

*Chapter One*

## **Encountering God in Difficult Times**

*Wishing God's direction came with directions*

## **Why is God interested in you?**

*Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”*

Luke 10:23–24

### **SITUATION EXPLAINED**

What is Jesus thinking? Why me? Why you?

### **SOLUTION OFFERED**

Certainly there are more talented people on this earth, Lord, so why me?

I cannot count how many times I have uttered the above statement in prayer. Can you relate? Do you ever wonder why Jesus takes an interest in you? Maybe you don't think that He does, but you're wrong.

Whether or not you can see in yourself what He sees in you has no bearing on whether or not God loves you. He does. Your shortsightedness also has no bearing on whether or not He has a plan for you. Once again, He does.

Throughout the centuries there have been people well-suited to follow God and well-equipped to lead people, at least in the opinion of society. But those people were not always the ones whom God chose to speak on His behalf.

Many of our great biblical figures—Joshua, David, Esther, Jeremiah, Mary, John and Timothy—were quite young when God called them. Others were young at heart: Noah, Abraham, Sara, Moses, Ruth, Isaiah and Elijah.

There were talented leaders in the time of Jesus whom He could have chosen to be His followers: educated people who were good speakers, charismatic and holy people. But He chose His group of fishermen, tax collectors and rebels. They weren't perfect, but they were passionate, hardworking and humble.

Why does this matter? Well, because it shows that worldly stature means very little to God. He does not measure our worth by age or by accomplishments. Zip codes, bank accounts, brand names and job titles mean little to Him. He reveals Himself and works through the smallest and meekest people He finds.

The fact that you're reading this book is proof that you are active in your faith walk. That is very cool. God has a plan for you. He is calling you to a mission that only you can fulfill in this world. You have the option of answering it or ignoring it. It's your choice.

You don't have to be the smartest, the funniest, the coolest or the most popular person in order for God to use you; you only need to be willing. God can accomplish more with your imperfections than the world can with its perfections. God does not call the equipped; He equips the called.

Today praise God for your imperfections, for those areas in which you feel that you are lacking. That's right, embrace them. Just because you aren't great at one thing doesn't mean you can't be great at something else, and that may be where God wants to use you this day.

One of my heroes is Blessed Pope John XXIII, who was known for his amazing love and sense of humor. On becoming a bishop he wrote to a friend, "Where there are no

horses, donkeys will do.” He knew that while he might not be the most handsome or the strongest, God apparently felt he could get the job done. And that was right. He went on to become pope, and he changed the church forever.

Pope John XXIII understood something that I often forget when I am muttering the “Why me, God?” question: God knows exactly what He is doing. He created me.

He created you too, and He thinks the world of you—so much so that He stretched out His arms and died for you. His hope is that you join Him back at home in heaven, but not before you have told others about how much He loves them too.

#### **SALVATION GIVEN**

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Luke 10:23–24

Jesus, thank You for always seeing in me more than I see in myself.

## **Does anybody understand God?**

*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

1 Corinthians 1:25

### **SITUATION EXPLAINED**

Ever wonder why God does the things He does? Why does He allow certain things to happen?

### **SOLUTION OFFERED**

There is one period in my life when I had a real problem with God. I couldn't understand why He made certain things happen in my life. How could a loving God let these things take place?

It was easier to point the finger at God when things went wrong in my life than it was to point the finger at others, at the devil or even (God forbid) at myself. Looking back, the truth is that I was angry because God's will wasn't matching up with *my will*, and I didn't like that. I wanted things my way all the time, no questions asked.

I wanted God to be more of a genie than a creator. When things didn't go my way, no matter the reason, it was easy for me to believe that God didn't love me.

I still need to quit second-guessing the artist. I need to quit trying to be the painter and just be the brush. Maybe this is a lifetime process.

