
The Search for God

The search for God has continued throughout the ages. At first people queried, "What is God?" Then the question became, "Who is God?" and finally, "What is God all about?" And the exploration becomes ever more penetrating and probing today. We now pursue the inner essence of God, something extremely mystical and mysterious. Unificationists pose questions different from those asked in the past. What we explore and strive to accomplish is something most other religions do not even consider. Because their search is not as detailed or poignant as ours, some who misunderstand our intentions may consider us blasphemers. They cannot relate to what we are talking about when we share with them our deepest desire to meet God personally. Some Christians feel that Jesus does most everything and all a person has to do is pray a little in order to feel good. But since Unificationists have been given the Principle, we are not satisfied just to feel good. We want to penetrate the very heart of God, analyze all that we find, and then discover ways to fathom still deeper.

In a way, the nature of God is not all that simple. In fact He can be considered quite a complicated being, for the essence of God even dwells within sub-atomic particles. But on the other hand, He is extremely unpretentious and easy to understand. His nature becomes obvious once we become mature. Yet the *search* for God is often seen as problematic. Throughout history, numerous religions and cultures developed on the basis of their pursuit of God. Since countless books of theology and philosophy have been written, it would seem that He is indeed highly complex. But once you find Him, you can discard all those elaborate plans to excavate His character. The quest is over: you have met Him face-to-face.

Yet sometimes you turn your head the other way, and in your confusion feel He becomes complicated again. If you feel downhearted, you can no longer see or sense Him. Even when somebody reassures you of His presence, you still find it hard to believe in Him. As you climb the ladder of faith once again, you naturally come ever closer to God. Once you have ascended even greater heights and can survey how far you have advanced, you yearn to know more about Him. And then suddenly your exploration becomes simple once again.

I have journeyed this rarely traveled path in search of God. I can tell you where some of the rocky cliffs and swirling eddies are. I want to do my best to guide you over the mountain passes of doubt and away from the whirlpools of disbelief that could suck you in or even swallow you. I want to assure you that He awaits your arrival. Once you discover the entryway

to His castle, it will all become clear. It is only if you are in hell or near its borders that the exploration seems incomprehensible.

Even though an individual may tell you with conviction he does not believe in God, I feel that every person possesses an element of faith, even if he isn't vocal about it. If someone confronts you with such a statement, why don't you ask him, "In which God do you not believe?" His answer will reveal the level of his faith. Everybody believes in something. Some people may keep it a secret and feel that they disguise their belief pretty well, but I feel that in his own way, every person searches for this entity we call God and when he comes into trouble, yells for Him anyway.

Maybe the thought is subconscious, but I am convinced that people generally want to know what He looks like. Maybe those you meet have an intense longing to know what your God looks like. Tell them. You must have caught at least a glimpse of Him!

You can meet God by working on the frontline. To a Unificationist, the most easily discernible "frontline" involves the activities of either witnessing or fundraising. True Parents encourage us to engage in them in order to afford us the greatest benefits of spiritual growth. Through this kind of work both our character and heart are judged; we have the opportunity to experience the intensity of suffering both God and True Parents endure, and in turn cry tears of loneliness and misery for this unrestored world as they do.

Some people pray with fervor, "Oh, my God! Do You hear me? Do You still love me? Or have You changed Your mind?" Rest assured, He will never change His mind about loving you. But realize that God is on the frontline; if you have not met Him recently, examine yourself. Has your heart left the forefront? Some Unificationists who are employed in work other than witnessing and fundraising do not always engage in as intense a battle with Satan on a daily basis. Nor do they encounter the full extent of victory it is possible to win.

Many people could never imagine God's intimate involvement in history, and that He constantly resides on the edge of the conflict between good and evil. But if you want to meet Him, that is where you have to go. In fundraising work, both your life and your result are on the line every day. And without meeting God, it is almost impossible to survive. People persecute and even ridicule you. They may call you stupid and be angered by your commitment. You undoubtedly suffer. You may not even eat at regu-

lar times. And when you *do* take the time to eat, you usually need to eat all by yourself. Yet that is hard to do day after day. Tears may stream down your cheeks, and after the pangs of self-doubt rise and ebb, you could begin to rationalize, "Poor me! Nobody cares about me." Have you ever experienced that? Those are the times you can remember easily. And those are the times you really need to meet God. But haven't you also encountered the grace of God at such moments?

