

This is a reprint of the book that went with the 2004 TFG senior weekend.

The aim of it is to help you in your search for God's face.

Also available (at £2.50 a copy or get a friend who has one to burn you a copy of theirs!) is the CD-Rom with even more stuff on it; some but not all of which you will also find on www.tfg.org.uk/seek

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"
Matthew 6:33

"Seek my face"
2 Chronicles 7:14

"But if ... you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul."
Deuteronomy 4:29

Whom do you Seek ?



And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
(Hebrews 11:6).

Throughout history, people have invented their own gods and then worshipped them. The Bible is full of such false gods: Baal, Ashteroth, Zeus and others. It makes it clear that they are worthless idols, good for nothing and unable to help us in our needs. Yet in another sense they are real, because they capture the lives of their worshippers, and bind them to the rituals. Rituals made up by people, which then trap succeeding generations with fear and guilt.

But this weekend isn't about the problems with false gods, but about finding the One True God. Even here, however, there is a problem, because the truth about God has also become clouded, and both the Father and Jesus have ended up being presented in ways that hide their true selves, images of God but not the Truth about Him. The picture on the front of the book, when you see its image in your closed eyes, is simply a caricature of what someone thinks Jesus looked like. No-one knows, no painting was ever done of Him. I think that's God's plan, because it's not the physical looks but the character of the person that is important.

We are all made in the image of God: not His physical looks (the Father isn't physical) but His Spirit, and His Person(ality).



As we seek the One true God we become more like Him and reflect His personality, and grow in his Spirit. This weekend is for people who are seekers, or who want to be seekers. However long you have been a Christian, you may not really be a seeker. Even if you have not yet given your life to God, you might be a seeker. Seeking is an active word. We can start seeking God before we know Him, and then afterwards stop doing it. But we should all be doing it all the time, because there is always more to discover about Him and what He is like.

The verse quoted at the beginning of this material promises rewards for those who earnestly seek Him. Six times in the Old Testament we are told to seek God's face, yet in the same Old Testament God also says: *Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen* (Exodus 33:23). So why does God tell us to seek His face, if He also says "my face must not be seen"? It was well known that anyone who did see God would die (Judges 13:22).

The short answer must be that God wants us to die!! We need to seek God's face more and more. As we do, as we see more and more of His person revealed to us, so we die more to the way of life we were living, we become more like Him. In seeing God we are transformed into His image, the way we were always meant to be. John wrote: *Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God* (3 John 11); the converse would seem to imply that those who do what is not evil *have seen God* to some extent. In 1 John 4:12 he writes *No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us*. By loving each other we are beginning to become like God, beginning to seek His face.



Together

So the first place to start in seeking God is *together*, where we can demonstrate love towards each other. What does together mean?

Think about the group of people you meet with regularly at church, home or cell groups, school Christian meetings, etc.

Try to answer these questions honestly, circle the answer closest to your own:

(1) How many of them do you actually *like*?

ALL MOST FEW NONE

(2) How many of them would you probably have chosen to be friends because of common interests other than faith/Christian things?

ALL MOST FEW NONE

(3) If there are any of them that you *don't* like, circle any of the answers below that are true for you:

I TALK ABOUT THEM WHEN THEY AREN'T AROUND I STICK UP FOR THEM

I PRAY FOR THEM OFTEN I PRAY THEY WON'T TURN UP TO THE GROUP

I OFTEN REMIND THEM I DON'T LIKE THEM

I TREAT THEM LIKE THE ONES I DO LIKE

If you answered ALL to both (1) and (2) your group is probably nice, enjoyable and comfortable but it may well not be welcoming to newcomers, and isn't teaching you much about God's love.... which is for the *unlovely*(unlikeable) as much as for the lovely.

If you are treating the ones you *don't like* harshly, you are not showing love, you are not reflecting God to them. Love is not a feeling or emotion ("I like you so I will love you"), it's an act of commitment ("I am making a decision to love you"). God's love is unconditional, it does not change depending on what we do to Him. He simply loves us. As we seek His face and draw close to Him, we find we become like Him, so we love.

