

FINDING GOD

by Vern Bennom Grimsley

A little 4-year old girl had been in bed for several days recovering from the flu. Then one afternoon her grandmother came to visit her. "My dear child," she said, "how did you find yourself this morning?"

The little girl said, "It was easy. I just opened my eyes, and there I was!"

Believe it or not, it is exactly that easy to find God. Just open your eyes...and there He is!

In Genesis, chapter 28, it is written, "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, 'surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not!'"

The hour is now striking for all mankind to waken from its spiritual slumberings and realize, "surely the Lord is in this place"--and we knew it not! Men die seeking for the very God who dwells within them.

God is where you are; His spirit inhabits the mortal mind. God is not a hair's breadth from your thoughts this moment.

Think of it! God's presence patrols the starry circuits of space and spans the leagues of infinity, yet watches and waits within the mind of man as well.

This tremendous truth should make us stop and think.

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We should pause to ponder the solemn fact that we are more than we think we are! We are spiritual children of God; kin to the creator of the cosmos!

Suppose a rather dullwitted fellow taking a scenic bus tour through the Rockies began complaining to the driver that the mountains were blocking his view. We would smile at that, wouldn't we? For the mountains are the view.

Yet many a man will spend his entire lifetime thinking anguished and despairing thoughts about how he is unable to find God, about how God is so far, far away, yet will fail to recognize that the very same mind which he uses to think these despairing thoughts is the very place where God dwells. It is like putting on your only pair of glasses to look for your only pair of glasses--they're not lost; you're wearing them.

So, God is not lost: He inhabits the tabernacle of your mind.

Jesus proclaims this stirring truth in Luke 17:21--"Behold, the kingdom of God is within you!" Or as scholar J.B. Phillips translates it, "The kingdom of God never comes by watching for it. Men cannot say,

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'Look, here it is' or 'there it is,' for the kingdom of God is inside you."

In Nehemiah 9:20 it is written that God gives his good spirit to instruct us!

Job 32:8--"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the almighty giveth them understanding."

And Proverbs 20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts."

God's spirit--a fragment of infinity--indwells your mind. But you don't see it; you can't touch it or taste it or smell it. And a surgeon could operate on your brain but never find it. You might as well tear apart your radio during one of my Family of God broadcasts and try to find my voice inside; you'll find wires, condensers, resistors, tubes, transistors, potentiometers, and dozens of other electronic gadgets--but not my voice. Yet my voice is real.

God's spirit is likewise real, inside of you; this is a still, small voice, and you must listen very, very intently to hear it in your soul--but hear it you shall. And what will it speak to you? "This is the way. Walk therein."

God at this very moment

stands watch both at the outpost of eternity and at the threshold of our thoughts. He loves each one of us as sons of his and brothers to each other in the Family of God, if we would only dare to believe it.

The spirit of God in you is constantly coaxing you to become a better person, to follow divine guidance for your life, by courageous, spirit-inspired, lifechanging decisions. But only you can make those decisions!

Consider: If you noticed a brown-shelled acorn lying on the ground, you might at first mistake it for a stone; yet an acorn, unlike a stone, has the living power of growth inside it.

It is crucial to recognize that you too have such a power of living, spiritual growth within yourself. For there resides in you, throbbing and vigorously vibrant with life, the very spirit of the living God. In seeking God, fail not to seek within.

God is where you are. His child you are, if you will have the faith to believe it! And since every child is entitled to know his Father, and since God is the Father of all mankind, we can literally know God in personal prayer and worship.

Where is God? Dwelling out somewhere behind the beyond and over the yonder? I once heard a woman who said she had a religion that was "out of this world"... it sounded rather inconvenient to me. For we need a religion for this world, here, now and today! Such is the religion of Jesus--the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

We have all read the advice-columns in daily newspapers--where perplexed people write in for answers to their pressing problems and questions. Troubled souls send thousands of letters weekly to such journalistic oracles. Others seek out counsellors, psychologists, ministers, and even bartenders, searching for advice, wisdom, and insight into their difficulties. The more renowned the authority, the more people seek his advice.

