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THE LIFE GOD BLESSES

By Jim Cymbala

"As interesting as man's quest for God is, it merely *points to a far more significant search* that I want us to consider. That search was revealed long ago when God sent a prophet to deliver a message to King Asa in Jerusalem. Although the Lord was correcting Asa for his lack of faith and devotion, the prophetic word contained a declaration *that God himself was involved in a unique search!*

In describing God's love and desire to bless his people, the prophet declared a truth that is staggering in its implications: ***"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."*** II Chron. 16:9

God is on a search...**The Creator of all things is looking throughout the whole earth for a certain kind of heart.** He is searching for a human heart that will allow him to show how marvelously he can strengthen, help, and bless someone's life.

He isn't seeking someone with a high IQ or multiple talents, nor a clever speaker or person of influence. He revealed where his true interest lies when he sent the prophet Samuel to anoint the future king of Israel. God said, ***"Do not consider his appearance or his height...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*** I Sam. 16:7

A Huge Impression

When Jim Cymbala was about seven years old Howard Goss spoke at their church and left a big impression on his young heart. While in Manila to speak at a large church, Jim met Howard Goss's son who relayed this story to him about his father:

"I'll never forget one big camp meeting up in Canada when I was a kid. Every famous preacher was invited, and the crowds were tremendous. Our family arrived a day early, and the leaders were making out the schedule for the speakers. Meetings were held all day long—morning, afternoon, and night—and the visiting preachers all wanted to speak during the night rallies when the crowds were largest. The preachers actually jockeyed around, hoping to get the biggest meetings for their preaching assignments.

Suddenly one of the leaders asked where my father was. He was in the prime of his ministry and was highly respected by everyone. They wanted to consult with him, but no one seemed to know where he was. They finally heard that he was last seen in the kitchen and dining hall area, so I went with them to find him. They could scarcely believe their eyes when they got to the kitchen. There was my dad on his hands and knees scrubbing the floor with some of the other workers.

Brother Goss, they said, "What are you doing here? We're making out the preaching schedule and wanted to know your preference? Oh, brothers, my dad replied, you've got so many good preachers here that you don't need to worry about me. But I found out that they're short of help here in the kitchen so I thought I'd lend a hand.

Tears welled up in our eyes as the son reminisced about his father, whose godly heart had left such a deep impression on so many. My dad was sure different, Pastor, he said. He was the real thing. His heart was so humble before the Lord that he had a special power in prayer and preaching. The Lord was really with my dad."

God can be with you and me in the same way as we walk with humble hearts before him. Just as pride drives away the blessings of heaven and precedes certain failure, a humble heart is like a magnet that draws the favor of God toward us. The Lord really does dwell with certain people in a special way. He is there because of the resting place provided for him by their humble hearts. It is a kind of divine favoritism verified by the Word of God.

This is what the Lord says: ***Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.*** Isaiah 66:1-3

Let us humble our hearts before the Lord and seek his help and approval above all other things. Then by his grace we will personally experience the awesome power of his might as he surrounds us with blessings and favor. God will act in keeping with his promise: ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.***" I Peter 5:6 - Cymbala



The Heart God Revives

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Ps. 51:17

“A heart out of tune, out of sync with God’s heart, will produce a life of spiritual barrenness and missed opportunities. But as we ask the Lord to bring our hearts into harmony and in submission to his, we will find the secret of his blessings that has remained the same throughout all generations.” – Cymbala

Please use “**The Heart God Revives**” insert by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth to guide you as you set aside time to be with the Lord.

God Hears the Heart

“The HEART (WILL, SPIRIT) is precisely what God observes and addresses in human beings. He cares little or nothing for outward show. HE responds to the heart because it is, above all, who we are: who we choose and have chosen to be. What God wants of us can only come from there. He respects the centrality of our will and will not override it. He seeks godly character in us and for us, to fulfill the eternal destiny he has in mind for us.

