

## Chapter 1

~Welcome ~

*“But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe.”*

- C.H.Spurgeon

*The Heart of God revealed ~*

*My Take ~*

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*The Heart of God revealed ~*

Know what's in the heart of God?

**- You.**



That's right; **You** are in the heart of God. God knows your name, your weight (aggh!), your history, your hurts, and your heart. God knows what makes you tick. He knows what you ate for breakfast this morning. He knows what you love and what you hate. And, He knows how you got that way. He knows your parents, and siblings, and friends. He knows the dog who greeted you on your way to school every day, and the stuffed bear you cuddled with to dry your tears. He knows the great job or friend He plans to give to you next year. He knows when and where you were born, and when and how you'll die. He knows how many hairs are on your head, (and on your knuckles!). He knows what you want, and even more importantly He knows what you *need*.

### **So welcome to the heart of God - revealed.**

I know God's heart, because I'm in it too! I've been exploring it for decades and now the Lord has asked me to help Him show you His heart.

**Will you come with me on a journey into the heart of God?** I can promise that you'll find yourself there, and many, many, fulfilling surprises. Honestly, you'll find some disturbing ones too, but don't let the land-mines get in your way. We're on a journey together, and I'll point out the land mines, as we walk *around* them! You get to decide later whether you want to de-activate (or explode!) those.

### ***My Take ~***

Whenever we talk about God, we have to realize that we are coming from a perspective. Sometimes we name that perspective "recovery" or "rose-colored glasses" or "dysfunctional." Usually, we name that perspective with a religious title, like Mormon or Muslim, Hindu or Zoroastrian, Evolutionary or Heinz-57. I come from a Western Judeo-Christian perspective. That means that my perspective on God comes through a history of Judaism that went west and became the Christianity that haunts America today. I've come through the "rose-colored glasses" into the "recovery" and now I'm exploring "freedom." **We're all "dysfunctional!"**

### **Welcome Home**

By Tammy Trent

I was taken back when You took me in  
Just to wipe my tears away  
You made no demands chose not to  
blame  
Though I knew You had the right to  
And I saw the years I wasted  
Searching everywhere in vain  
Finding nothing to believe in  
Until I finally heard you say

Welcome Home My mercy's waiting  
Welcome Home to open arms  
There's no shame in your returning  
Though you may have wandered far  
Welcome Home

That was years ago so far away  
At an altar on my knees  
But I can still recall like yesterday  
How Your love forever changed me  
Oh I see how You've been faithful  
Though I've often caused you pain  
And I've learned you won't forsake me  
When I need to hear you say  
Welcome Home ...

### *My Disclaimer ~*

**This book is not presented as the definitive work on or about God** – assuming that anyone could *totally* understand or define God. It is presented only as an invitation to explore God and to gain meaning from what we have discovered about God to date. Theology is simply the study of what we know about God. It is an on-going work. **Every time you pray, meditate, read scriptures or any sacred book, attend religious services, or discuss God or the meaning of life with someone, you are dealing in theology** – you are entering into the discussion.

### *C.S. Lewis' appraisal ~*

From atheist to preeminent 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian theologian; the beloved English author of the Chronicles of Narnia, Professor Clive Staples Lewis described the situation this way:

“Theology means “the science of God,” and I think any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available. You are not children: why should you be treated like children?

In a way I quite understand why some people are put off by Theology. I remember once when I had been giving a talk to the R.A.F., an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, “I’ve no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I’m a religious man too. I *know* there’s a God. I’ve *felt* Him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that’s just why I don’t believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about Him. To anyone who’s met the real thing they all seem so petty and pedantic and unreal!”

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he had probably a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real, to something less real. In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of colored paper. But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only colored paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single isolated glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America.

Now Theology is like the map. Merely learning and thinking about the Christian doctrines, if you stop there, is less real and less exciting than the sort of thing my friend got in the desert. Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But the map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God-experiences compared with which any thrills or pious feelings you or I

are likely to get on our own way are very elementary and very confused. And secondly, if you want to get any further, you must use the map. You see, what happened to that man in the desert may have been real, and was certainly exciting, but nothing comes of it. It leads nowhere. There is nothing to do about it. In fact, that is just why a vague religion – all about feeling God in nature, and so on – is so attractive. It is all thrills and no work; like watching the waves from the beach. But you will not get to Newfoundland by studying the Atlantic that way, and you will not get eternal life by simply feeling the presence of God in flowers or music. Neither will you get anywhere by looking at maps without going to sea. Nor will you be very safe if you go to sea without a map.