It is when we live by quite a normal and regimented schedule that we are not always conscious of our everyday activities, and one day comes to feel quite a bit like the next. Perhaps it is because we do not invite God to enter our life and live with us. That is when we come to live more on our own than with God. But it is when we work above and beyond the call of duty that we find God. Everyone strives to fulfill his duty, but what moves the heart of God is when we go beyond what is expected.

How is it possible to meet God if you don't work on the "frontline" activities of either witnessing or fundraising? The frontline is still the place of encounter. No matter what your work, you can make your *heart* the frontline. It takes more guts, courage, and spirituality, but it *is* possible to meet and live with God in the frontline of your heart.

God is the greatest reality. He was real before anything else became real. And He will stay real for eternity. When all of us are gone from this earth, God will be as tangible as He was in the beginning. Even though we keep our individual nature or uniqueness once we live in the spirit world, we have to meet God as our true identity—one cell of His being. In fact, we have to return to Him and become one with Him.

At the most unexpected times we may feel God bestowing His grace upon us. He is near even when we least expect Him to be and His presence has a way of simply overwhelming us. But on the other hand, we cannot *force* God to meet us. Feeling the love and grace of God does not just stem from desire. It depends upon the connection we make to Him through action. One way to perceive His presence and meet Him daily is to keep our senses attuned.

If we put God first in our life, our individual problems will diminish in intensity. But they can easily recur when we don't expend the effort to find fulfillment in this relationship of love; when we are self-centered, God has a much tougher time to communicate with us.

We have the desire to live with God: He has the same desire to live with us. And the impending question of "how" continues to reiterate. We hope to find a formula that would allow us to instantly reach our target, God. Once we begin to taste His love, we become desperate to discover any shortcut to meet Him. Yet if we continue to go our own way, compromise, and live more for ourselves than for Him, we will only zig-zag back and forth and go around in circles, continuing to approach God the same way mankind has done throughout history. The only real "shortcut" to God is to walk straight, but going that way is by far the most painful.

Have you ever experienced seeing someone cry and then felt tears run down your own cheeks? Empathy is very real. How do you feel when you gaze at a little baby yawning and napping? It is natural to feel paternal or maternal stirrings in your heart. Your heart may also be deeply touched when you see an old grandmother folding her hands to pray; you notice the lines creasing her face and realize her faith must have deepened through the years she bore her suffering and struggle. And when you see an accident, you might involuntarily sympathize and suffer along with those involved.

When your heart is moved, you can be sure that God is very near. In his inexperience and naivete a child cannot readily participate in such displays of human emotions because he does not comprehend that kind of affinity. And when we become childish through introversion and self-centeredness, we have a much more difficult time experiencing the heart of God or understanding and empathizing with either the emotions or the circumstances of the poor and the forlorn.

I think it is better to experience hell than nothing at all. People who are not impassioned by anything are spiritually impoverished. If you only observe life, your reservoir of experiences and emotions will run dry someday. Plunge in; live! It is through experiences of life that you can meet God.

We each experience a great internal struggle through living a life of faith. We long to meet God and want to perceive that He really loves us. We desire to be in accord with our Heavenly Father even though we still live in the world which Satan controls. His values have nothing to do with God's, but unfortunately we inherited them. Mankind became estranged from God and had to fight hard to discover His existence, and much of humanity is still not convinced that He is alive. Yet even since the time when man envisioned God as thunderbolts and lightning, he has been afraid of Him. Per-

haps it is because man does not trust that God loves Him. I feel that no matter how irreligious a person is, he knows intuitively it was man who walked away from God, not vice versa. And for that very reason, man's guilt often prevents him from reaching a real closeness with God. Yet there is a very deep longing in every person to experience the love of God. People might look for love in things which are so distant from God—such as free sex and shallow relationships built on small talk—just to satisfy that longing for love.