That's the essence of what Saint Paul is trying to get at in this verse to the Corinthians. We can get so wrapped up in our own lives, problems, worries and struggles that we lose sight of the bigger picture, the picture that God, the Creator of all, is painting for us.

This verse reminds me that no matter how smart or self-

aware I think I am, my tiny human brain cannot even begin to comprehend the vastness and complexity of God's mind. No Ph.D., no supercomputer, no billion-dollar satellite system, will ever come close to scratching the surface of the wisdom of God.

The beauty of this situation is contained in the second part of the verse. When I'm too shortsighted to see beyond myself and my immediate problems, God is there to share His strength. When I feel as if I just want to quit trying or abandon prayer, He is there. He's wise enough to see through what I want and focus on what I need, even before I realize that I need it.

**SALVATION GIVEN**

*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

1 Corinthians 1:25

Socrates said, "True knowledge lies in knowing that we know nothing." For a guy who wore a toga all year long, he was actually pretty bright.

## Got faith?

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*Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."*

John 4:48

### SITUATION EXPLAINED

Do you have faith? If seeing equaled believing, Christianity would be easy.

### SOLUTION OFFERED

There is something to be said for the power of words, especially God's. *Faith* is one of those words that can be easy to speak about but almost impossible to explain. Words can be that way sometimes.

Certain words sound the same as other words but mean something very different:

I'm sure you have *read* about the *Red Sea* in the Exodus account of Moses' leading the Jews out of Egypt.

And the *prophets* found that there were no *profits* to be made in speaking God's word. Picture it: *mourning* every *morning*, walking around in a *daze* for *days*.

You've heard the story about the birth of Jesus and the manger. It's because of *Him* that we have the *hymn* "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Now, be sure to join in that *hymn*, because Saint Augustine said about *praise*, "The person who sings *prays* twice."

I wonder if the Magi were *thrown* when they found the king not on a *throne* but in a manger. I wonder how soon they realized that they were not *there* because of *their presents* but for His *presence*.

The folks on the *scene* at the wedding feast in Cana couldn't believe what they had *seen*. Mary didn't *whine* for

the *wine*; she simply informed Jesus of the situation. Though He said it wasn't His *hour*, He would never deny *our* Mother. Jesus *knew* where the *new* wine came from.

The events of Holy *Week* show that Jesus was anything but *weak*. *Would* you carry the *wood* that our Savior did? His *sole* purpose was your *soul* and those of your brothers and sisters. He said that He would *raze* the temple, and God did *raise* His *Son* under the *rays* of the *sun* that Easter morning. The *sight* at that *site* in the garden was so beautiful that all of the Gospel writers would *cite* it. Jesus is the *One* who *won*.

And now at Mass it's in that ordinary *piece* of bread that you will find your *peace*. We are *wholly* different after Communion: we are *holy* because of Jesus' presence. What happens on that *altar* can *alter* us in ways we cannot imagine.

You see? Words carry meaning and power, and sometimes we need to think about more than their sound.

While God's Word might sound familiar, there is often a deeper meaning that He is trying to communicate to our hearts. Faith is not about what you see with your eyes but what you see with your heart.

Faith in God isn't wrapped up in an extravagant package; it's a simple gift wrapped deep within you and within me. Faith is a gift from God, a gift that speaks to the heart more than to the eyes.

We are no different from the folks back in biblical times. They too saw amazing things that they couldn't explain. Some were open to faith and followed; others weren't and didn't.

You have more faith than you realize; we all do. It is an untapped power source that became imbedded in you dur-

ing your baptism. Tap into it, and trust in it.

Jesus is our doctor, waiting to heal us; He is the surgeon for our souls. But we are not just *patients* waiting to be *billed*. Through God's grace we gain *patience* so that we can *build* the city of God within the city of man.

### **SALVATION GIVEN**

*Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."*

John 4:48

Have faith in Him. He has faith in you.

By the way, be sure to live a *chaste* life if you want to be *chased* by Mr. or Miss Right.