But think for a moment. Who would be the greatest authority in the world, even in the universe? God. But He doesn't write a column. It is much better than that. His very spirit is within; man can receive insight and live a God-guided life by sincere prayer and communion. It is a totally transforming experience!

Once, driving down a remote and rutted, dried-mud country road in Kansas, my wife and I discovered

we had a flat tire. I was out repairing it (although you who have heard me speak probably suspect I could have fixed it by blowing it up again), when I commented to Nancy, "This certainly is a desolate, God-forsaken place."

Suddenly I realized how foolishly I had spoken--that no matter how desolate a place may be, it is never God-forsaken. God is everywhere. And no matter how desolate a human life may seem, it is never God-forsaken either. For God the Father loves and is with every person every moment, right now. If you will muster the faith to believe that simple truth, you have found God.

Amid the crumbling ruins of ancient temples archeologists sometimes find forgotten fragments of art, scattered gems and broken statuary beneath the stones and fallen pillars.

Among the rubble of fallen human lives there likewise lie fragments of forgotten beauty, remnants of toppled values, hopes, and buried meanings. Eternal yearnings live within the heart of man, and while they live, the soul shall never die. For finding God means having the faith to know that you have.

There waits and watches within you something eternal and divine, the spirit of the living Father. We are children of the Everlasting one: sons of the living God!

GROWING SPIRITUALLY

by Vera Bennom Grimsley

When a prominent San Francisco woman committed suicide recently, her photograph and the story of her death appeared on page one of the newspapers. But had she been the wife of a manual laborer or a small shopowner, there would have been no more than a two-inch item on page 26.

In her case, it was frontpage news. Why? Because the public always finds it incredible, unbelievable, that anyone with power, prominence and wealth would be dissatisfied with life. But Jesus knew better. "What shall it profit a man," he asked, "to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" Without spiritual growth, we are restless and dissatisfied.

San Francisco, California, is one of the most wealthy cities in the U.S.A. But according to police statistics, it also possesses the highest suicide rate of any city in the U.S.A. Many of mankind who live in material wealth live also in spiritual poverty. Jesus taught that no man can serve two masters; we must choose between God and mammon. ("Mammon" was the Aramaic word for "money.") "Lay up your treasure in heaven," he said, "where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal."

Affluence alone cannot create joy. "Man shall not live by bread alone," quoted Jesus. A banquet may swell your stomach, but it can never satisfy your soul! Our most

urgent yearning is for God! "You shall worship the Lord, and him only shall you serve," declared Christ.

Some people claim to be uninterested in religion because their adequacy has never been tested; they have contented themselves with paltry aspirations and meagre goals; never have they known the thrill of great endeavor, the stirring straining with all their strength to achieve some noble aim, the vital adventure of living by supreme ideals, and seeking perfection, even as God is perfect.

Only he who hungers knows the true delight of food, and no one savors water like the man whose tongue smoulders with thirst. The lumberjack who swings an ax and drives a saw all day knows more about the joy of falling asleep at night than the shiftless lad who lies around his room in indolence. It is a physiological fact: he who does little work needs little food. And likewise, he who dreams no dreams, has no hopes, loves, aspirations, mighty tasks and projects in his life may feel little need of spiritual growth and the power of God. A baby's bathtub boat has no need of mighty canvas sails stretched into the winds either -- it isn't going anywhere anyway! So it is with the man who toys with the trivialities of life, but never dares give himself wholeheartedly to the best he knows: never having spent his own strength, he feels, perhaps, no need of God's.

But the man or woman who seeks to live as the Master taught, as a son or daughter of the living God

and a brother to every other man, the person who tries to love his enemies, bless those who curse him, pray for those who despise him, return good for evil, and live by the noblest truth he knows...that person soon discovers his own inward inadequacy, his spiritual shortcomings. He finds he can't live this higher life by his own power alone, but he needs the inner energies of God. And turning to God with all of his heart, he discovers God, as a person and a power in his life! He begins the adventure of spiritual growth!

