

Looking FOR *God*

DONNA VANLIERE



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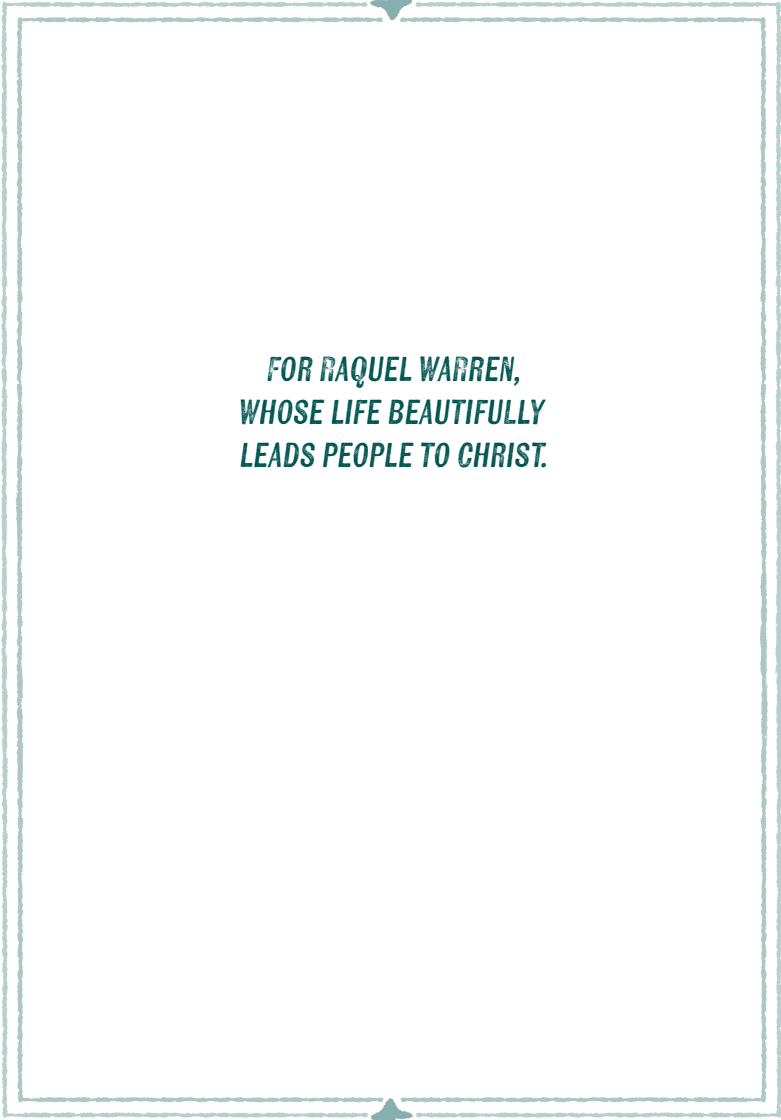
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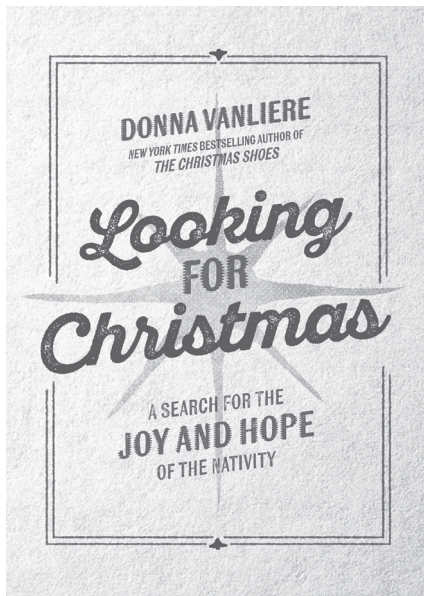
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***FOR RAQUEL WARREN,
WHOSE LIFE BEAUTIFULLY
LEADS PEOPLE TO CHRIST.***

Also by
Donna VanLiere



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ONE

Looking at God's Heart for You

I glanced down at my phone and saw that Nicole Fischer, a woman in our church, was texting. I knew the backstory of this beautiful woman, and how she and her husband, Travis, had been walking through a terrible illness he had suffered over the last few years. In his health journey, Travis had been through multiple procedures and surgeries and was on several medications. They had small children at home, and the stress had caught up with Nicole. She said she was dealing with terrible anxiety and asked if it was possible to meet me at the church so I could pray for her.

