

# Finding God

## Introduction

In the recent film 'Prince Caspian', Susan asks Lucy why she didn't see Aslan. Lucy responds, "Perhaps you weren't looking for him".

This study is about looking for, and finding God.

## We can all find God

The Creator of the Universe has promised that if we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him!

*<sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD , "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)***

If we all looked for God with all our hearts, our world and life would be radically different.

## Wherever Jesus walks, supernatural things happen

Where Jesus went people were healed, the dead were raised back to life, lives were transformed, demons freaked out, and people got angry. Everywhere Jesus walked, supernatural things happened! We must realise that Jesus is still alive, and wherever He is, supernatural things continue to happen!

*<sup>20</sup>For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."*  
**Matthew 18:20 (NLT)**

When we gather together as Christians, Jesus is there by the power of the Holy Spirit! We can have full assurance that Jesus wants to move in power, still doing what He did when He walked on Earth 2000 years ago, right in the midst of us! So why aren't we seeing amazing miracles and life transformations like we read in the Gospels? Simple. We aren't really seeking God, we don't expect Him to show up and we aren't ready for Him to show up.

## We restrict Jesus' power

*<sup>1</sup>Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. <sup>2</sup>The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They asked, "Where did he get all his wisdom and the power to perform such miracles? <sup>3</sup>He's just the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family." <sup>5</sup>And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any mighty miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their unbelief. **Mark 6:1-6 (NLT)***

The above verses reveal some hard-hitting truths...

### 1. The people gossiped among themselves

*<sup>2</sup>...They asked, "Where did he get all his wisdom and the power to perform such miracles? <sup>3</sup>He's just the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." **Mark 6:2b-3a (NLT)***

### 2. The people took offence at Jesus

*<sup>3</sup>...They were deeply offended... **Mark 6:3b (NLT)***

### 3. The people refused to believe in Jesus

...and refused to believe in him. **Mark 6:3b (NLT)**

### 4. The people's sin restricted Jesus moving in power

<sup>5</sup>And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any mighty miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. **Mark 6:5 (NLT)**

When we come together as Christians, do we gossip? Do we carry offences in our heart against others, especially those in leadership? Do we really expect Jesus to show up? Do we realise that our sin, our lack of expectancy, and our attitude can and probably will hinder what God wants to do in our midst? Are we bursting inside with faith and expectancy that God will move? Are we searching for Him with all of our heart?

*"Dislike of enthusiasm is to quench the Spirit. Those familiar with the history of the church, and in particular the history of revivals, will know this charge of enthusiasm is one always brought against people most active in a period of revival"*<sup>1</sup>

## Places where we find God

### 1. In prison

<sup>22</sup>A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. <sup>23</sup>They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. <sup>24</sup>So he took no chances but put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup>Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! <sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted to him, "Don't do it! We are all here!"

<sup>29</sup>Trembling with fear, the jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>He brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

**Acts 16:22-30 (NLT)**

Paul and Silas, who, after they had been half-beaten to death and bound in a dungeon, were praising God! There was a prison-wide revival, because of two men who had expectant hearts.

Many people feel that they are in a dungeon, because of circumstances, addiction, sin (caused by themselves and/or others), and sickness. In the depths of despair there seems to be little hope, but have faith in God! Expect Him to show up. He can and will turn the prison into a place of blessing.

<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,  
and he turned to me and heard my cry.

<sup>2</sup>He lifted me out of the pit of despair,  
out of the mud and the mire.

He set my feet on solid ground  
and steadied me as I walked along.

<sup>3</sup>He has given me a new song to sing,  
a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see what he has done and be astounded.

They will put their trust in the LORD. **Psalms 40:1-3 (NLT)**

### 2. In the desert

<sup>10</sup>Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. <sup>11</sup>At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup>As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it.

<sup>13</sup>At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. <sup>14</sup>Your descendants will be as numerous as

the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. <sup>15</sup>What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised.”  
<sup>16</sup>Then Jacob woke up and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it.”  
<sup>17</sup>He was afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!” **Genesis 28:10-17 (NLT)**

We will all experience desert or wilderness times in our life, times and seasons where we feel all alone, with no one to turn to and no one who understands. We feel as though God is a million miles away and doesn't care about us.

**The truth is that God is there... we just don't realise it.**

<sup>16</sup>Then Jacob woke up and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it.”  
**Genesis 28:16 (NLT)**

Our desert experiences can become some of the most blessed times in our lives if we realise that God is there with us through it all. We must trust in Him and believe that He cares and is in control.

