but with hundreds and thousands of supernatural acts. Since God's very existence is miraculous by definition (when compared to our mundane existence), His every activity upon the earth or within the human soul is also miraculous in nature. The greatest of these miracles on earth is indisputably the resurrection of Christ. The greatest miracle within the soul is the born-again experience of the one who is made a "new creature" when he obeys Christ's gospel (John 3:3-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Peter 1:3).

The Bible serves as the connective link between secular history and the theocracy of Israel. It blends together the physical world of man with the reality of heaven. It unites the humble smallness of man with the majestic greatness of God. It magnifies the weakness of

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man's weak and self-destructive nature *and* the infinite power of Christ's saving grace. It contrasts the self-serving pride of the human spirit with the unstoppable and inexhaustible power of the Holy Spirit ("the zeal of the Lord"). The Bible speaks, works, and inspires on a level that far transcends the mundane world of man.

The God of the Bible

We could continue to talk about the Bible's unique character, but we really want to draw our attention to something even greater than the Bible itself: the One who *wrote* it. "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16), which means that the message which has been preserved through the ages is not only in agreement with God but *originated* with Him. God did not necessarily oversee every word the Bible writers chose to use; He did not prevent their own personalities or writing styles from influencing the expression of their works. But God *did* make sure that the Creation account, Israel's history, prophecies of His Messiah, and the gospel of the Savior Himself would all be accurately recorded, preserved, and uncorrupted (Galatians 1:11-12, 2 Peter 1:16-21). Thus, the Bible is a product of God's mind, not a mere collection of men's writings or recollections of history.

In reading what has been preserved in the Bible, we are made to wonder: what kind of God is this who not only *desires* to communicate with us but also has the *ability* to do so? Men have been seeking contact with "extraterrestrial intelligence" for some time now, but nothing can be more extraterrestrial or intelligent than an omnipotent, omniscient Creator! This Creator has not sent us blips and beeps on an astral radar screen to identify Himself (like what we think we will receive if intelligent life *was* trying to contact us), but He has communicated with us through an intellectual, logical, poetic, and life-transforming message. He has told us things we could

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not have known otherwise; at the same time, He has not gushed with intellectual smugness, like we would expect from an all-knowing human genius. God's great *restraint*—in knowledge, power, and reaction to men's provocations—is as impressive as that which He *has* revealed.

God's timelessness, His transcendence, and His flawless knowledge of the future are some of what makes the Bible story so impressive and amazing. God is not a glorified man; He is not a spiritual Superman with superhuman powers—or kryptonite-induced weaknesses. His power cannot be depleted or exhausted; He cannot be conquered or killed. God has no equal or comparison. We cannot say, "God is like such-and-such," because there is nothing in this world or in our imagination that God is *like*. As Isaiah has recorded (44:6-7),

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place."

Who else is able to scan all of human history in a single view? What man or idol has ever been able to accurately foretell the future? Not only does God *see* all of history from beginning to end, He also *directs* it according to a predetermined purpose (Ephesians 3:11). While He allows man to make moral choices on his own, no man can usurp *God's* choices. This is one of the primary lessons of Genesis: God's promises to Abraham continue on course, unaffected by the pitfalls of the story's characters. God's will is going to be accomplished; His purpose is going to be fulfilled; there is nothing that men, time, or circumstances can do to alter this. As God has said (Isaiah 55:10-11),

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For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

We are unable to control the events of our own lifetime (or a single day), but God is able to control the events of *all history*. This does not mean that God is responsible for every single thing that happens, but that *nothing* happens without His knowledge and nothing can overwhelm His overall purpose. His *ultimate* purpose is the salvation of all those who believe and obey Him (John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:3-6).

God not only exercises divine control over the world, He has *created* it. Every living creature, every mountain, every jungle, every ocean, every weather pattern, and every ecological system was originally made and ideally designed by God the Father through the agency of God the Son (see John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-18, Hebrews 1:1-2). Every atom, proton, and electron—as well as every constellation, galaxy, and quasar—was brought into existence by the very *utterance* of God's Mind.