The other people around you who are Christians are your sisters and brothers. John wrote *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.* (1 John 4:20). You might say "I don't hate them", but if you are not acting towards them in *love*, then the Bible speaks of it as hate. There is nothing in the middle, no sitting on the fence "If you are not for me, you are against me" (Matthew 12:30).

The point of all this is, we can't even begin to seek God if we are not acting on what He has already revealed of Himself: *LOVE*. You can't draw near to God in truth without being affected by His heart of love for the people around you. The amount you seek God is reflected in the depth of your love for others, the amount you love others is a sign of your seeking God. The two go hand in hand.

Let's do some Bible study *together* to see what Jesus is like:

Group Bible Studies

Study ONE: Prophecy of the Messiah

You will need: A bible each, 2 large flipchart papers + pens

You are going to look at Jesus, as revealed in the Bible outside of the Gospels. Obviously the Gospels are the fullest picture we get of Jesus in the Bible, but this morning we are looking at different passages. Jesus is *the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (Colossians 1:15). So, as we look at Jesus, we see the face of God.

Your group will only look at one of these passages, later today you will learn what the other groups discover.

1/10 mins If you were going to write a fiction book, and were inventing a god for a long lost tribe in the book to worship, what sort of things would you say about the god to make him/it/she sound worthy of worship? On first flipchart write down all the characteristics you would want your god to have.

2/5 mins Read Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. This is a prophecy God gave to Isaiah about 1000 years before Jesus was born, telling him what the Messiah would be like when he came.

3/10 mins Write the name "Jesus" in the centre of the second flipchart (large enough to read across the main meeting room). Write words round the sheet which come from this passage and describe what Jesus is like (or use your own words to describe things talked about in the passage). Write the relevant verse number(s) next to the words.

4/10 mins What sort of picture of Jesus does this give you?

Do these words describe the stereotypical images the world has of Jesus? How well or not does it match your 'made up' god from earlier? Talk about why it does/does not match the world's image and the invented god.

5/5 mins Try to come up with one word or phrase that you agree on that sum all these words up. Write it across the bottom of the sheet of paper.

6/15 mins Work through chapter 53 slowly. There are four sections, each 3 verses long. Can you think of incidents in the gospels which relate to each section? e.g., in vv1-3 it is talking about Jesus being unattractive and despised, can you think of passages from the gospels which this might be describing? (the first section is harder than the other 3).

7/5 mins Everybody in group says one thing from this session which has impressed you the most/spoken to you the most/surprised you the most (etc.).

If there is time left spend it praying about what you have learnt, that God will help you to remember it.

Group Bible Studies

Study TWO: The Risen Christ

You will need: A bible each, 2 large flipchart papers + pens

You are going to look at Jesus, as revealed in the Bible outside of the Gospels. Obviously the Gospels are the fullest picture we get of Jesus in the Bible, but this morning we are looking at different passages. Jesus is *the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (Colossians 1:15). So, as we look at Jesus, we see the face of God.

Your group will only look at one of these passages, later today you will learn what the other groups discover.

1/10 mins **If you were going to make a film about the life of Jesus, what are the essential things about his character that you would want to get across?** On first flipchart write down all the characteristics you would want your film to demonstrate. (NB Character not acts).

Which famous actor would you want to play the part?

2/5 mins **Read Revelation chapter 1 verses 8 to 18.** This is a vision God gave to John about 50 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, showing him what the risen Messiah is like. (NB Messiah is Hebrew, Christ is Greek, both mean "Anointed One").

3/10 mins **Write the name "Jesus" in the centre of the second flipchart** (large enough to read across the main meeting room). Write words round the sheet which come from this passage and describe what Jesus is like (or use your own words to describe things talked about in the passage). Write the relevant verse number(s) next to the words.

4/10 mins **What sort of picture of Jesus does this give you?**

Do these words describe the stereotypical images the world has of Jesus? How well or not does it match your 'Hollywood Jesus' from earlier? Talk about why it does/does not match the world's image and the film image.

5/5 mins Try **to come up with one word or phrase** that you agree on that sum all these words up. Write it across the bottom of the sheet of paper.