<sup>1</sup>O God, you are my God;  
 I earnestly search for you.  
 My soul thirsts for you;  
 my whole body longs for you  
 in this parched and weary land  
 where there is no water.  
<sup>2</sup>I have seen you in your sanctuary  
 and gazed upon your power and glory.  
<sup>3</sup>Your unfailing love is better to me than life itself;  
 how I praise you!  
<sup>4</sup>I will honor you as long as I live,  
 lifting up my hands to you in prayer.  
<sup>5</sup>You satisfy me more than the richest of foods.  
 I will praise you with songs of joy.  
<sup>6</sup>I lie awake thinking of you,  
 meditating on you through the night.  
<sup>7</sup>I think how much you have helped me;  
 I sing for joy in the shadow of your protecting wings.  
<sup>8</sup>I follow close behind you;  
 your strong right hand holds me securely. **Psalms 63:1-8 (NLT)**

### 3. In the street

<sup>1</sup>Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, <sup>2</sup>but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup>As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and Pharisees brought a woman they had caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.  
<sup>4</sup>“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”  
<sup>6</sup>They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. <sup>7</sup>They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, stone her. But let those who have never sinned throw the first stones!” <sup>8</sup>Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.  
<sup>9</sup>When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, “Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?”  
<sup>11</sup>“No, Lord,” she said.  
 And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” **John 8:1-11 (NLT)**

Many people found Jesus in the street. This verse tells us that the hypocritical religious leaders of the day realised their sin and left the scene. One woman, who had sinned big-time, found compassion and forgiveness in Jesus. Then Jesus instructed her to “Go and sin no more.”

Jesus can be found in the street today, in our everyday lives. Jesus chooses us to be His hands and His feet, to continue the work He started, to follow in His footsteps. I wonder how many times we have missed the opportunity to reveal Jesus to someone who desperately needs Him, just because of our own fear, self-centeredness, or pride?

#### 4. In the storm

<sup>35</sup>As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."

<sup>36</sup>He was already in the boat, so they started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). <sup>37</sup>But soon a fierce storm arose. High waves began to break into the boat until it was nearly full of water.

<sup>38</sup>Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. Frantically they woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you even care that we are going to drown?"

<sup>39</sup>When he woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Quiet down!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup>And he asked them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have faith in me?"

<sup>41</sup>And they were filled with awe and said among themselves, "Who is this man, that even the wind and waves obey him?" **Mark 4:35-41 (NLT)**

In the middle of the storms of life, Jesus is there, and He tests us to see if we really do trust Him with our lives, or if we begin to accuse Him for forsaking us. Jesus is ready to help us, to calm the storm, but first He wants to build faith and trust in His followers.

*"I will never fail you. I will never forsake you."* **Hebrews 13:5b (NIV)**

#### 5. In the House of God

<sup>2</sup>Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple.

<sup>7</sup>Then the priests carried the Ark of the LORD's covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim

<sup>11</sup>Then the priests left the Holy Place. All the priests who were present had purified themselves, whether or not they were on duty that day. <sup>12</sup>And the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers—were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets. <sup>13</sup>The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the LORD with these words: "He is so good! His faithful love endures forever!" At that moment a cloud filled the Temple of the LORD. <sup>14</sup>The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple of God. **2 Chronicles 5:2, 7, 11-14 (NLT)**

There are countless accounts from all over the world of God showing up in power as His people worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, with clean hands and pure hearts, seeking Him with absolute desperation. When we meet together to praise and worship God, are we really expecting to meet with the Creator of the Universe? I believe that if everyone who attended church was desperately expectant to meet with God there, the traditional church meetings as we know them now would cease to exist. God would show up and our world would be turned upside down.

*The famous Duncan Campbell described a meeting on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland during 1949. "The lad rose to his feet and in his prayer made reference to the fourth chapter of Revelation, which he had been reading that morning; "O God, I seem to be gazing through the open door. I see the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, with the keys of death and of hell at his girdle." He began to sob, then lifting his eyes toward heaven, cried: "Oh God, there is power there, let it loose!" With the force of a hurricane the Spirit of God swept into the building and the flood gates of heaven opened. The church resembled a battlefield. On one side many were prostrated over the seats weeping and sighing; on the other side some were affected by throwing their arms in the air in a rigid posture. God had come."*<sup>2</sup>

We must be careful that we don't put God in a box with what we think will or won't happen when God shows up. Many people believe that just because no one has been plastered to the floor by God's power, God

hasn't moved. Some of the most powerful encounters I have had with God have produced no such manifestations... on the other hand many of them have. When God is in the house supernatural things will happen, whether we feel it at the time or not.

