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FOUNDATIONS FOR FAITH

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The Roads to God are Clearly Defined

The Natural World Reveals His Greatness

The Moral Order Undergirds His Wisdom

Great Souls Show What God is Like

The Seeker is Rewarded

Conclusion

Affirmation

BELOVED PERFECTOR:

In your last Lesson, Spiritual Foundations for Daily Living, we were shown how the foundations for triumphant living are made available to us, and it is my hope that you have daily used the Affirmation, "I will listen to the voices of the spirit; I will seek always the highest and the best."

If you have not done so, then please reaffirm this thought, in meditation with me, as we now begin our study of "Foundations for Faith".

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Man at his best needs help beyond himself. The strongest of men look upward as well as inward and outward. This area of our thinking is often clouded. As Milton, almost blind, looked through the storied windows of a cathedral and saw only a faint light shining through, so it is that many of us see only dimly when we try to pierce the mystery of God's nature and works.

The search for an understanding of God's nature is universal. As Sabatier, the eminent French philosopher expressed it, man is incurably religious. In searching for the eternal the highest churchman and the humblest seeker kneel together. It is part of God's plan that the most learned philosopher has no avenue to Truth which is not available to the earnest pilgrim who has a sincere desire in his heart to know Him.

Different titles are chosen when addressing the Deity, but the quest is the same, whether the name Allah, Jehovah, Great Spirit, or Jesus is used. Efforts have been made by certain individuals and nations to stifle the religious nature of man, but they have always failed and they always will fail. There is something deep in the nature of all of us that makes us want to know the Divine,

and which makes us know that we need a power beyond the human.

People of every age have struggled to know more about God. David of old reflected something that is in all of us when he cried: "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Centuries later, Augustine, after years of struggle with the evil forces in his life, declared: "For thyself, O God, thou hast created us, and our hearts know no repose until they rest in thee."

Daniel Webster, a giant in intellect, was as humble in worship as he was proud on the public platform. When he was asked to name his most sublime thought, he answered: "The thought of God and my relation to Him."

Robert G. Ingersoll gave his life to a crusade designed to ridicule faith in a Divine Being, but when he stood beside the grave of his beloved brother, he cried: "Hope saw a star and listening love heard the rustle of a wing." Whatever man is, or wherever he may be, he shares with all of humanity a desire to know God.

This quest is yours. In your nobler moments you feel an intense desire to know more about the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The assurance of this Lesson is that you can both seek and find. It is God's will for you that you should know Him, and receive from His hands the wisdom and strength by which your life can be transformed.

Both an open mind and an open heart are essential if you are to gain the goal you are striving to reach. Keep in your mind the thought that others have made the journey to faith, and have reached their goal. As you begin the study, remember the ancient words which have a contemporary urgency:

"IF WITH ALL YOUR HEART YOU TRULY SEEK HIM, YOU
SHALL SURELY FIND HIM."

Let the Prayer that follows be the expression of your hopes and desires:

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PRAYER

Gracious God, I bow before the mystery of Thy Creative Greatness and Thy Power. I want to know Thee better. I eagerly desire more of Thy Truth. Give me strength to put aside every weakness that blinds me to Thy Presence. May I walk the path that will lead me to a fuller understanding of Thee, and of Thy Will for my life. Then give me strength that I may go forward in Thy ways. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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THE ROADS TO GOD
ARE CLEARLY DEFINED

It is helpful for us to consider the different roadways men have traveled in their quest to know God, and the revelations of His nature that have appealed most eloquently to

the hearts of men. The cry of one of Job's friends, when a triple disaster befell him, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" is still the cry of millions of men.

Our ideas of God change with the passing years. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define the Deity in words. There is a reason for the idol worship that characterized primitive people. Intellectual concepts such as truth, beauty, and love mean little to darkened minds, but symbols of such eternal verities awaken feelings of reverence. As our thought of God expands we find ourselves handicapped by the expressions that are purely material. He is a Being "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." There is a vast difference between the Moses-like God of our early childhood and the Ultimate Reality of our adult years. Our first Biblical picture of God represents Him as a companion of Adam in a garden at eventide. Moses spoke to Him face to face, seeing Him in the form of a human being. These pictures are helpful, but they leave us bewildered when we try to relate such a Being to the Creator and Sustainer of the vast universe in which we live.

Our knowledge of God has been enriched by the lives and teachings of many great religious leaders. The Christian religion is not the only religion, but it is the one faith that gives us our highest conception of God.

Let us begin by considering the insights that have been central in some of the other religions of mankind. Islam emphasizes God's ruling sovereignty. The followers of Mohammed extend his kingdom by fire and the sword; but there is still much to admire in this faith, which is growing faster than any other religion. These followers are also referred to as Moslems. They believe in prayer, and bow to Allah five times each day. Temperance is observed.

The God of the Moslems, however, is small by Christian standards. Allah has no quality of mercy, no willingness to forgive. Nor is he the constant source of power for daily needs. He is far removed from those who worship him.

