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To Patti's father, Lyle Hudson, a man of prayer and faith, who was called home before this book was completed, and her mother, Claire, a woman clothed with grace and dignity, this book is lovingly dedicated.

FOREWORD

“His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor” (Is. 9:6). When the woundedness of our souls cries out for help, what a blessing it is to turn to our Wonderful Counselor! When our lives are crippled by the bondages of fear and doubt, thank God for our Wonderful Counselor! When the world can only point to our past as a reason for the brokenness of our present, we yet have hope in our Wonderful Counselor!

Our heavenly Father does not expect us to live our lives on our own. He has graciously placed us within a body, a family, of like believers. He commands us to exhort, encourage, love and nurture one another. Whenever we give our advice or opinion to another, we are in fact counseling them, whether deliberately or not. How carefully we must guard our tongues that only the words of the Wonderful Counselor within us find their way past our lips!

A skilled and compassionate human counselor will often be able to help us see our situation from a new perspective. He may guide us to biblical principles which we have violated, resulting in our present dilemma. Through prayer he may discern the trauma of the past which has left a deep wound in our spirit. But though he may help us find the root of our problem, no human can provide the grace to over-

come faulty or sinful habits. No human can pour the balm of Gilead into a broken soul. Counselors who truly bring lasting change and deep healing are those who know how to lead the suffering one to the feet of Jesus where His touch makes all things new.

This small book does not contain the solutions to all of your problems. It does not provide a formula for healing. It does not give foolproof methods of restoration. What it does suggest is that the root cause of the vast majority of difficulties in our lives is losing sight of God and His working in our lives. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Conversely, it may be assumed that contamination of the heart prevents us from seeing God, and that seeing God purifies and heals the heart. Therefore, the message of this book is encouragement to you to meet with the Wonderful Counselor, experience His touch of compassion, and be made whole. It is only through divine encounter that our lives are changed forever. That is my prayer for you.

1

OPEN MY EYES, THAT I MAY SEE

God is reaching out to touch the hearts of His children. He wants to join their spirits with His, to breathe upon them the renewing life of His Holy Spirit. “Blessed are the pure in heart,” healed are their spirits, free are they to laugh and dance their way through life, enjoying God and the fullness of His creation. Free are they to love the brethren. Free are they to love themselves. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!” (Matt. 5:8).

If having a pure, healthy, liberated heart involves seeing God, then what does it mean to do so? Where can I look to find Him? Where might I see Him? The Bible offers an astounding array of answers to these questions.

In a Vision

One morning, the prophet Elisha was awakened by his servant with the frightening news, “A great army of horses

and chariots has surrounded us during the night. The enemy knows where we are and surely we will not escape. Alas, what shall we do?" What a great way to start the day! Alas, indeed! Do you know that this would be an easy morning to wonder where God is? It would be understandable if Elisha did not see God in these circumstances.

But what was the prophet's ("seer's") response? "'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (II Kings 6:17). In a moment the servant's perspective was changed. In a moment fear became faith, doubt became hope, depression became excitement. Why? Because he saw God!

Imagine for a moment the beloved apostle, advanced in years, bound and in exile on the isle of Patmos. Jesus had promised that He would return, but years had passed with no deliverance. John had given his life to follow his Master, and in return he was alone, far from home and friends, in prison. In the same circumstances, don't you think you might wonder what was happening? Would you begin to doubt that God was really in control?

But what was John's reaction? "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.' Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven and One sitting on the throne" (Rev. 4:1,2). When John looked, he saw God on the throne, still ruling, still in control, even in the midst of imprisonment, exile, and loneliness.

No doubt there were people sitting nearby who did not

see God. No doubt other prisoners and guards saw only the chains, the bars and the thick prison walls. Why was John able to see when others weren't? Part of the answer is found in the words, "I looked." If we are going to be a people who see God, one thing we must do is *look* with the eyes of our heart, in faith expecting to see Him and His movement in our lives and circumstances.

Stephen was another disciple who could have become angry with God. Stephen had also given his life for Christ and the service of His body. What did he get in return? Execution by stoning. He could have looked at the "disaster" which had come upon him and shaken his fist in anger at God. He could have given in to doubt and despair. God couldn't be ruling, or this wouldn't be happening to him.

Instead, Stephen kept his heart pure, and "being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:55,56). God was still in control. Jesus still loved him and was awaiting his arrival into glory.

One of the Old Testament words for prophet was "seer," referring to their ability to see into the spirit world. Christ has opened the veil that in the New Covenant we may all see what only a few caught a glimpse of in the past. As seers, we can see beyond what is obvious to our fleshly eyes to what is equally obvious in the spirit world. We see beyond the physical reality to the deeper spiritual reality which underlies it all.

In His Creation

Not only can we see God in the spirit world, we can also

see Him clearly in the world which He has created. “For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

The glory of God is revealed in the sunshine and the rain, in the trees and clouds, in the grass and flowers, in summer and winter. Not everyone sees God in nature. One may look out at the pouring rain and grumble, “I wanted the sun to shine today. Why did this have to happen? I hate the rain!” To another the sunshine is too hot and only adds to the burden of his labor. Yet to those who look, to those who want to see God, “His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature” can be seen in all that He has created.