6/15 mins **Work through the passage slowly.** John describes what he saw of Jesus in great detail. What do you think each description means? (ie...the robe that reaches down to the ground is the same as the High Priest's robe and/or royal robe)

7/5 mins **Everybody in group says one thing** from this session which has impressed you the most/spoken to you the most/or surprised you the most (etc.).

If there is time left spend it praying about what you have learnt, that God will help you to remember it.

How do we seek God's face?

So, if we can't actually see God with our eyes, how do we go about seeking His face?



It's often been said that someone's character can be seen by studying their face. If their eyes are 'shifty' you know they are hiding things, and may be devious. If their face is light and open, so is their personality. The converse suggests that if you know someone's personality, you can begin to see their face.

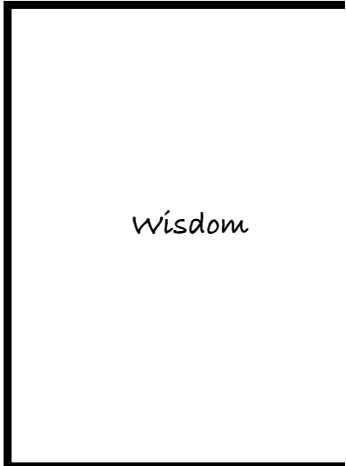
It is the *character* of God we are to seek, and many of His characteristics will have come out of the studies in groups. A good way then of seeking His face is to meditate on these characteristics. As an example, let's take just one of the things that may well have come from the first study above (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12).

In Isaiah 52:13 it says "See, my servant will act wisely". Jesus is described as being wise. Let's spend some time with that characteristic of God.

(1) Take a sheet of paper and write "WISE" or "WISDOM" in the centre of it.

(2) Write other words on the page that you know which describe wisdom or help to explain it.

(3) Now look up other passages in the Bible which refer to the word in the middle. In this case it is wisdom. If you can't think of other passages use a **concordance** or computer software Bible. A concordance is a book which lists all passages that mention the word you are looking for. Some bibles have short concordances in the back. There are also websites you can look at, for instance, SEARCH GOD'S WORD which is linked from the TFG homepage, just click on "BIBLE". Type in the word you want and you get a list of relevant passages (the web concordance is somewhat limited, but it is a good place to start. Think about investing in a piece of Bible software, or even a printed concordance).



Take a passage at a time and read it and study it. Ask questions such as "What does this passage tell me about wisdom?"; "Since God is wise what does it tell me about God?" You might find you spend a whole week or more looking up passages, taking one a day and thinking them through slowly. For each passage be asking "What does this tell me about God?"

(4) Write a short summary of each passage on your sheet (start another one if necessary).

(5) Spend 5 minutes quietly using your imagination to think about God in the light of the descriptions you have just looked at. Praise and thank Him for these qualities of His personality, ask Him to reveal more of this side of his character to you. Adore Him for Who He is.

(6) When, maybe after several days, you have finished studying that topic, try to summarise it by completing the sentence "God is (wise), which means God is....."

Remember this is not just for wisdom, go back to Isaiah 52 and find the next word which describes

God, and do the same. (Then do it for the Revelation passage, and then for other passages you come across in scripture which describe what God or Jesus is like).

"*Wait a minute!*" you cry, "that will take ages!".

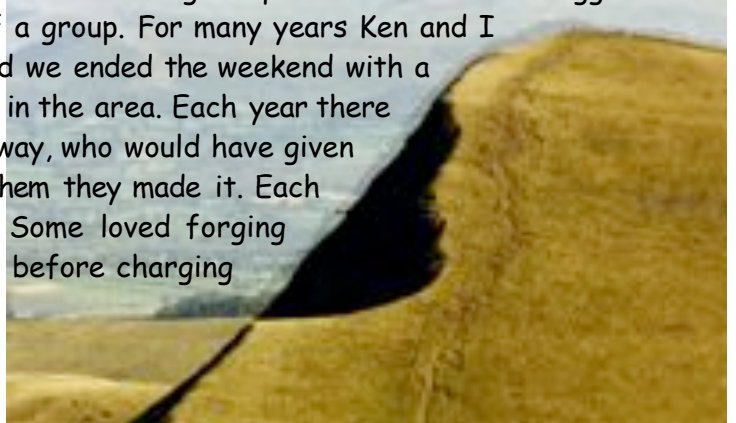
Yep.