I contacted another woman from our prayer group who was available at that time, and we quickly made our way to the church. As I drove, I asked God to touch Nicole's heart in a way that she could understand. Immediately, the words "The Lord your God is with you...He will

rejoice over you with singing” came to mind. I knew that came from a verse in Zephaniah, but I couldn’t remember exactly where. I sensed that God wanted Nicole to know that He was not only with her but was rejoicing over her with singing, just like a parent comforting a child and holding her as she drifts off to sleep.

When I got to the church, I quickly looked up the verse on my phone and found it was Zephaniah 3:17: “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (NIV).

The three of us slipped into a room and sat down, and I told Nicole about the verse that came to my mind. When I read it, tears began to stream down her face. She said, “That is my favorite verse in the Bible! It means so much to me that a friend of mine created a painting with those words, and I have it hanging in my home.” She wiped the tears from her eyes and said, “God knew I needed to hear that. I needed to know that He sees me and He’s fighting for me—for my family.”

You might call that a coincidence, but there are more than 31,000 verses in the Bible, and the verse that came to my mind was the *one* verse that meant the most to Nicole. She was looking for God in the middle of the fallout of stress and anxiety from dealing for so long with Travis’s

health issues, and God, in His goodness, gave her a personal message from His heart to hers. He may not touch you exactly like that, but God wants to reach you with His love in a way that you can understand.

THE DOOR OF A BROTHEL

When I told my husband, Troy, that I was writing a book titled *Looking for God*, he asked, “Are you going to use that quote about knocking on the door of a brothel?” I wasn’t familiar with the quote and was intrigued, so I looked it up. I discovered that in 1945, a Scottish writer named Bruce Marshall wrote a novel entitled *The World, the Flesh and Father Smith*. Within the story, the character of Father Smith says, in part, that “the young man who rings the bell at the brothel is unconsciously looking for God.”¹

Father Smith was saying that a young man who does that is seeking immediate pleasure, but ultimately, he is looking for love. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God “has planted eternity in the human heart.” Each of us has, in our hearts, a sense of eternity, which was put there by God. But all of us also have our own “brothel” doors that we are knocking on because we’re searching for something to fill that eternity-shaped hole inside of us. Either we will fill it with God and His truth and love, or we will pound on the door of money, power, sex, sports, fame, women, men,

work, education, gangs, social media, exercise, gambling, gaming, cosmetic procedures, intimacy, significance, success, knowledge, pleasure, possessions, porn, or position as we look unconsciously for God.

You may say that you aren't knocking on any "brothel" door, but what if you are? What if your search for love and connection in this world has left you empty because you have yet to knock on God's door and know His real love in an unreal world? The Bible tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), so shouldn't that satisfy us? Why do we keep knocking on brothel doors?

YOU WERE CREATED ON PURPOSE

My friend Carmen hosts a radio program called *The Reconnect with Carmen LaBerge*. We were chatting one day about why we continue to knock on doors in life that ultimately will never satisfy. Carmen is one of the smartest and wisest people I know, and she said, "People can't get their mind around the idea that God made them on purpose. They don't believe they are created, so why look for a creator? It's an endless cycle of folly as they continue to make and remake themselves into something else, but they can never achieve what they are imagining. It's exhausting and makes people despair."