### What happens when we find God...

## 1. Supernatural things happen

<sup>1</sup>On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. <sup>3</sup>Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. <sup>4</sup>And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. **Acts 2:1 (NLT)**

The experience of being baptized (saturated, submerged) with/in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in an unlearned language (tongues) is available to every Christian! I fully believe that we simply cannot live the great adventure of zealous Christianity (the way Jesus expects us to live it) without being continuously filled by God's Holy Spirit.

*"Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery, but be filled with the spirit."*  
**Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)**

The original rendering of this verse is to be "be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit". It definitely isn't a one-time occurrence only! We should be constantly seeking refreshing, re-filling, and re-fuelling by God's power!

## 2. We become painfully aware of our sin and frailty

<sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets, and you will catch many fish."  
<sup>5</sup>"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, we'll try again."  
<sup>6</sup>And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! <sup>7</sup>A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.  
<sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."  
<sup>9</sup>For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him. <sup>10</sup>His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.  
Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" <sup>11</sup>And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. **Luke 5:4-11 (NLT)**

When we have a divine encounter with God, we see ourselves the way we really are... Totally unworthy and ashamed. We feel too sinful to be in God's presence...

*... "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."* **Luke 5:8b (NLT)**

...But God accepts us and forgives us when He sees our godly sorrow and genuine repentance. He delights in taking our lives and commissions us for His glory!

*Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!"* <sup>11</sup>And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. **Luke 5:10b-11 (NLT)**

### How can we not leave our old life and follow Jesus too?

## 3. Healing, deliverance, and freedom happens

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Soon he became well known throughout the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup>When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. <sup>17</sup>The scroll containing the messages of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and he unrolled the scroll to the place where it says:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors,<sup>19</sup> and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”

<sup>20</sup>He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue stared at him intently. <sup>21</sup>Then he said, “This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!” **Luke 4:14-21 (NLT)**

Jesus is still fulfilling this prophecy today, 2000 years later. And He will continue to do so until time ends as we know it, because He is still alive and moving by the Holy Spirit in the world today!

## Meeting with God

Some people just aren’t willing to meet with God. As an analogy... imagine if I was to give you a gift-wrapped present. If you refused to accept and un-wrap the gift, there would be little I could do to force you. Similarly, if I was to knock on your front door... and you refused to welcome me in, I wouldn’t be likely to force my way inside, as I would feel totally unwelcome. It is the same with God, and receiving God’s gifts. We must be willing.

**Below are some ways to prepare ourselves to meet with God...**

### 1. Be holy

*Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. **Matthew 5:8***

I believe this verse is a promise to us that if we develop and maintain a pure heart before God we will have some phenomenal experiences with Him this side of heaven! When was the last time you spent time searching your heart and getting yourself right with God before you came to Him to worship?

### 2. Be humble

God despises the sin of pride, and shamefully many of us come to God, and expect to meet with Him, not with a humble attitude, but with a prideful one. We are concerned with how we look, our self-righteousness, our religiosity, we ignore the Holy Spirit’s conviction of attitudinal sin in our heart and prompting to repent, and then we wonder why our spiritual life is lacking. We must be humble if we are to meet with God.

<sup>7</sup>So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites. <sup>9</sup>Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. <sup>10</sup>When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor. **James 4:7-10 (NLT)**

### 3. Be hungry

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled!  
**Matthew 5:6 (NIV)**

We must be desperate to find God, hungering and thirsting for more of Him. Tommy Tenny, author of “God Chasers” says the following about desperation for God...

*“Who could look into the eyes of a teenager desperate for an encounter for God and look away, I know I couldn’t!”*

**How desperate are you to find God?**

## Conclusion

<sup>23</sup>After they were on the other side, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup>This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until dawn. <sup>25</sup>When the man saw that he couldn’t win the match, he struck Jacob’s hip and knocked it out of joint at the socket.

<sup>26</sup>Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is dawn."

But Jacob panted, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

<sup>27</sup>"What is your name?" the man asked.

He replied, "Jacob."

<sup>28</sup>"Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel, because you have struggled with both God and men and have won."

<sup>29</sup>"What is your name?" Jacob asked him.

"Why do you ask?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

<sup>30</sup>Jacob named the place Peniel—"face of God"—for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared." <sup>31</sup>The sun rose as he left Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. **Genesis 32:23-31 (NLT)**

When Jacob had an encounter with God, he would not let go of God until He changed him. And God did change him. God changed Jacob's identity, and God left him with a reminder that he would never be the same again.

We can have life-changing experiences with God, as Jacob had, if we are desperate to find Him. If we search for Him with all our heart, we will find Him. God will change us, and we will never be the same again.

<sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. **Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)**

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**References:**

1. Martin Lloyd Jones
2. Renewal Journal #7, Brisbane, Australia, pg. 8-18. <http://www.renewaljournal.com>

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