Not only does He oversee the physical world, but God also has absolute control over the spiritual realm. All authorities and dominions, whether on earth or in heaven, have always been under the authority of God the Father; He has since put these under the authority of God the Son (1 Corinthians 15:27-28, Colossians 1:15-16). This means God presides over *our* spiritual realm, the unseen dimensions of our unseen existence. He is able to peer into the folds and crevices of

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our secret lives, even the most private recesses of our souls. Nothing escapes His view; no one can remove himself from under His authority. The Bible tells us (Hebrews 4:12-13) that

The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

What other person can know our thoughts, unless we divulge them (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11)? Yet God knows not only our thoughts themselves, but also the *intentions* of those thoughts—the motives that inspired them. In other words, He not only knows the “what” of our thinking, He knows the “why.” There is no thought that we can hide from Him, no motive that He cannot expose; and, in the end, “God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Romans 2:16).

The more we learn about God, the more we realize that He is *not of human invention*—He is not even within human reach. We are not dealing with a molten image that sits on a man-made pedestal, gathering dust in some ancient temple. We are not admiring a god of our own making, indirectly praising *ourselves* through the work of our own hands or minds. We are not dealing with a “God” of some denominational religion that tries to dictate our beliefs through charismatic men, human creeds, and human effort. We are not hoping in a questionable or vague spirit whom we can never really trust or place any confidence. We are not waiting for a god who may fail, has never proven his performance, or has not been deemed worthy of our faith.

In light of all that we have discussed thus far, we must ask ourselves: *Is this a God worth seeking?* If not, then what other god *is*? Should we seek instead after a god that has nothing to

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offer, is incapable of love, and does not even truly exist? This makes no sense. In light of all that the God of Scripture has to offer, all other choices are rendered pointless. Yet whenever people seek completion, satisfaction, or salvation in anything else other than the God of heaven, they are seeking after such a god. Instead of seeking after the sacred, everything these people do ultimately is “futility and striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

The Object of Our Search

We have discussed how important it is that one first understands the very nature *of* the sacred before commencing one’s search for it. We must not succumb to what so many have done in the past, that is, to seek after something “sacred” simply because it is *deemed* sacred. Seeking after an object of curiosity or person of intrigue is hardly a noble endeavor in itself. This is merely an expression of idolatry and can never equal or replace one’s search for God. Seeking after any god—or object of veneration—other than the God of heaven has always been condemned *by* God (Exodus 20:3-5, Romans 1:21-25, et al).

Furthermore, it is not enough to believe that a sacred God exists; we must also actively seek Him. Read this again: *we* must actively seek *Him*. We are not merely to seek a religion that involves God, or embark on a search that seeks only the gifts of God. Our goal is to draw near to *Him*, not merely to a congregation of those who *belong* to Him, or to a church that uses His name. While many seek “truth” or “religion” or “a church that I feel comfortable with,” these people often fail to understand that their search is supposed to be for the One who calls *us* to Himself. When we focus our search for God on *His* terms, then our religion, worship, and focus become very productive and personal. If we fail to understand this, then these things will

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always remain on the periphery of our lives. Our religion will at best be an emotional experience; at worst, it will be a purely mechanical one.

This anticipates the question, “Why do I need to ‘seek’ after God? Isn’t it enough that I simply recognize His holiness and acknowledge His supremacy?” While these actions are absolutely necessary, they are not the goal of our moral responsibility. Worshipping the sacred God must not be reduced to a mere worship of the sacredness *of* God. God does not want to be merely “recognized,” as though nodding respectfully in His direction while gorging ourselves with self-indulgence. God wants to be *loved*, just as you and I want to be loved. He wants to be *admired*, just as you and I want to be admired. He wants to be *obeyed*, just as you and I want to be obeyed by those whom we oversee. His supremacy really is not “acknowledged” at all if He is not given His due respect as One who is supremely worthy of all these things.