Seeking is an active thing. It's about getting to know someone. In this case, the person you are getting to know is infinitely big and there will always be more to learn. As you do it, you will die! That is, as you discover what He is like, so you will be changed into His likeness. There is no other way of approaching Him, you can only get as close to God as you are prepared to reflect His person. That's why if you have spent time being disobedient it is hard to sense His Presence, you need to confess and get washed in His blood and grace to be able to approach again.

In Psalm 24: 3- 6 we read: *Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Saviour. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.*

The ones who have clean hands and a pure heart and who may ascend the hill of the Lord are the generation of those who seek God. In other words, those who seek God have the pure hands and clean heart and may approach Him. The more you seek, the more purified your heart, the higher up the hill you can go!

Climbing a hill takes effort. Many don't even bother. Those who do get the reward of a great view at the top but also the satisfaction of something difficult being conquered. Those who struggle find it much easier to keep going if they are part of a group. For many years Ken and I led a 6th form trip to the Brecon Beacons, and we ended the weekend with a walk to the top of Pen-y-Fan, the highest peak in the area. Each year there were some who needed encouragement all the way, who would have given up on their own. But with the group around them they made it. Each person in the group did it a different way. Some loved forging ahead and then waiting for others to catch up before charging off again. Others liked to be at the back, knowing it was possible because there were others who had done it. And others liked to be ganged together somewhere in the middle, speaking encouragement to each other. But all made it, together.



So seeking God needs to be a *together* thing as well as an individual thing. You may be a person who will forge ahead and gain a great insight into what God is like. Doubtless God will then use you to teach others of this in some way, as you encourage them to discover what you have. But if you are a person who would never make it on your own, it is essential you join with a group that is seeking together. Meet each week, work on a passage together, listen to each other. It may be for you the only way you will ever be organised enough to spend a couple of hours focussing on what God is like is to be in such a group. In which case, the thing you must commit to as a result of this weekend is to joining one and going regularly.



God's face, not His hands

Many get sidetracked and start to look for the *works* of God, rather than His

character. They hear of some place where there are miracles, or strange happenings, and go rushing there to see it or get 'touched' by it. It's not wrong to do so, but it is wrong to focus on that and make it the thing we are seeking. The works of God are often described as His hands, because we need our hands to work. In the bible we are never taught to seek His hands or works.

Instead, the works of God should *follow* us (Deuteronomy 28:2, Mark 16:17). It's not that we should look for them, but as we go about the business of seeking God's face and teaching others to follow Him too, so we see God working with us. They should be a normal part of life for us, not an entertainment we go running after as something unusual.

All believers are accompanied by the works of God, but many are unaware of it because the things He does are rarely what we would call 'supernatural'. Often that is because the level of faith the person is living at does not often call for 'emergency rescue services' from heaven! But as we seek Him more, and follow Him more closely, so we find ourselves in positions which need 'signs accompanying'.

The sad thing is, when someone is following God and the signs which accompany their lives begin to get heard of, so many people go to see the *servant* and the *signs* rather than seek God more for themselves. That may be understandable for non-believers, but is a tragedy amongst believers.

Passive Activity?

One of the hard things for many people in our society is to physically be doing nothing, and yet often seeking God requires periods of physical inactivity. Our consciences say we are wasting time, just sitting there, praying and reading. So we cut the time short. But we are being spiritually active at these times, and we need to give quality time to this spiritual activity if we are to do it well.

However, although it is good to have time sitting with the Bible and notebook to read passages about "God is (wise)", we can also be seeking at other times too. Some use the time they spend in the gym to be meditating on what they read earlier, or praying. Or maybe on a walk, when cycling, playing music, skating, swimming, anything we can do whilst leaving our minds relatively free to meditate and pray.



