

How to Find God When It Seems Like He's Hiding – Deuteronomy 4:29

As a college student I spent a summer studying in Europe. It was not only classroom lectures but also travel to various cathedrals, museums and historic places throughout Europe.

One of those stops was at the world famous Louvre in Paris. The museum is huge - - - big enough for weeks of exploration. But there is one piece of art I especially wanted to see: the Mona Lisa. Not only was this famous painting on the cover of the Louvre guidebook but it is probably the most famous painting in the museum. I wandered around for a long time looking for the masterpiece. I saw a lot of very good art. But I couldn't find the Mona Lisa, even with the map in my hand.

Finally, I did something many men are reluctant to do. I asked for directions. The guide said, "Right there," and pointed to a wall about twenty feet away. Sure enough, there was the Mona Lisa. It was surrounded by a large crowd and was not at all the size I expected it to be.

For many people the search for God is much the same. We look everywhere but it seems that he is hiding or perhaps blocked by a crowd of people who make him hard to find.

One such searcher was a university student named Todd Lake. He tells his story in a book entitled Finding God at Harvard. He starts his story talking about . . .

Religious truth. I had long viewed this as a classic oxymoron. Debates among devotees of the Buddha, the prophet Mohammed and the Christ seemed as pointless as junior high boys arguing about whose girlfriend was prettier.

Todd Lake declared himself an agnostic—that seemed like the most intellectually honest position. But he was open. I would call him a

searcher for truth more than a searcher for God.

His search took an unexpected turn when a visiting lecturer at Harvard asked him a provocative question: "What if Jesus Christ really had risen from the dead, vindicating his claims to be God in the flesh?" Todd Lake thought that was a stupid question, like asking, "What if Eleanor Roosevelt could fly?" But the lecturer wouldn't let up. He asked how this Harvard student knew anything from history was true. That led him on a serious search of the evidence. He discovered the amazing reliability of the New Testament witnesses. He raised every objection he could think of about the Bible, God and Christianity - - - but he did not close his mind or quit his search.

He was intrigued to learn about Old Testament prophecies made hundreds of years in advance. There were prophecies detailing the life of Jesus and prophecies about death by crucifixion before that method of execution was even invented.

Todd Lake searched with all the intensity and intelligence that won him his honors degree from Harvard College and admission to the Harvard Law School.

But, what if you or I want to find God? What should we do? Where should we look? Probably most of us would not

be as disciplined or as academic as this Harvard student, but there are some simple steps for us to consider.

First on the list is to believe a little. That may seem like a strange place to begin, but it is really the only place to begin. Anyone who has a completely closed mind about God would never begin a search or want to find him. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6 that "anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and

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that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

It doesn't take a lot of faith to find God. On a scale of one-to-ten, one is enough to get started. Doubts are okay. Uncertainty is completely normal. Maybe it is even enough to believe in the probability or possibility of God. It doesn't take a lot to get started, but there has to be a place to begin. My guess is that just about everyone has enough faith to at least get started.

Maybe we identify with one of the stories in the biography of Jesus. One day a man with a very sick child came to Jesus for help. Jesus sensed right away that the father who was asking did not have much faith. So he asked the question, “Do you believe?” This father was amazingly honest and his answer apparently was good enough for Jesus. He said, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.”

I've said that to God. I've told him, “I believe . . . but I know it's not much. Help me overcome my unbelief. Help me have more faith.”

To find God doesn't take a lot of belief but it does take a lot of desire. The Old Testament leader Moses had a lot of experience seeking God. Nearing his death he gave his best advice to his people and following generations: “. . . if you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

This makes sense. Few employers hire applicants who don't really want the job. Imagine getting called for an interview and saying, “Well, maybe I'll come if I wake up in time and feel like it. I'm just not really sure.”

The same goes for marriage. If the person you are dating doesn't have some strong feelings about you or getting married, forget about the wedding!

But who wouldn't want God? To know God is the greatest good in life. God gives the highest fulfillment. His is the ultimate relationship.

The French scientist and philosopher Blaise Pascal said that every person has a God-shaped vacuum that only Jesus Christ can fill.

God is worth finding, but you have to want to. I want to. That is my desire. But, what about you? Is it your desire to find God, know God and to experience God? Because if it is, the thing to do is to tell God you are looking. Jesus said,

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Pray a prayer much like one that thousands of others have prayed: “God, please show yourself to me. Help me discover you.” I am convinced that kind of a sincere prayer strikes a responsive chord in a God who wants us to know him and who wants a relationship with us.

I know of people who have prayed, “God, I don't even know if you exist or if I believe the Bible or anything about Jesus Christ. But, if you are real, I want you. Please, God, show yourself to me.”

God wants to be found by us; he wants to be known; he wants us connected to him. He is willing to start where we are . . . even if our faith is little; even if our sins are great; even if our knowledge is small. He delights to know that we want him. So, it is very good for us to get started by telling God we're looking for him.

Most often God does not answer this kind of prayer with an angel from heaven or a burning bush or a spectacular miracle. Usually he draws us to his Book. The Bible is God's story about himself and his relationship to people.

If you buy a new computer or VCR and call the 800 number to ask how to turn it on, probably the customer service representative will ask if you've read the instruction book. If you say, “No, but I'd like you to come over to my house and set up this thing for me,” the person on the phone will probably tell you to read the instruction book first. The company very well may send someone to your house if that really becomes necessary, but the book is the place to start.

The same goes with God. If he really needs to show up at your house or perform a miracle, he may actually do it. But start with the Book first.

God's Book is the Bible. It is an encyclopedia of information about God and life. If you've never seriously read it before, get started. If you don't know where to begin, don't begin at the beginning. The New Testament is in the back and is easier to understand than the Old Testament in the front. Start by reading the Gospel of Mark and then read the Gospel of John.

Read the Book and make a commitment. The front-end commitment is to seek God. But finding God *always* leads to another commitment. God always asks for everything. He never

settles for a percentage of our lives. He wants us to give total and complete allegiance to him . . . our hearts, our souls, our minds, our bodies, our time, our relationships, our possessions.

To be a Christian is more than discovering information about God. It is to experience God person-to-person through Jesus Christ. God took the initiative by sending his Son to die for us and raising him back to life as the ultimate proof of his power and his claims.

Actually, finding God may not be all that difficult. It is the commitment that so many

people find so hard to do. As much as we want God, God wants us even more!

What ever happened to that Harvard student, Todd Lake? Where did his search take him? Listen to his own words:

(One July day) "I knelt down in the kitchen of my family's home in Whittier, California, and asked the resurrected Jesus Christ of history to forgive me for what I had done to others and to God, and to come into my life and make me the person that God had created for me to be.

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Let me encourage you in your search for God. You will not be sorry. God is well worth the search.

Or, maybe you're through

searching. You're ready - - - ready to do like Todd Lake. If you are ready to fully believe and fully follow Jesus Christ, simply tell him now. Pray to God and ask the resurrected Christ of history to forgive your sins, come into your life and make you all God created you to be.

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