Let us now consider some other reasons why God must be *sought* and not merely acknowledged:

- ❑ **He is a part of us and we are a part of Him.** We are His own Creation, and He is our Father. We cannot exist without God, and God’s love cannot be demonstrated without an object of that love. This demands a certain *relationship* between the two parties, that is, between you and the God who gave you life. This relationship factor is crucial to understanding *why* you should seek God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7), which means that before one can become enlightened *by* God he must first have a proper respect *for* God.
- ❑ **Our destiny (ideally) is to be with Him, just as He wants fellowship with us.** God does not create a human life to destroy it, but to give that person an opportunity to choose

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Him as his God—in essence, so that God can enjoy his fellowship endlessly. This takes the relationship factor to the next level. It is not enough to honor God as our Creator or as the Father of our souls (cf. Hebrews 12:9); it is necessary to become part of His *family*, “the household of God,” through Christ’s church (1 Timothy 3:15). This requires that certain conditions be met—namely, that one’s heart will surrender and submit to Christ’s gospel. God’s love is unconditional; salvation (which is found only “in Christ”) is most certainly conditional.

- ❑ **This world is empty, vain, helpless, and hopeless on its own.** This world creates problems but cannot solve them. It identifies limitations, but cannot overcome them. It ridicules the sacred, but cannot find peace and solace apart from communion *with* the sacred. Each one of us is incomplete without God. This may not seem to be a significant problem up front (after all, we have become accustomed to living with inadequacy and incompleteness), but it is our incompleteness that will prevent us from being *with* God in the hereafter. We cannot complete ourselves, however; it is only “in Christ” that we are made complete (Colossians 1:28). There is no other way to the Father except *through* Christ (John 14:6).
- ❑ **This world is not supposed to be our final dwelling place.** Rather, it is supposed to make us appreciate a *better* dwelling place. When the Bible talks about a “new heavens and a new earth” (such as in Isaiah 65:17 or 2 Peter 3:13), the context always describes a new dwelling place for man—a new state of existence—not a refurbished physical planet: “the former [heavens and earth—CMS] shall not be remembered or come to mind.” Those who believe that Christ is going to live on this overhauled earth for a thousand years miss the point: God is not going to live among *us* on this planet, but the redeemed are going to

live with *Him* in His heaven. This has been His intention ever since He created us. We begin in the physical realm, but anticipate life with God in the spiritual (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:46-50, Philippians 3:20-21, et al).

Seekers by Nature

It is not unusual that God asks us to be seekers of the sacred, since He has made us seekers by nature. We are always searching for something, whether or not we recognize this. We are all seeking answers (sometimes it's just “the” answer), reasons, knowledge, and enlightenment in one form or another. We seek forgiveness, vengeance, apologies, and closure. We also seek fame, fortune, acceptance, love, physical or sensual gratification, and pleasure in whatever form we can find it. Despite this, no other search is going to produce the absolute joy, completion, and reward that the search for the sacred will most certainly produce—if one conducts it properly.

Unfortunately, some focus upon a certain *object* or *achievement* as their lifelong quest with a “search for the holy grail”-kind of mentality. (We must question how productive or useful such a search really is.) Others become absorbed and even obsessed with the search itself; whether or not they actually accomplish anything in the process seems almost secondary to the thrill of the pursuit. For example, you will hear people use phrases like, “It’s been my lifelong passion to . . .” or “My vision is to . . .” or “The purpose of my existence . . .” is to do or discover something or other. You hear it from the numismatist that is always searching for the perfect coin to add to his collection. Or listen to the big game hunter who is ever seeking that perfect hunt for the ideal prey. Or there is the mountain climber who forever has his sights on that euphoric mountain climbing experience upon the perfect peak. More close to home, there is the

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man or woman seeking to find—or become—the ideal wife or husband. Or there is that lonely person seeking after companionship and the warmth of someone else’s presence in his life.