But on the other hand, he is sensitive to the slightest move of the heart. This is the witness of both the Bible and of life. It doesn’t matter whether you are “religious” or not (“Jew” or “Greek”), for **“The same one is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”** Romans 10:12-13

When the inmost spirit of the individual who has no longer any hope other than God, God hears and responds without fail. It is as if he has a **“heart monitor”** installed in every person. And when the heart truly reaches out to God as God, no longer looking to itself or others, he responds with the gift of “life from above”.

In fact, God is constantly looking for people who will worship him “in spirit and in truth.” . . . people who have free-hearted and wholehearted admiration, respect and commitment to God as the highest being of all. God is actively seeking such people.”
– Dallas Willard

GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART . . . DO YOU KNOW HIS?

“When we discover the heart of the King, and when we are more attuned to His kingdom concerns, a closer acquaintance with the King has also resulted in more answers to prayer; after all, by better knowing His heart I’m praying more ‘answerable’ prayers.”- Batterson

“If we want to know the glory of God, if we want to experience the beauty of God, and if we want to be used by the hand of God, then **we must live in the Word of God.** Don’t settle for a causal relationship with Christ, be on a journey of radically following Jesus!” – Platt

We discover God’s heart when we read His Word. He desires to meet with us and we need it in order to align ourselves with His heart and mind. Someone once said that *we should know our Bibles so well that when we get to Heaven we won’t look like a tourist!* ☺

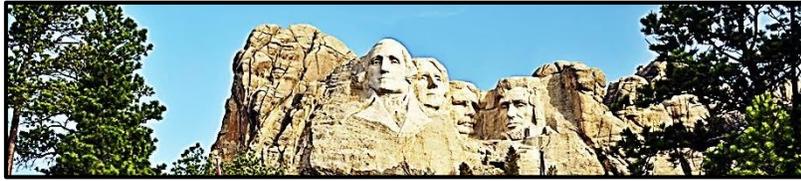
Let’s ask God to recapture our hearts! *“Help me to keep my eyes and ears open so I can know Your heart for this world! Keep my heart tender so that I don’t miss any opportunity to glorify You in and through my life.”*

TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path. Proverbs 3:5, 6

I want the Lord to direct my steps but why do I often insist that I know a better route? God knows the road we must take. He knows what lies ahead in the future. He is our GPS (God’s Positioning System). The Lord convicted me one day that I was putting more trust in my GPS than I was in trusting His direction for my life. **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path** (not a floodlight to my future!). Psalms 119:105. God desires for us to walk in daily dependence upon Him and His Word. He is pleased when we walk by FAITH (Fantastic Adventure In Trusting Him). *“God will give us what we ask for or He will give us what we would have asked if we knew everything He knows.”* – Tim Keller. God has a plan, a future and a hope for each of us with our name on it. Let’s walk confidently in that truth!

CULTIVATE A LISTENING HEART



“You could inscribe these words on the tombstones of many Americans: hurried, worried, buried. **We are the only nation on earth that actually has a national monument called Mount Rushmore.** And we can be so busy that we don't have time for God. I would like to go to church, but I am so busy this time of the year. I would like to pray, but there's so much going on — so many responsibilities. I would like to invest in the kingdom of God, but I have other financial commitments. People are so preoccupied with their lives and what they are doing that they don't have any time for God.” – Laurie

“We spend so little time waiting on God, waiting to hear the Holy Spirit's directives. God is speaking and communicating God, but someone must be listening on the other end. God's eyes still roam over the earth, looking for attentive, submissive hearts so he can show himself strong and mighty on our behalf.