There is no way to perceive His love without searching for and meeting our personal God. We just waste our time if we continue to run away from Him or the responsibility that He gives us. The most foolish thing is going only part way to meet Him—being "half" a Unificationist, Christian, Moslem, etc. Being only halfway home will never be the same as being home. A person may have the goal of walking one hundred miles but if he only succeeds in walking fifty, he may yell down the last fifty mile stretch desiring to know if God is really there. God may hear him and try to reply, but the person most likely will not be able to hear His response. To come to God, we have to march through the desert. But a person in such a situation stands at the point of no return, in the very middle of the desert. He abhors the idea of going back to Satan but at the same time, resists coming closer to God. He belongs to nobody—neither God nor Satan.

Unificationists have the commission to assist True Parents in the restoration of the whole world. When God called us to this task, we acknowledged by committing our lives. If we already gave our life to God, how can we take it back? How can we reclaim even ten percent? By rights it belongs to Him, and is no longer ours. From that point on, we should listen only to His command. Once we give our lives to God and God tells us what to do, we should be obedient. We cannot divide ourselves, donating half to God and allowing Satan to keep the other half. God cannot accept such a stained and impure offering, and Satan becomes angered if our loyalty is not totally given to him. Yet if we search for God, meet and eventually live with Him, we have no choice but to leave Satan.

If you come closer to God, your conscience definitely becomes much more keen, and it will balance your intellect and emotions. By the results of your actions, you will see that God has been with you, and indeed answered your prayers. And you will see the consequence of His walk with you.

When you encounter God, you may feel embraced and almost

squeezed to death by Him. Like a cloak, His love may come down around your shoulders and gently caress your total being in its folds. Then you no longer breathe air, but rather your lungs are filled with the love of God.

Each of us should experience spiritual rebirth to some degree every day. Every time we sit down at our place of prayer, we should meet our bride or bridegroom—God.

Our heart is the Most Holy Place—the place where God can reside, and the place we encounter Him. One problem in attracting God is that many times our Most Holy Place is not kept as clean as our Holy Place. Our prayer area may be more clean and spiritually pure than the chambers of our own heart. We have to season our heart, preparing it for God's arrival. When we do, the meeting that ensues will be a very personal and precious one.

Too often we allow our emotions to become so twisted they almost strangle our heart. At such times we may be overly concerned about what others think of us. But what God thinks is much more important. Yet unless we prepare our heart, how can we connect with God? We have to cleanse and purify it so that it can serve as the altar on which we present our offering to God. For when He enters the heart, things begin to happen!

If you meet God in prayer, you definitely open up your heart to Him. And when the heart of God fills you and you feel appreciated by Him, you will reveal even more. The more love you receive, the stronger becomes your desire to be close to God. That is when a real relationship of love begins. You will want to serve Him and even die for Him.

It is important that we start by respecting and giving value to others, and on that basis, come to love them. That is the way we can also nurture our relationship with God. Of course it is a continuous thing, and it all stems from God's initiative. We have to relate to God by sowing seeds of respect, but the final revelation will spark within us in the most splendid and glorious love when we ourselves meet God.

If we really want to come to God, we must first cleanse the rooms in our heart. One way to do this is to make peace with every brother and sister and mend any heart that we personally had a hand in tattering. Even though we cannot accomplish that within the span of a single day, we can begin to heal any broken relationships through repentance. And we must

forgive anyone who may have trespassed against us. We ourselves need to ask for forgiveness for all that we did and all that we did *not* do. Unless we have a clear conscience, we will not be able to face God.

Free yourself of resentments. Apologize to the people you have hurt. Once you are free and clear, you can come before God. Apologize that you are still not perfected; He will forgive you. And your ultimate meeting will prove that your search was well worth the effort.

Our daily actions, thoughts, and feelings must be focused upon paying off our debts; we must satisfy Satan through our payment of indemnity so that he will agree to release us. If we want to come to God, we have to fulfill our responsibility toward spiritual laws, and toward God Himself. As we pursue God, we may be tempted to look for a painless way to restore our relationship with Him; unfortunately, it does not exist. If there was one, Father would have discovered it a long time ago.