Certainly we should have dreams and we should pursue them. That’s all part of the human experience. My point is that all of these searches—and any search for something that can only be found on this earth, or even worse, only in one’s imagination—are ultimately disappointing. This is because they are *limited* to the human experience. All such searches end once a person dies, no matter how passionate his pursuit was when he was alive. Even if a person is successful in his pursuit, there is still emptiness at the other end of it all. Once a person finds what he is looking for, then what? Now that he has discovered his priceless reward, what is there to look forward to? Worse yet, what if that person never finds the object of his quest at all? If someone has put all his life into looking for some fabled Fountain of Youth, for example, but never finds it, he has *spent* all his youth and all those productive years for nothing. This is beyond disappointing; it is a total loss.

The search for the Sacred God is entirely different, however. Such a pursuit is not a useless, pointless venture. For one thing, God is not a figment of someone’s imagination. He is not an urban legend, myth, fable, or fantasy. Heaven is not El Dorado, Xanadu, Nirvana, or the Lost City of Atlantis. Holiness is not some comic-book “power” which only a superhero can possess, nor is it some kind of spiritual aphrodisiac designed to create the ultimate euphoric experience.

Secondly, *anyone* can join in this search and *everyone* who sincerely and appropriately does so *will indeed find what he or she is looking for*. The search for God is not limited to a privileged few, the rich, or the powerful. No one stumbles into completion accidentally,

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salvation cannot be purchased with money, and no one is invited into heaven because of earthly status. In fact, “many who are first will be last; and the last, first” (Matthew 19:30).

Thirdly, no one who “finds God” is ever done with the search. Discovering God is like discovering math: you might think that simple arithmetic is fascinating in itself, until you realize that simple math leads to more complex math, then to math that can hardly be described with human language. In another sense, you might relate to math first on a purely numerical level; then you realize that math can be expressed through variables and non-numerical symbols. Ultimately, you may realize that math ascends to a virtually conceptual level which cannot be expressed in mere numbers *or* variables, but requires actual written explanation, three-dimensional models, or . . . who knows what else.

God, even more than mathematics, is infinite. He is not merely a mathematical expression, however; He is a Living Being who is impossible to fully know or “discover” in this lifetime. Which leads to a fourth point: the search for the sacred is not limited to this earth, a particular time in one’s life, or even to this life at all. The search is not consummated until we leave this world and actually enter into God’s own world, where we will meet Him face to face. Even then, one has to wonder if we will not spend the rest of eternity still “discovering” God. Since He is infinite, and since His Life has no end or boundaries, then to think we will spend every moment of eternity drawing ever closer to the sacred is not a far-fetched one. In fact, it is perfectly logical.

The Distance to God

Jesus once told a man who had answered Him well that he was “not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:34). Jesus was not speaking of the length of travel or of geographical

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proximity. He was not telling the man how far it was to the nearest “sound congregation,” if you know what I mean. He was talking about *attitude*. Jesus meant, in essence, “Your attitude is very close to that which is expected in the kingdom of God.” Similarly, someone else once said, “The distance to heaven is not a matter of altitude, but attitude.” Paul wrote that Christ’s salvation is not too high, nor too deep, nor at all inaccessible to the one who believes; rather, He is *in your heart*, which is as close to a person as anyone can get (Romans 10:5-10).

Searching for God is not like searching for treasure on a treasure map, where “X” marks the spot. However, there is a certain obvious parallel. The *Bible* is like a treasure map, in the sense that one must follow God’s instructions in order to enjoy the riches of God (Ephesians 1:18, et al). Indeed, the *cross* marks the “spot” where God is centrally located—not the physical wooden crucifix upon which Jesus was literally crucified, and not the literal location where that crucifixion occurred, but what that cross symbolizes in expressing the very heart of God’s love for man.

Someone says, “Well, if the cross marks the location of the treasure, then why do I need the rest of the Bible? You’ve already given away the secret!” First of all, there are no secrets to which I or anyone else is privy that you yourself cannot know. Anyone and everyone can “know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19) provided they search for this knowledge and fullness through prayer, study, and fellowship. Christ’s church is the church of the elect, not the elite. Anyone can be a part of it and no one has a good reason *not* to be a part of it.