In All Matter

Going a step further, not only can God be seen in the beauty and power of nature, He can be seen in every molecule of all matter. “In Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16,17). Even matter is alive, infused with the power and life of Almighty God. He is the force which holds all of the molecules together. Thus, when I hold this book in my hand, I can sense the sustaining power of God in it. Not that matter is God. That is pantheism. Obviously God is much bigger than this little book. He is the Creator of all. But all of matter is *infused* with God.

Do you remember what Jesus said when the Pharisees tried to silence His disciples as He rode into Jerusalem? “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!” (Lk. 19:40). Inanimate though they be, even the stones could be used to praise the King.

In Spiritual Growth

We tend to think that we are responsible for our spiritual growth. But God says that “by *His* doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30). Spiritual growth involves increasing righteousness in our daily living and greater sanctification or setting apart of our lives from sin. I can try to do that by my own efforts but it is only dead works, independent of Christ. True spiritual growth is the growth of Christ within me. I grow in righteousness by allowing Him to be released through me. It is not my responsibility to sanctify myself, but rather my response to His ability to do so (I Thess. 5:23,24). So even when I look at my own life, I can see my God at work.

In Circumstances

When things are going your way, it's easy to see God's hand at work in your life. When the boss gives you a raise, the car is running smoothly, the children are well-behaved and your wife cooks your favorite meal, how blithely you say, “God is so good! His hand is certainly upon my life!” But what about the day you're fired, the car breaks down (again!), the children are fighting, or worse, have left home to live a life you can't even bear to contemplate, your spouse informs you that she needs “more space to find herself” and your life lies in ruins around you? Can you still see God? Is God still good? Is His hand still upon your life? In the tragedies of life, can you still believe that Christ “works *all things* after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11) and further, that He “causes *all things* to work together for good” (Rom. 8:28)?

The nation was at war. The city lay under siege. Months

passed with no provisions. Starvation was rampant. Mothers were driven by the madness of the times to eating their own children. Could any circumstances possibly be worse? Could God still be caring for the nation that was His bride? Could He possibly cause the horror of war to somehow work together for the good of His people?

“Yes,” the prophet Jeremiah said. Yes, God’s hand is still upon you. Submit to the enemy, for God will use all that comes upon you to purify and cleanse our nation. A remnant shall come forth and through that remnant shall come the salvation of the world. Though evil seems out of control, yet I see God still on the throne.

In Everything

“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The pure in heart see God in the very breath that they breathe. They feel His strength in every muscle of their bodies. Christ is the Center and Circumference of everything. “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). He “fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23).

But how can we see God in all these ways? When my heart is broken, my faith shattered, my strength all gone, how can I see? Only by revelation. Only by the grace of God can we see control in the midst of chaos, love in the midst of despair, joy in the midst of sorrow. We must come to Him, empty of all our own efforts and pray that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we may know (Eph. 1:17,18). This becomes our constant prayer, to see differently than the world or our flesh see, to see with the eyes of our heart the reality of the world of the Spirit.

David prayed, “Open my eyes, that I may behold...” (Ps.

119:18). David's physical eyes were not blind. He could read the words of the Scriptures. But he couldn't *see*. His spiritual eyes were blinded by doubt or fear or sin. Only the power of the Spirit could cleanse his heart and open his spiritual eyes.

As two disciples walked the Emmaus road, life had lost all meaning (Lk. 24:13-35). Tragedy had struck. Jesus had been crucified, evil had triumphed, the healing love had ceased to flow, life had become purposeless. No longer could they see God. They were "separated from Christ, having no hope, and without God in this world" (Eph. 2:12). As they walked the long road home, they discussed the terrible disaster which had befallen them. Perhaps they discussed their discouragement and disillusionment. After all, they thought the Messiah had come who would deliver them from oppression. They had left their homes and families to follow Him. They thought it was going to be so wonderful, but instead it turned out awful. There was no Messiah, just empty wasted years following a wishful dream.

Suddenly "Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him." How often the same is true for us. Jesus is right there beside us, longing to comfort and heal, but our eyes are blinded by the brokenness within. And Jesus said to the two disciples, "What are you talking about?" Of course Jesus knew what they were talking about. He knows all things. So why did He ask? Because He wanted to draw them out, to have them express the thoughts of their hearts. Often Jesus will do the same when we dialogue with Him. He will ask us questions and we may want to respond, "But you know the answer to that. Why are you asking me?" But the beginning

of our healing comes when we pour out our hearts to God. Don't be afraid or ashamed to let out all your questions and angers, doubts and fears. You will not shock or offend Him. He wants you to bring every negative within your heart to Him that He may touch them and turn them into glorious positives.

But the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus Who asked them what they were talking about and they responded, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" He was the only One Who really *KNEW* what had happened! Everyone else only saw what happened in the physical world, but Jesus knew how the physical realm intertwined with the spiritual, how events in one caused responses in the other. Only Jesus found cause for rejoicing in the "calamity" of His crucifixion.

So the disciples poured out their hearts to the Stranger Who responded by explaining how suffering gives way to glory and showing by illuminating Scriptures that God's purposes were being fulfilled, even in the midst of seeming tragedy. How Jesus longs to do the same for you! He longs to open your eyes that you might recognize Him in the dark moments of your life. He wants to set your heart burning within you, exchanging your fear, guilt and anger for His glorious faith, hope and love.

Only God can transform the heart. Only by coming to Him will this purifying take place. Only by doing what the Emmaus disciples did can we be healed. We must not only pour out our hearts to Him but also listen to His response. When circumstances look bad and we wonder if things are out of control, He says, "Be at peace. I'm still on My throne."