One essential element in searching for God is maintaining a prayerful attitude throughout the day. Yet if we focus almost totally on horizontal relationships, we will not really be lonely enough to search for God. Living quite comfortably and making sure the necessities of life are taken care of could become an obstacle in our search for God. If we have no need to communicate with God, will we earnestly look for Him every day?

Do you recall the very early days of your life of faith? Remember the desperation to meet God you once felt? He still has that kind of yearning to meet with you, but how intense is it from your side?

Learn how to meet God. If you learn where and how you can find Him, then you will eagerly anticipate your encounters with Him. You will begin to feel real compassion for God and some emotional "juice" will begin to flow. But then who wants dry emotions?—God is a God of passion and deep love. As His children, we can be the same. Meet Him in your intense situations. You may find a beautiful juncture and realize that even at your loneliest moments, He is your companion.

Once you begin to comprehend and perceive the heart of God, you will be able to recall those experiences again. That is when you can make the contact and plug yourself into God. I find that to meet Him, you must both have life as well as life of faith experiences. If you can eventually plug into the socket of God without looking, but rather just by feeling, you will have far fewer problems.

Every human being is a part of God. Observing mankind can show us so many things about Him. We learn about God by studying a person—his soul, his heart, and even the quality of love he generates. We can find God in every person, but to meet the total God, we would face the task of getting acquainted with every individual throughout the entire world. Yet we want to find our *one* God. We want to talk to that one precious entity, not four or five billion people. If God is manifested in everybody's mind and heart, where can we find this one God we are talking to when we pray? We can start by looking within, and then we can lift our heads and begin to look around!

Why can't you pray? Because you are tense, clogged up. You say your heart is in a sephulcher and a stone blocks the entrance? Roll it away! As it was in Jesus' time, so let it be now. Confrontation can bring to the surface the same kind of tension in any of us. You are not the only one faced with such a problem. The way to meet God is to surrender yourself to Him; that action in itself will make you free and able to resurrect from your spiritual tomb. If you come to the point of total capitulation to God and are willing to do whatever He may tell you, you will have a tremendous encounter.

The important thing is to reach God. Yet to do so is not a matter of juggling knowledge or experiences. That will help, but if you are not able to feel the heart of God, then all the facts and figures you have stored within you have no meaning. Unless you sense what God feels for a person, you might destroy him. Your investigation into the God you love begins by meeting and embracing the person right beside you.

I remember one vivid experience I had with quite a unique aspect of God. It happened when I looked at the drops of rain running down the window of the car; I simply burst into tears. I felt I met God even in that simple moment.

We can see God anywhere and everywhere. Next time you walk through a street or the woods, be more fully aware that you can observe God all around you. Notice the number of manifestations of Him you previously overlooked.

In order to sustain our spiritual life, we need to have experiences

with God. We need reaffirmation of His love. If we meet God anew every day, we will know with assurance He is there. What are we waiting for? We have been called to work for God and humanity. And to do that effectively we have to be in constant communication with Him. Of course that will take some work, but we have to realize that our Heavenly Father has an even greater desire to meet us!

We must consider God's position as we pray. We must allow Him to remain on His throne and not pull Him down to the realm in which we live. Instead, we should prepare to elevate ourselves to meet Him.

We should begin our talk with God by telling Him that we deeply respect Him. We should offer Him the honor He deserves before expressing our desire to receive some blessing. And we should realize that when we go to pray, we go to meet the Absolute Being. It is with humility that we should approach the threshold of His heaven. God resides in the highest realm of the spiritual world; if we do not reach that level, we cannot touch Him spiritually.

Bring your relationship with God into everything you do. If you behave toward God in a certain manner, you should act the same way toward True Parents and the others who share your life. Whether we like it or not, our actions and habits reflect our spiritual standard. We cannot advocate a certain behavior and promise that once we live in spirit world we will abide by it, and yet act contrary to it while we still live on earth. Jesus says that what we "bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." We will be judged by what we do, right *and* wrong. If we behave correctly here, we will behave likewise in the spirit world. We cannot conduct ourselves wrongly and then expect to meet God. We must become upright, virtuous people—physically and spiritually.