Seeking Praying

For many people, praying is a list of things asking God to do. We are always concentrating on getting His hands moving! It is important to spend time *interceding*, as this type of prayer is called, but even more important to spend time *adoring*, *praising* and *meditating* as we pray. Here is a suggestion about this.

Take the sheet of paper from earlier, the one with "Wisdom" written in the centre. Use it as the basis for your praying. Imagine God as the things written on the page, and start to thank Him for being like that, to worship Him for it. Ask Him as you do for better understanding of these characteristics, express your love to Him that He is like this, and so forth.

Don't be afraid of times of silence, when you simply think about the things written down, and enjoy being quiet together with Him.

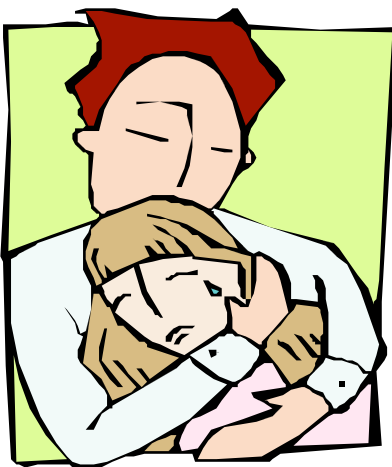
Always spend some time rejoicing: this Person, the One you have been thinking about, *loves you!* Praise Him for that. he is with you and He is (wise).

You can probably see that if you spend time building up the picture of (wisdom) through the week, and then have a time of prayer like this on several days during the week, that you can't "get your praying done" in just 5 minutes a day.

As you get to know God more in this way, you will discover things that move His heart. He will reveal them to you, and He reveals different things to different people. These then become the things He wants you to be praying for (interceding). They will become things which move your heart too. Your *intercession* becomes a natural follow on for the seeking, rather than a list of things you pray for each day without really ever asking God what He thinks.

"I found Him! But He's GONE!"

Just when you think you are beginning to get there, learning how to seek him, how to know Him, how to love Him.....He goes away! You've discovered how to have amazing times alone with Him, and then the next day *nothing*. It's as if he just doesn't show up. Some call this the *wilderness experience*, when you seem to be left alone in the dry desert unable to meet with the One you seek. In *Jesus Christ Superstar* Mary Magdalene sings "I don't know how to love Him"....it's something that constantly needs to be found out!



In Song of Solomon the beloved has the same experience, she awakens to hear her lover calling (S.O.S 5:2 - 8), but when she opens the door to Him He has gone, and she runs through the nighttime streets seeking Him. "I looked for Him but did not find Him, I called for Him but He did not answer"(v 6). As a result she gets abused by the people of the city, the people who do not know her lover, yet she

presses on in her search until she eventually finds Him again.

In the desert of Sinai God never allowed the Israelites to become content in one place for long. The pillar of cloud and fire would rise up and move off. They needed to be constantly attentive to where it (symbolising God) was and where it/He was going. Only if they followed would they stay with Him.

Seeking, then, means constant following, not





being content to rest in one place but ready to move on, always seeking where He is and where He is going. The more we discover Him, so the more He moves from us. Not because He does not want us to know Him, but because he wants us to discover more of Him. The more we discover, the more we change to be like Him, the more we die. We are following Jesus, and His life was spent walking daily towards death, which was His purpose in life. "...*anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*"(Matthew 10:38). "Take up your cross" meant only one thing to someone living under Roman rule: crucifixion.

Jesus was saying "if you are not heading for death, you are not following me".

DEATH?

For most people reading this, the death being spoken of here of course is not physical death on a cross, or being beaten up for being a Christian. Instead it is death to self, turning over more and more of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus. Becoming more like Him and less like the sinful world around us.

Some of the steps are small, you may have been a Christian for years and genuinely seeking God throughout that time, but the amount He has revealed of Himself to you that has changed you has not made you very different yet from others around you. on the other hand, the more earnestly you seek, the more time you give to finding Him, the more you will change *if you want to*. If you don't want to, you will simply stop seeking. In the end you can't go on as a seeker if you are not changing, because it becomes too painful. If you refuse to change something He has revealed to be wrong, then each time you come back into His Presence you will feel His pain at your sin. So you either change, or stop coming into His Presence.