Secondly, one is mistaken if he thinks that by learning key Bible verses or becoming an expert on biblical concepts is a replacement for the rewarding search for the sacred. Whoever

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has access to a Bible can learn of God's sacred plan of salvation, and this plan always leads one to the cross of Christ. In fact, the more one studies the Bible, the more one realizes just how powerfully and perfectly the cross consummates the grand picture which God has revealed to us. The cross is the opening of the treasure, so to speak; indeed, it serves as a kind of wooden key that opens up the doors of heaven to the seeker of God. However, discovering the full extent or depth of that treasure is an endless, exhilarating, and completely worthwhile adventure.

The Object of Our Existence

To seek after the sacred means to put all other searches and pursuits secondary to this one search. Whatever else we seek here upon this earth cannot be considered equal or superior to our search for God. This mindset requires, especially in the beginning, an abrupt yet critical shift in our thinking. Our jobs, careers, spouses, children, different seasons of life, etc. are all part of what we call our "life," but your life is not complete with any one of these things or all of them combined. Jesus once told a crowd, "Not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). We may not categorize our family and careers and such as "possessions" *per se*, but I don't think Jesus was limiting His discussion only to things you can buy at the store, either. I understand the context to refer to whatever one has or possesses in the most general sense (think of Matthew 10:37-39, for example). Not ironically, His statement about possessions is in the context of a general warning against succumbing to greed, which is naturally and frequently present in the raw, unrefined, and unspiritual human life.

This thought forces us to clarify the true object of our existence. It is not to possess things; it is not merely to have or enjoy human relationships; it is not to have control over things

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or people. Furthermore, we were not put upon this earth merely to make a living, produce offspring, and have a good time. From God's point of view, we were *created*, and therefore we have *purpose*: we were created *for* a purpose. The highest purpose of *every* person is to seek after God—to be a seeker of the sacred. Consider the words of Paul in his speech on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:25-28, EM):

He [God] Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, **that they would seek God**, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist.

God is the beginning of our existence. Ideally, we are to regard Him as the substance, desire, and *consummation* of our existence as well. People, possessions, or positions are not the objects of our existence. I realize that, for many, this is all they have, but that is not the way it is supposed to be—this was never God's intention. Furthermore, if this is all that one has, then it is only a thin veneer of “substance” which barely masks a vast expanse of emptiness and darkness. Such emptiness will be painfully evident once that person's physical life is taken from him.

Jesus admonished us to store our treasures in heaven—in essence, to recognize that our treasure is *in* heaven, where God is—versus accumulating treasures here upon this earth (Matthew 6:19-21). This is such a simple spiritual concept, but it ushers in an absolute and monumental truth: we have so little control over the things of this world, and no control of the things beyond this world, *if left to our own power*. This is the ultimate context in which Jesus had revealed this truth. He was not merely talking about property and possessions, but power

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and control—i.e., the human inability to exercise or sustain power and control over the things of this world. In contrast, God’s power and control cannot be touched by the deteriorative or corrosive elements of this world or by the greed and wickedness of men (as illustrated by rust and moths, intrusion and thievery). Trying to place any sort of permanent value upon earthly things or relationships is ultimately self-defeating.

This does not mean that this world is useless to us, or that we must abandon people in order to have a proper relationship with God. Quite the contrary, a person who has forsaken all worldly connections and has divorced himself from all personal relationships will hardly be able to relate to the world in which he is supposed to exercise Christian virtues. One can hardly be a light to the world or salt of the earth if he is holed up in some (literal or figurative) monastic cave (cf. Matthew 5:13-16). He will not be a “fellow partaker of the gospel” if he is unable to be all things to all people (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:23). He cannot be useful to the kingdom of God if he cannot functionally interact with this world.

What God gives us to enjoy in this life are *blessings*, not cargo to jettison. (It is true that *God* can give or remove these blessings according to His will [cf. Job 1:21]; it is *not* true that we have the right to insist that He does one or the other.) God does not bless us with marriages, children, material possessions, jobs, etc. just so that He can have something with which to criticize and condemn us. Imagine a father who gives his son a nice car, a great job in the family business, and a college education—then turns around and berates the son for actually accepting those gifts instead of denouncing them all as excessive! What a hypocrite that father would be to his son. Not only that, but such a man would be impossible to please, since his son is condemned no matter what decision he makes.