Realize that despite all the difficulties in your search for God, you are so close to Him! He cooperates with you day and night. No doubt you are great friends. Accept the fact, but also do not forget that He is still the almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-powerful. You are a son or daughter of this almighty God; that is your most precious treasure. But since He occupies such a high position, even as a son or daughter, we must show appropriate respect and know how to behave in His presence.

If we start every day with that thought and maintain a sincere attitude, we will surely make progress. If we address Heavenly Father with esteem, many spiritual beings will join our chorus of praise and help us to meet God every day.

People from all walks of life pray. But on the whole, does mankind really understand the significance of prayer? Can we recall moments of heart-break when we were able to meet God in prayer? Based on our understanding of truth, we should be conscious of our ability to come close to the heart of God. Never before in history has this been possible. Never before in history has mankind been able to discover so much about the nature of God.

Throughout the ages people have prayed in much the same way they do today. Some people bow before God in public church buildings. Some bow down and whisper words of prayer in the darkness of night when no one else is looking. Moslems respond to the call for prayer by bowing before Allah five times a day. We praise Him as the Creator when we sit together and in our discussion unravel the many wondrous qualities of our Heavenly Parent. By doing this, we discover time and again that He is our beautiful, loving Father. We ourselves grow spiritually. We not only groom our hearts to meet Him, but we also prepare the red carpet that winds its way to Heaven, upon which others can walk straight to His throne.

Through my observation of human nature, it seems that at least in many developed nations of the world, addiction is becoming more widespread—addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, sports, and so forth. There is often group support available when one reaches out for a solution to these problems. In Western society support groups have formed for the thousands who have problems with addiction—from foodaholics to smokers. Drug rehabilitation centers and fitness clinics have been initiated; people seem to take great comfort knowing they are not the only one with a certain problem. But addiction is so rampant it penetrates every level of society; it points to the fact that people are hungry and desperately searching for something.

Today, far too many people have empty hearts. At this time, society can witness countless people turning to different objects of love just to make it through the day. The fact that people turn on the television again and again proves that they need a partner; they want to communicate with someone or at least watch other people do something they themselves long to do. But the question remains whether a person will confront others and the world by forming realistic relationships, or simply get lost in abstract, symbolic stories in which he never fully participates. It is usually fear that holds people back from doing things in real life and opt for a substitute.

Indulging in material pleasures will never bring any of us closer to God. Being popular may bring a certain sense of fulfillment, but it does not fill that chasm in the heart, or help stave off the waves of insecurity we may

feel when alone. What will assist us in going home to God and reaching perfection is silent service—serving others, not ourselves. That is, after all, exactly what God has been providing since the outset of creation. Addiction to certain gods can be displaced by new desires; we must develop a different motivation and after meeting the one true God, old obsessions can be replaced with a new one—an addiction to God!

You may talk to God in your desire to meet Him and ask, "Heavenly Father, please manifest Yourself. I'm looking up to heaven but all I see now is the sun and I am blinded by it. Please come forward and show Your face."

You feel that it is possible to use words to describe the face of God, but then discover it is difficult to formulate the ones that will evoke from every other person the same emotions you feel. Even in describing nature, someone will always notice things in a different light, with a different slant. Someone might focus on the brilliant and muted color scheme, while another person will describe the wildlife. Still another would talk about the way he feels when he gazes at the particular scene. A description is clearly only a substitute; you have to see something for yourself.

If you meet God personally, you will know what He looks like. But even after you meet Him, you may still have a difficult time to convey that to others. Each one of us has to meet Him personally.

In his speeches, Father describes God and the qualities of a true man. He has used multitudes of examples, but still we do not totally comprehend. All the descriptions are piled in books of words and although we may read and re-read them, each one of us is much more excited about the possibility of encountering God personally. And so we continue our own quest. Although we can help each other by sharing our individual experiences with God, we each must meet Him personally. We must fall in love with God and find our own harmony with the Eternal.