Buddhism is a religion of negation, with no hope of the hereafter. When life's candle burns out, its flame is gone forever. There is no concept of the patience and kindness of the Creator, nor does it include any challenge to feel deep pity for the poor and the needy. Buddhism teaches that there are three major sins: sensuousness, a desire for immortality, and a craving for material things. The supreme goal of the faith is to enter Nirvana, the state in which all human desires are completely suppressed.

The philosophy of Confucianism includes more ethics than religion. Many of its teachings possess genuine beauty. Its founder, Confucius, did a great deal to encourage respect for ancestral relationships and respect for the dead.

The world will forever owe a debt of gratitude to Judaism, for it was Judaism which gave mankind its first concept of one God, and the brotherhood of all men. It is strange that the people who gave us the idea of human brotherhood have often been treated as outcasts. Jewish literature has a universal appeal. The songs of Moses and David continue to inspire men in every generation; the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea challenge all of us to ethical conduct and social responsibility.

Hinduism is a collection of many beliefs, some noble and some degraded.

It is permeated with ideas of demons and devils. There is beauty, however, in its conception of God's immanence, or presence everywhere. Rabindraneth Tagore, the renowned poet of Hinduism, was one of the great spiritual figures of this century. So, too, was Ghandi. Both of these distinguished men of faith demonstrated the manner in which Hinduism tends to absorb the values of other religions. Both owed a great debt to the Christian faith.

You can learn a great deal about God from religions other than your own. Most of all, you will discover that the quest to understand the nature of the Divine is universal. All men have it.

You can be grateful that you have grown to maturity in the stream of thought that represents the noblest concept of God mankind has ever known. Do not regard this treasure lightly. Use every opportunity to add to your understanding of the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

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THE NATURAL WORLD REVEALS HIS GREATNESS The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, declared that the two greatest proofs of God are the starry heavens and the moral order in man. You may be impressed by your small place in God's universe when you consider that you are one of over three billion people on this small planet which is called the Earth. But, think beyond that to the fact that the earth is only one of nine planets orbiting the sun, which in itself equals 1,300,000 worlds the size of the one on which we live. Then think of the sun as only one of the two billion stars in the galactic system of which we are a part.

We are moved to awe when we consider that we are only one three-billionth part of our little world, which is itself only one two-billionth part of God's known universe! The magnitude of the average star equals that of one thousand worlds such as our own. Such stars are so numerous that an adding machine, counting one each second, would require seven hundred years to complete the task.

One star, Betelgeuse, is twenty-five million times the size of the sun. Nor is that all. Our galactic system is only one of two million known systems. The two hundred inch telescope on Mt. Palomar brings knowledge regularly of other systems heretofore unknown to man.

The human mind is unable to conceive of celestial distances. Compared to the size of our known universe, the projected flight of astronauts to the moon is no more than a rowboat crossing a small pond. Astronomers tell us that light comes from the moon in one and three-tenths seconds, and from the sun in eight minutes and nineteen seconds. By comparison, there are only thirty stars whose light reaches us in thirteen years or less.

The orderliness, as well as the immensity of the universe, awes us. That its countless units should move with clocklike precision awakens our constant wonder and increasing reverence.

History confirms our faith that, though wrong be for a moment on the throne, and truth for a while on the scaffold, Truth will triumph! There is a moral order in the universe and God still rules, though clouds sometimes obscure His face as they often hide the highest mountain peaks.

The mosque of Saint Sophia in Istanbul ranks in beauty and splendor with the great churches of the world. Built by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, it was a Christian Church until 1493 when Mohammedans captured the city and made it a mosque. Every attempt was made at the time to remove all paintings of Christ's life, and even the ceiling was gilded to remove the scenes depicted there. But a strange thing has happened through the years. On the tympanum of the apse there was painted nearly fourteen hundred years ago a picture of Christ on a throne, with a king kneeling to lay his crown at the Master's feet. Year after year that picture has been gilded and regilded by Mohammedan command, and yet it always reappears. The hand of man cannot permanently destroy it. For a time it is hidden, and then it comes back to life!

This is a parable of the manner in which the laws of God are often ridiculed and neglected. Yet they cannot be ignored. It is fashionable in some psychological circles to declare that consciousness of sin is the greatest barrier to happiness; that men would be released from bondage if only they did not have feelings of guilt. The foolish endeavors of those who would disparage honesty, purity, and loyalty must inevitably end in failure. There is a sense of right at the heart of the universe. Nothing man can do will ever efface it, for it is God at work in His world.

The mystery of God's nature and works are comprehended as rapidly as we are able to understand them. We sometimes wonder whether we are yet ready for some of the wonders of the universe and of human nature which have been revealed to us, for we are but infants in His sight.

All around us and within us there are evidences of the work of an Unseen Hand. We may fail to recognize them, but they are there just the same. As the atmosphere around us is filled with the sounds of music sent out by the radio transmitter, so the world around us is filled with notes divine, and whenever we tune in we can hear them.

Be alert to the Divine promptings within you. God is available. He can be known. You are never left without His witness.

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GREAT SOULS SHOW There is no other explanation for the lives of certain individuals
WHAT GOD IS LIKE except that God's hand has touched them and contributed
to building them into what they are.