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Our God is not a God of contradiction or double-minded intentions. God does not tempt us with evil (James 1:13), nor does He give us evil things to bring about our ruin. God does not attempt to confound our seeking Him by throwing all sorts of obstacles and stumbling blocks in our way; He does not beckon us to heaven and then plant land mines in our path. Christ admits freely that our path is narrow and fraught with danger, predators (“wolves”; Matthew 7:15-20), distractions, and sensual temptations, but Christ does not *put* them there. These things exist in the world due to the sin of man, and anyone who is in the world—no matter how godly that person may be—will be confronted with them.

We must also recognize just how important *sacrifice* is in our seeking after the sacred. (We will discuss this much more thoroughly in an upcoming chapter entitled “Drawing Near to God.”) Jesus taught that whatever causes us to stumble we are to cut, gouge, or rip out of our lives (Matthew 18:8-9). The context refers to whatever tempts us to *sin* and yet is within our power to remove from our lives. The implication is clear: when Jesus speaks of a stumbling block, He refers to *whatever interferes with our search for God*. Such obstacles must be removed; we cannot be passive toward them. The search for God is worth sacrificing whatever would compromise that search. God is worth seeking; therefore God is worth the sacrifices we would render to Him. Jesus Christ deserves our full attention; therefore He deserves our uncompromising allegiance. Our future with God cannot be jeopardized by (comparatively-speaking) a few moments of pleasure or distraction.

Enhancing Our Search for God

Let’s turn this subject on its head for a moment: suppose we considered all that we have in our life as part of the search, if viewed properly. From God’s bird’s-eye perspective, every

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earthly blessing is supposed to enrich our *spiritual* life, not ruin it. In fact, if we step back and look at the big picture, we can realize that these things, while not part of our final objective, most certainly ought to whet our appetite *for* it. In essence, rather than serve as stumbling blocks, our circumstances and possessions can actually point us heavenward. Think about the following:

- ❑ **Physical wealth**, regardless of how much or little it might be, can help give us a foretaste of what God has prepared for us. If we have much, then we can always remember that God has far more, and He will share *all* of it with us so long as we do not cling too tightly to what we have now. If we have little, then God's unlimited wealth will also be ours, so long as we do not despise what we have been denied here upon the earth.
- ❑ **Personal relationships**, if we find them to be enjoyable, will be infinitely more so in heaven. Fellowship there will have no bounds, no inhibitions, and no end. All the limitations of time and distance, all the interference of human emotions and others' intrusions, and all the hindrances of human imperfections will be gone. All who are in heaven will be in love with Christ, and thus in love with one another. I'm not talking about some sappy, emotional love, but the "great love with which He loved us"-kind of love (cf. Ephesians 2:4). Even if our earthly relationships are joyless—i.e., we endure them out of obligation, duty, previous commitments, etc.—then we can anticipate a "time" with God when all such relationships will have ceased to exist. This does not mean that all those with whom we have such relationships will be lost, just because we do not enjoy such people. It means that in heaven, *no one* will have an unpleasant relationship with anyone else. Such experiences will not exist; the very idea is unthinkable there. We will all be kindred spirits; no one will be overwhelmed or overlooked.