Carmen is absolutely right. Why would anyone ever knock on God's door if they don't believe that God loves

them and that He created them? Instead, they will easily get caught up in the endless cycle of folly that leads to knocking on one “brothel” door after another. A.W. Tozer (1897–1963) said,

...the enemy of man's soul has mugged humanity, robbing them of their identity, men and women wander around in a spiritual and moral fog, not knowing who they are, what they are, or where they are going. People do not know why they are here...and do not know their purpose in life, why they were created, or what they are sent to do. Consequently, lives are filled with confusion, reaching out for any explanation; hence the proliferation of religions in our world. Religion only addresses man's external condition, not his internal confusion.²

Religion is our attempt to find God. It's also legalistic: Do this or that, or take that action, and it is easy yet exhausting to get caught on that hamster wheel. However, when we look for a relationship with God, we are met with His grace and find hope and peace. We will not find our purpose on the hamster wheel of religion, but rather, in a true relationship with the God who loves us.

How can you believe that God loves you or that you were created on purpose, or that you even have a purpose,

if you grew up in a home where you heard the opposite? Or if you have lived with a spouse or someone else who would rather tear you down than build you up?

Throughout the Bible, we are told truths like these:

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me (Psalm 138:8 ESV).

Those who love God...are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! (Psalm 139:13-14).

God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth...Everything was created through him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

You created all things, and they exist because *you created what you pleased* (Revelation 4:11, emphasis added).

It pleased God to create you, but you have to decide whether you believe that. Henri Nouwen (1932–1996) said,

The greatest spiritual battle begins—and never ends—with the reclaiming of our chosenness. Long before any human being saw us, we are seen by God's loving eyes. Long before anyone heard us cry or laugh, we are heard by our God who is all ears for us. Long before any person spoke to us in this world, we are spoken to by the voice of eternal love.³

God loved you way before anyone knew you even existed. When you talk to Him, your voice is heard in heaven! You may feel that you have not had a voice in your current circumstances, but God loves to hear what you say, and bends down to listen to you (Psalm 116:2).

GOD IS SEEKING YOU

Again, God loves you so much that He created you on purpose and *for* a purpose! No one is a mistake, and no one is so lost that he can't be found. God created us to seek Him (Acts 17:27), and most remarkable of all is that God is seeking you! The Creator of this world says in Ezekiel 34:16, "I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bandage the injured and strengthen the weak." His Son, Jesus, says,

“The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10). But what is “lost”?

In 2005, NFL quarterback Tom Brady sat down for an interview with *60 Minutes*. At that time, he had led the New England Patriots to a Super Bowl win three times (he went on to earn four more Super Bowl victories: three additional wins for the Patriots, and one for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers). In the interview he said, “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there’s something greater out there for me?...I think, God, there’s got to be something more than this...What else is there for me?”

Reporter Steve Kroft asked, “What’s the answer?”

Brady replied, “I wish I knew. I wish I knew.”⁴

That’s a perfect definition of lost. Like Tom Brady, you may think there’s got to be something more than this and you keep searching, diligently trying to find what you’re looking for. There’s a lostness we all experience—it’s that place in our hearts where God has set eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and in our search for that “something more,” we fill up that hole in our heart with everything that’s behind the brothel door.

Remember the young man who knocked on the brothel door? He was lost, searching for something to fill the eternity-shaped hole in him. He was searching for love, not knowing God alone can give the love that would fulfill him. Jesus came to Earth to make God’s love known to

those who are lost—those who don't have a relationship with Him.

You may be busy knocking on doors, but God Himself is knocking on yours. A.W. Tozer said, "Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this: that, before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man. We pursue God, because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit. 'No man can come to me,' said our Lord, 'except the Father, which had sent me draw him.'"⁵

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) said that God knocks on your door for your

immediate and endless happiness...Do not, therefore, act as if you were not at home: do not turn a deaf ear, or a careless heart. I am asking nothing of you in the name of God or man. It is not my intent to make any requirement at your hands; but I come in God's name, to bring you a free gift, which it shall be to your present and eternal joy to receive. Open the door, and let my pleadings enter.⁶

As you read the pages of this book, remember Spurgeon's plea, and don't act as if you are not at home. Open the door to receive God's love.