Many who were once seekers stop because in the end they do not really want to die, they want to keep some aspect of their sinfulness. In the parable of the sower Jesus said some will at first grow up eagerly, but then the *worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful* (Mark 4:19). The best way to make sure that doesn't happen to you is to develop good habits of seeking God daily now, whilst you are young, so that they become your standard way of life. Then you will be so familiar with Jesus by the time the "worries of life" take over that it will be natural to take them to Jesus, rather than run away from Him. *{Of course, if you are already over 25 as you read this it's not too late to start!}*. If you want to run the London marathon, compete in the 2008 Olympics, swim the Channel or even just get the best possible results in GCSE, A Levels or Degrees, you have to put some effort in. Being a first rate member of the Body of Christ is no different! What do you want to do?



Resources

Apart from suggestions made in the text and during the weekend, you will find things to help you be a seeker in the following places:



1} The Bible. Get one with Study notes that explain passages. Get one written in a style you understand easily. Better still, have a few in different styles so you can compare different translations of the passage to gain a fuller understanding.

2} As already mentioned, a concordance. These are really helpful if you have a good knowledge of the Bible anyway and are trying to find a verse you have half remembered. They are also useful for the sort of study mentioned earlier when you want to find all verses mentioning "Wisdom", for instance. You can buy concordances in book form or, similar priced, computer software. Any Bible on CD Rom acts as a concordance as well. Or use the one on the TFG website or others found by searching for "Bible concordance" on the web.

3} Friends. Meet with others each week and agree which passage you will be studying and talk about. Write down questions about the passage before you meet together. Help each other with fuller understanding. Be seekers together.



4} A good teacher/preacher. Whilst



discovering for yourself is always the best way, it is also vital to hear regularly other people speaking and teaching what they have heard from God. Make sure you are part of a church or group where this happens regularly. There are also excellent speakers on Christian radio stations (listen to a few speakers to find the one you enjoy most: most are American as not many British preachers have developed radio or internet ministries).

There are links to British Christian radio stations on the TFG website.

5} Christian Books. Like those in the TFG library.

6} Hopefully there will be a CD ROM for this weekend, with lots of stuff to help you see more clearly the face of Jesus. But it will just be examples of things mentioned above... and won't last forever!

Go Seek!!



This page included for historical reference only. It is very out of date! This was TFG in 2004....

Audio: previous weekends and most Thursday evening talks on line in QuickTime streamed audio....to help you seek more clearly.
Worship from previous weekends, and some of the fun bits too for the lighter times in life.

TFG games;
Weather update;
latest World News

Links to websites of local churches; Christian advice sites; Christian joke sites; Christian music; Worship sites; Christian radio and much much more

www.tfg.org.uk


TFG games;
Weather update;
latest World News

a DAILY Bible reading provided by the Lehrman group in America, and a concordance to help you search the Word

Bible Studies, articles, testimonies (we need **MORE**, why not send in your own??)

Message Board to leave your news, jokes, views and comments.
{We are currently looking for a better board for the future}

TRAVEL information and help to get you from A to B in London and across the UK



Lunchtimes at 1:35pm:

Mondays WORSHIP

Wednesdays Years 11 - 13

Thursdays Years 9 and 10

Fridays Creative Prayer or a visiting speaker.

Thursdays at 8pm:

2 hours of teaching, worship, fellowship and support for years 10 and above, plus ex-students and friends.

Other groups and meetings

meet as requested. In particular:

GIRLS' Bible Study on Mondays after school with Miss Viles.

Many people ask: *Where does TFG get its money from?* Apart from trying to run weekends at a small profit, the answer is donations from current and former students. If you would like to contribute, the treasurer is Adrian Little (he's sitting at the back) and the bank details are:

Barclays Alperton (sort code 20-01-89), account "TWYFORD FELLOWSHIP GROUP", number 70766356.

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