In other words, Theology is practical: especially now. In the old days, where there was less education and discussion, perhaps it was possible to get on with a very few simple ideas about God. But it is not so now. Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed; consequently, if you do not listen to Theology that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones - bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today, are simply the ones which real Theologians tried centuries ago and rejected. To believe in the popular religion of modern England is retrogression – like believing the earth is flat.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Your Challenge ~*

**Everyone has notions about what they believe or don't believe about God.** That's their theology. We can choose to let Hollywood and the evening news determine our theology; trusting in others' opinions, or we can begin to study and make our own informed decisions about what we are going to believe.

I love Wm. Paul Young's appraisal of the problem in the runaway best-seller *The Shack*, where God explains Divinity:

“I am what some would say ‘holy, and wholly other than you.’ The problem is that many folks try to grasp some sense of who I am by taking the best version of themselves, projecting that to the nth degree, factoring in all the goodness they can perceive, which often isn't much, and then call *that* God. And while it may seem like a noble effort, the truth is that it falls pitifully short of who I really am. I'm not merely the best version of you that you can think of. I am far more than that, above and beyond all that you can ask or think.”

It is my prayer that you will be inspired and challenged by this book to consider what you believe and the possibilities that are presented here. I can't promise that all your questions will be answered in this book. It is just a practical, working introduction to a topic beyond human exploration, of a personality beyond human definition. **This book is**

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<sup>1</sup> *Mere Christianity*, and also in *The Joyful Christian*, 127 readings by C.S. Lewis.

**simply an invitation to join in the exploration of perhaps the most important journey any of us can take in learning more about our world - Finding out about the personality who made it – for YOU; the personality who wants you to know that - God.**

Welcome to the journey of attempting to understand a world beyond knowing, and a God beyond understanding. Welcome home, to the place you already were, even if you didn't know it. You'll see.

*Your Thoughts ~  
Journal your thoughts while reading this introduction.*

*Note the Date:  
(You'll be glad you did later!)*

## *Some Activities ~*

*Consider adapting an open attitude toward God ~ Three things you can do to move in that direction:*

### ***1. Open your mind and heart to God.***

At middle-age now, I have found that most of the things I've been terribly proud of in the past, embarrass me terribly now. Remember the huge bell-bottom pants many of us strutted around in?! I've thought I knew about life. I've thought I understood the world or at least my part in it. With every passing year I discover more things I had wrong; more ways that I was reading the signs around me backwards or not at all. One of the best things I've done over the years has been learning to acknowledge this fact and open my mind and my heart up to God. Admitting I don't have all the answers somehow opens me up to new answers. When I stop telling God what needs to be done, and look at what *is happening* around me, I can learn and grow and participate. Most importantly for us as miniature control freaks, we need to give God some breathing room. Take The Holy One out of the box we have Him in and allow God to reveal Himself to us as Divine. Could the maker of the universe have really flooded the whole world? Could The Almighty have really plagued Egypt and set over a million people free to wander a desert for forty years? Why would Divinity choose to reveal Himself to us tiny people on this tiny planet not even in the middle of the universe by becoming one of us? Could this Infinite Creator really be interested in ME?

***2. Getting more personal, ask yourself "What are my current assumptions about God?"*** "How did I get them?" Most of us see God initially through the lens of our parent's behaviors; after all, they were our first gods. Was your Mom a control freak – scheduling every moment of your day, and every plan for your life? Did your Dad discipline you severely for every infraction of the rules? If so, your god is probably a demanding, menacing, taskmaster. Any chance your subconscious expectations of God might be at all skewed, based on some of the imperfect people from your past?

***3. As you consider these new thoughts about who God could really be, if you catch yourself dismissing an idea easily, reconsider.*** Remember we all begin to approach God thinking small thoughts. Just because you have a new idea doesn't make it wrong, if it's big and bizarre – could it be other-worldly? Really ponder it for just a few extra minutes before you dismiss it.

For Group questions and activities see: [www.GodforEveryone.com](http://www.GodforEveryone.com)