*Isaiah 55:2-3...Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me that your soul may live. Let's ask God for the blessing of a childlike heart such as young Samuel had, so that when the Lord calls our name, we too can answer, **Speak, for your servant is listening.**” I Sam. 3:10
- Cymbala*

“When I'm praying the most eloquently, I am getting the least accomplished in my prayer life. But when I stop getting eloquent and give God less theology and just gaze upward and wait for God to speak to my heart, He speaks with such power that I have to grab a pencil and a notebook and take notes on what God is saying to my heart.” – Tozer

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Heb. 12:1-2

FIX your eyes on Jesus ... not a casual glance, not just a Sunday glance. I am FOCUSED on HIM! We often seek Him last, not first. “*We Facebook more than we seek His face. We text more than we study The Text. And our eyes aren't fixed on Jesus. They're fixed on our iPhones and iPads – emphasis on 'I'.*” - Batterson

Help me to seek you first, not second, third, or last. Too often I find myself gazing at my circumstances and glancing at Jesus instead of the other way around. Someone said: *A vertical focus will keep you from horizontal panic.* How true!

Helen Howarth, who wrote *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, responded with enthusiasm when asked how she was doing “*I'm doing well in the things that count.*” This, despite her infirmities, living on government assistance in a sparse bedroom at the end of her life. Helen's life was a testimony to the joy that is found when we fix our eyes upon Jesus.

Maybe it's time we sang that familiar song again: *Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*

A story is told about a young man who was looking forward to watching his team play in the Super Bowl. He was disappointed, however, when he discovered that he would have to miss the game due to his work schedule. He recorded the game so that he could watch it after work. On the way home he stopped at the store to pick up some snacks and while there he saw a friend who excitedly told him, "Wasn't that an awesome game -- our team won!"

"What's the use of seeing the game now", he thought to himself. But with snacks in hand and nothing else on the agenda, he decided to watch the game. It ended up being the most enjoyable game he had ever watched! Why? At half time his team was down by two touchdowns, but he didn't worry because he knew how the game ended! I've always appreciated this story because it reminds me that no matter what is happening at "half-time", we don't have to live in fear because we know how the story ends from the promises in Scripture!



DID YOU KNOW . . . that it is against the law to put anything in your neighbor's mailbox unless it has postage on it? I had been putting my newsletters in my neighbors' mailboxes unaware that this is **"against Federal law to put anything in a mailbox, on which no postage has been paid, and if caught doing so a person could be fined up to \$5,000 and an organization \$10,000."** I am not doing this again!

When I saw Tony, our mail carrier, coming down the street I told him I was just putting my newsletters in my neighbors' mailboxes. He told me it was against the law. I had no idea and promised I would not do that again! As we chatted, he told me he was retiring and that he and his wife were looking forward to this season and how they had spent a lot of time and money preparing for this. I told him I was thrilled for them. Then the Lord prompted me to ask: ***I know you have been planning for your retirement, but have you given any thought to planning for eternity?*** I shared how Jesus had changed my life and gave him a ***How to Know God Personally*** booklet. When he drove away, I thought: ***How ironic that I was talking to Tony about Jesus while unknowingly breaking the law!***



February 17 – Gary, who used to be our neighbor, has asked me to speak at the Celebration of Life ceremony for his mother, who would have been 100 on the 17th of this month. She passed away two years ago, and Gary wants to celebrate her life. I am humbled that he reached out to me after all these years to invite me to be part of this. God in His sovereignty has opened this door and I desire to be a light for Him to all who attend.

March 4 – Two years ago, I had the joy of hosting an all-day speaker appreciation event in my home for Stonecroft Ministry. Emily Firnstahl, who is on the Board of Stonecroft, will be leading our time together. We are planning a fun gathering using a birthday party theme since this is Stonecroft's 85th year. We will celebrate all the Lord has done in this wonderful ministry and for the privilege of being part of it as speakers. I'm grateful for the opportunity to host this for the 14 women who will be attending!



"Deep in my heart is the constant prayer that I would be a woman who consistently walks with God. I know that apart from Christ I can do nothing – at least nothing that is selfless, truly satisfying and eternal. To walk with the Lord is to be with Him consistently, to go with Him where He wants me to go, to let Him set the pace, and to delight in His companionship above all others. Lord, I don't want to go through life bothered and anxious. I don't want to eat haphazardly from Your table or give You the leftovers of my life. Sitting at Your feet is the good part of any day.

Give me an undistracted heart so that I will abide in You," - Heald

Sara