A study of history shows the Divine workings of a Creative Mind. In the fifteenth century men were bogged down. It was time for something to happen to humanity when Columbus was prompted to sail in search of a new world. As his first act, on reaching land, Columbus offered thanks to God. He was convinced that God's hand was in his mission.

Roger Babson told of a visit to a Southern American capitol and of the questions put to him by the head of the government. "Our climate", he said, "is as salubrious, our soil is as fertile, our rivers as numerous as yours. Our mountains are packed with equally rich minerals. And yet you to the north excel us. Why?" Then he added, "I know the answer. The men who first went to North America were in search of God, while those who first came here were in search of gold. Therefore, God has blessed more abundantly those who tried to serve Him."

The inspired and dedicated lives of the heroes of every age point to a Divine Hand at work in the universe. We see the promptings of God's spirit in acts of heroism, and in the results of research. If you are awake to the realization of His laws at work in your mind and heart, God can give further revelations of His concern for men through you. You will be enabled to know Him better, and others will be enriched by the witness.

The highest revelation of God is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ said of himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It was Clement of Alexandria who declared, "God, through Christ, became like man, that man, through becoming like Christ might become like God."

If you desire to know what God is like, study the personality of Jesus. If you are anxious to know the attitude of God toward the hungry, watch Jesus feed the five thousand. If you wonder what is the response of God to childhood, see Jesus as He blesses the little children. If you wish to know God's reaction to man's social needs, look at Jesus at the wedding feast. If you long to know the attitude of God toward the evil in your life, listen to Jesus say, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." If you aspire to know what God thinks of government, hear Jesus say: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The attitudes of God toward His children are perfectly reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus.

The New Testament pictures the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth in terms that attract the interest and admiration of men in various walks of life. To the keeper of flocks, He is the Good Shepherd. To the farmer, He is the Sower who went forth to sow. To the botanist, He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. To the geologist, He is the Rock of Ages. To the architect, He is the Firm Foundation. To the gardner, He is the True Vine. To the student and teacher, He is the Great Teacher. To the astronomer, He is the Sun of Righteousness, as well as the Bright and Morning Star. To the person who is stumbling in darkness, Jesus is the Light of the World. To the one who is hungry, He is the Bread of Life. To the man or woman who is ill, He is the Great Physician.

Christ revealed God as a Universal Father, and all men as His potential sons. No other name for the Divine so appeals to finite man as God the Father. God the Creator and God the Eternal Judge often seem too far away from where we live. But when we think of God in terms of Father, heaven and earth are drawn close together.

Do not miss this high privilege of knowing God as He was seen in Christ. He will not thrust Himself upon you. Finding and knowing Him is the result of your need and desire. Leigh Hunt painted an immortal picture of Christ at the door, where He stands and knocks in quiet waiting. A child once asked his father why those inside did not answer the knocking. When the father hesitated, the child

said: "I know why they don't let Him in! They are down in the cellar and cannot hear His voice."

We are often in the cellars of our lower selves. There the voice of God cannot be heard.

From a spiritual standpoint, many of us spend our lives on the level where God remains unknown, for His voice is drowned out by self-interest or materialism. If we are alert and eager, we are able to hear His voice, and know His eternal love as seen in Christ.

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THE SEEKER There is a technique in winning this victory. It demands, not so
IS REWARDED much activity and struggle, as acceptance and fulfillment. The late
 Dr. Richard Cabot, an eminent physician of this century, said:

"There is a technique in finding God. First of all, relax. Throw yourself into the arms of God. Any hunter will tell you that, when listening for game sounds by day or night, you must be at once relaxed and concentrated. Overanxiety will fill your ears with imaginary noises; lack of concentration will degenerate into drowsiness. To the hunter listening for moose both are alike fatal to success. It is the same with the eye strained to distinguish a distant object. If the eye muscles become rigid the eye will not focus. So with the soul when listening for 'the still small voice'; you must be completely relaxed, but not drowsy; perfectly intent, but with an open, almost vacant mind. Lying flat upon your bed without a pillow in the early dawn is a method in common use. Many of us have found help by following this plan."

The method you follow in the quest to know God may differ somewhat from the one Dr. Cabot suggested. You may release your tension and acquire a receptive attitude while walking, instead of lying still. Or you may sense God's presence most clearly while busy at some routine task. It is not the posture that is important, but an attitude of expectation combined with confidence in God's continual concern and guidance. Whatever method you decide to utilize it must be built upon a genuine desire to know God, and upon a willingness to "wait on the Lord"; that is, to open your mind and heart to the promptings of God's spirit.

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CONCLUSION

As you search for God you will find Him in the wonders of the Universe, in man at his best, and most of all in the person of Christ. The seeking is for you to undertake, and the finding is God's gift.

Life has more meaning when God is a vital part of your thoughts and actions every day. You will grow in knowledge of your Heavenly Father when your spirit is eager and ready to receive His revelations.

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AFFIRMATION

Recognizing that I need vital faith if I am to live at my highest level, I am determined to seek every opportunity by which I may know Him better.

Blessings,

Your Instructor.