YOU WERE CREATED TO SEEK GOD

Google has been doing their Year in Search project for 22 years, and according to the website, these year-in-review results have “provided a unique look into what we all cared about, what inspired us and intrigued us, all over the world.” The search results for 2022 revealed, “Global search interest in ‘how to change myself’ and ‘how to be better’ reached an all-time high this year.”⁷

But in the searches for “how to change myself” and “how to be better,” I discovered there wasn’t one faith-based website in the top 100 searches, but there were several porn sites listed. In the top 20 alone, there were four of them.⁸ The Bible or God wasn’t listed; there was absolutely nothing faith-based in the top 100 searches. At the time of this writing in 2025, Google processes roughly 9.5 million searches every minute. That’s 13.7 billion searches a day.⁹ Now let this sink in: In the nearly 14 billion searches a day, God was nowhere to be found in the top 100 searches. By this data, it appears that few people are looking for God. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 NASB). But very few want to google that.

In the pages of this book, I hope to provide you with some of the answers that don’t make the top 100 searches on Google. You may be someone who sporadically goes to church and believes in God, that He is up there

somewhere, sitting in the clouds. You believe in God—great! But even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). There is a difference between believing *in* God and *believing God*.

When the prophet Jonah told the Ninevites that God was going to destroy them unless they repented, the Bible says, “The Ninevites believed God” (Jonah 3:5 NIV). What you believe about God matters. The Ninevites believed His word. They believed what He said and that He would do what He said. They didn’t parse down the message to make it more palatable. They believed God and repented (they turned away from their sin that separated them from God).

Jesus said to His disciples, who had seen Him in person, “Blessed are those who believe without seeing me” (John 20:29). Throughout this book, ask yourself if you actually *believe God*. Do you believe He is who He says He is? Do you believe what He says in His Word? Do you believe what He says about His love for you?

Or perhaps you are someone who is “satisfied in your belief that there is a God” and “are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls... that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him.”¹⁰ Maybe you have vague ideas about God. Perhaps you have believed the lies that He hates this group of people or that. You might possibly be a skeptic or an atheist who is

searching for answers, and as you read this book, you may be prompted to reevaluate your position.

Or, maybe you have been hurt in church and you want nothing to do with God, but the very fact that you are still reading this sentence proves that deep within, you are still seeking Him. You may believe that only theologians, pastors, ministers, or seminary professors can teach you about God, but in Jesus' day, the members of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish legislative and judicial council) took note that common fishermen "with no special training" had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). If someone walks with Jesus, he can lead you to God the Father at the gym, the grocery store, on the factory floor, around the water cooler, in a school hall, or within the pages of a book. No college or seminary degrees are required.

What may surprise you is that God created us to seek Him. Acts 17:27-28 says this about God's purpose for mankind: "His purpose was for the nations *to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him*—though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist" (emphasis added). If there is something deep inside of you that is groping and striving toward something, I would suggest that you are *looking for God*, and Acts 17:27-28 says that God created you to do that!

If you're knocking on "brothel" doors to fill the void

within you, ease the pain, or silence the noise inside, would you be open to the possibility that ultimately, you're looking for something more, something deeper in the form of God's love? If so, then I encourage you to pray this simple prayer:

Father God, I am searching for answers and giving this a shot. Please open the door of my heart, mind, soul, and spirit to believe that You are who You say You are. In Jesus' name, amen.

You may say that all of this God stuff is nonsense and make-believe. But what if you're wrong? Are you open to that possibility? What if this book is the beginning of faith in your life? Referencing Romans 10:17, Charles Spurgeon said, "Faith comes by hearing, and reading is a sort of hearing: faith may come to you while you are reading this book. Why not? O blessed Spirit of all grace, make it so!"¹¹