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- ❑ **Health problems, physical flaws or imperfections, aging and disease**—all of these should remind us that our stay here is temporary and ultimately unsatisfying. We were not intended to remain upon this earth forever, but we are here only for a brief stay until we can always sbe with the Lord. Every day—perhaps every hour—that we must endure the pain and discomfort of this physical existence can be looked upon as one day closer to our eternal rest with God. One needs only to view his earthly struggle one day at a time; one’s suffering only has to last 24 hours until that day is done. In contrast, life in God’s “day” will be one of perfect health, without decline or deterioration of any kind.
- ❑ **Suffering**—not the mere deprivation of desired comfort, but the assault of wrongs and injustices of this world upon our innocence—can also whet our appetite for the world to come. In God’s world, there are no tempters or oppressors, and no person, power or thing that can ever change any of that. In heaven, God will maintain the protection of His people forever; having made them innocent with His Son’s blood, He will preserve their innocence and security eternally.
- ❑ **Wickedness in general**, whether or not we are directly touched by it, can inspire a powerful hope for an existence in which there is no wickedness. The more we see of the wickedness of this world, the deeper our longing for a world without wickedness becomes. After all, Jesus came as a brilliant light into a darkened world (cf. John 1:4-9, 8:12); His brightness was paradoxically amplified and magnified *by* the extreme moral darkness of fallen humanity. The darker the picture into which the Light enters, the more brilliant the Light will appear—and the greater the contrast between the two will be.
- ❑ **Death** itself can provide a powerful incentive for a search for God. The fact of our impending death forces us—if we are willing to confront our mortality at all—to

appreciate the wonderful experience of simply being alive. An imperfect life is much more enjoyable if we believe that it will not last forever; death can be much more acceptable if we know that it serves as only a transition to a perfect life that will *never* end. Every day which is lived to the fullest can be viewed as only a faint glimmer of the kind of endless life that God has prepared for us with Him. The loss of dear friends and loved ones, while causing unspeakable pain and sorrow here, can still point us toward the God to whom all souls return after this life is over. Those who “die in the Lord” (cf. Revelation 14:13) will ultimately be rejoined with all who are believers in an inexpressibly wonderful existence with the Lord Jesus forever. There will be no more separation from those who love God. Even with regard to those who have chosen a different end, we will not grieve over them forever. When we are with the Savior, we will have sufficient knowledge and perspective to understand what has happened. With such understanding, we will find closure in what cannot be resolved here; we will find straightened whatever seems crooked and unfixable here; we will find completion to whatever is lacking here (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:15). Death, while appearing to be a symbol of irretrievable loss to us here will, in the end, provide for a rebirth into something better, brighter, and more beautiful than anything we could have ever known in this life. Death, paradoxically, leads us straight into the arms of Jesus, directly into the very real presence of God.

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The point here is not merely to provoke a rhapsodic, “How beautiful heaven must be!”—although I, too, believe heaven will be beautiful. However, if we focus upon heaven as a mere *place* or *experience* that is filled with good things (or void of bad things), we miss the central

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theme of the Bible, the intent of Christ's ministry, and the ultimate fulfillment of man's very existence. This ought to evoke from us not merely, "How beautiful heaven must be!" but "How beautiful *God* must be!" It is God, after all, who is at the center of every portrayal of heaven—heaven exists only by His authority, power, and majesty. God is the source of the very *concept* of heaven; even here, everything we call "good" mirrors the very nature of God Himself. God is also the giver of all that is good: everything we call "good" ultimately finds its origin in God Himself, since "every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17). The entire Bible is a tremendous testament to the glorious God of heaven. Through a study of it, we cannot help but become enthralled with a deeper, fonder, and more thrilling picture of this great God.

So once again, we are confronted with the question: Is this beautiful, majestic, and transcendent God not worth seeking? I believe He most certainly is, without question. There is nothing in this world that can compare to the sacred glory of God. To search for Him is to be filled with the rhapsody of life, love, and joy. To become a seeker of the sacred is the most fulfilling, rewarding, and intimate journey upon which anyone could embark. All other searches or pursuits are doomed to fail; if nothing else, death destroys them all. Yet God is "not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). Furthermore, Jesus Himself declared that He is "the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:18). Not even death can end one's search for the sacred.

Just because I have come to this conclusion does not mean that you will automatically be convinced of it. Nonetheless, the evidence of these things is compelling and irrefutable; not only this, but ultimately you have everything to gain by engaging in such a search. In this life, even if

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you gain the whole world but never find God, you still lose everything (cf. Matthew 16:26); but if you find God, even though you *will* lose the whole world, you will be blessed beyond earthly calculation in the end. With that in mind, I trust that you will continue with me in seeking the sacred. We will not be disappointed in what we discover.