The eminent historian Arnold Toynbee has said, "people are now afraid of being alone with themselves. They turn on the radio or the T.V. at once. They can't dare to be alone with their own thoughts and feelings. This is cowardice, really."

Jesus knew the sustaining strength of solitude. Often he went apart to pray, worship and seek spiritual energy for daily living. He further taught that each one of us was created for the same kind of close companionship with God. You were born to live in joy as a son or daughter of the Universal Father and a brother or sister to all mankind in the worldwide family of God. This vital fellowship with the Father is yours by faith alone.

Persist in your faith, prayer, and the seeking of God's will! Perhaps the following Grimsley terrible parable will illustrate the importance of unwavering spiritual perseverance: A weary business executive had just signed his name to an expensive life insurance policy. Turning to the

beaming salesman, he remarked, "young fellow, you should feel proud of yourself. I have refused to see three other insurance agents today." "I know," he replied. "I'm them!"

If persistence can be that important in business, just think how vital it is in the realm of religion! Jesus spent hours in prayer and worship. In the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, he prayed for the will of God not once, but three times in a row. He prayed with perseverance!

Once your life is given to God, a new spurt of spiritual growth will take place in your soul. But even at that, you may feel you are progressing too slowly. Be patient. When you plant a flower in a pot, will tugging and pulling at it make it grow any more readily? Of course not. Neither will worry and fretting accelerate spiritual progress. The flower grows no faster because the gardener worries; it only needs the proper conditions of growth: sunlight, soil and water. Neither can anxiety create spiritual progress in your life. You need only persevere in prayer, worship, faith, and the love of God and man. Maximum spiritual growth will be the inevitable result. And your life will begin to change!

In 1912, when the "Titanic" sank, among the 1,513 who drowned at sea was a prominent Philadelphia millionaire. He and his valet came strolling onto the deck amid the panicked passengers, both impeccably attired in their tuxedos. "We have dressed in our best, and are prepared to go down like gentlemen," he declared.

Yet, noble as it may be to die at

our best, far more important is living at our best! Truly great men are those who live by truly great ideals. They are never contented with petty purposes. Jesus challenged us to be true to the best we know. He didn't say, "Be you therefore polite, even as the pharisees in the temple are polite." He called us to the ultimate ideal: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." What a difference. Real spiritual growth is becoming Godlike!

But spiritual growth is not instantaneous. Jesus compared it to the planting of a mustard seed, the leavening of yeast in a pan of bread dough, and the ripening of crops in the field. Luke writes that Jesus himself "increased (grew) in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." His own spiritual growth took time; so will yours. The best way for a colt to become a horse is to enjoy being a colt: by prancing and frisking in the pasture, he naturally increases in strength, stamina, and stature. So it is with you: refuse to worry and despair over your spiritual growth -- worry and despair are in fact enemies of spiritual growth. Resolve joyfully to delight in the progress you have made instead of mourning over the progress you have not made. Maintain a childlike, trusting faith in God.

"Seek," Jesus exclaimed, "and you will find; ask and you shall receive; knock, and the door will be opened to you." Growth comes in the questing. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The Master emphasized that we must

positively and aggressively search for truth. He did not say "Wish and you will find." "Whine and you shall receive," or "daydream and the doors will be opened." You must turn to God with all your heart, and dedicate your life to the Father in utter faith. You will never find wholehearted spiritual joy in half-hearted spiritual commitment.

Have faith! As a son or daughter of the living God, you possess unsuspected spiritual possibilities. Astronomers have found that with our naked eyes, you and I can see only about nine thousand stars in the sky at most. But by means of cameras and telescopes, scientists count hundreds of thousands beyond. So it is with life itself: there is far more to existence than meets the eye at first glance: there is a spiritual dimension as well! Far from being a coldly mechanical, merely material universe, this cosmos is the starry Family of God, and you are a valuable member in it. The Father personally cares about you, and by seeking God's will and wisdom for your life, you can discover the enthralling adventure of spiritual growth -- day by day, and for all eternity beyond.

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The Family of God