



I think earth, if chosen  
instead of Heaven, will  
turn out to have been,  
all along, only a region  
of Hell: and earth, if put  
second to Heaven, to have  
been from the beginning a  
part of Heaven itself.

C. S. Lewis

**A**LL BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE CAPACITY TO KNOW GOD, and the inclination to worship Him. We are people set apart, each individual given his or her own umbilical to heaven: the Holy Spirit. The Comforter—among His many other qualities—shares with us the ability to do two things of critical importance to our relationship with the Father: to focus our attention on God, to the diminution of everything else; and to find God (or evidence of Him) in all elements of our earthly experience.

There is no shortage of evidence on this earth for the existence of and truth about God. Even the unregenerate know it is here.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

*Romans 1:18-22*

So long as we remain on this world—so long as we remain “not-yet-glorified”—those of this world who have chosen to disregard God will make every effort to cloud our vision. Their goal is to validate their own myopia by spreading its contagion to others, so that all will be as miserable as they. But by the ministry and unbounded power of the Holy Spirit, the believer not only can *know* God while he remains on earth, but he can *revel* in Him—to the extent that this rather ungainly existence can be transformed into the beginning of heaven itself.

It is a great presumption of the Christian to claim that he knows with certainty what it will be like in heaven, for, in truth, we have scant information on that topic. Based on the character and behavior of its inhabitants, however, the Christian can certainly guess what it may be like.

The impression left by God’s word is that heaven is *all of Him*. His presence is everywhere; His “person” is the focus of everyone’s attention; His worship is the principal occupation of heaven’s citizens. If there are any other activities in that lofty realm, they are surely of minor importance, and infrequent.

## A TEMPLATE FOR LIVING

So here is our template for living while we remain rooted to the soil of earth. Since God, or His fingerprints, are everywhere, His reality and purpose are to be the focus of our attention. Meanwhile, His worship, in its many and varied forms, is to be our principal occupation.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment."

*Matthew 22:34-38 niv*

All other activities—admittedly of some importance to our temporal well-being—are to be incorporated into our pursuit of Him. This does not necessarily mean a change in our activities, but it certainly means a change in the outlook and intentions of our heart. And it means a change, developed by practice, in our responses to everything around us.

Everyone in heaven knows that God is the source and arbiter of all things. Down here we must repeatedly remind ourselves of that truth. Through practice we train ourselves to have a response of gratitude and joy to beauty, to bounty, to pure love, to all those small occurrences that add texture and depth to our lives. God is the source; He is due the gratitude and praise. Like children we rediscover the small delights of living on earth, but like adults we learn to enjoy them as blessings from the hand of a gracious Father.

We train ourselves, until the practice becomes a reflexive habit, first to notice, then to enjoy, and finally to give thanks to God for all the good things of this life: family, security, beauty, home—even possessions, for they, too, are from Him. This is the easy part, and the habit is developed quickly.

More difficult is the habit of gratitude for the hard times, the times when our belly twists into a knot, and every part of our being wants to raise a fist of anger towards a God who would do such a thing. Everyone in heaven knows that God is the author of both the pleasant and the unpleasant. Those of us still on earth, however, find ourselves choking on words of praise for flood and famine, for war and death. Our flesh is never so strong as when we muster a response to pain. It is hard for our small minds to accept that it, too, is from a loving God.

## GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Here we, again, must employ the wide-angled lens—the perspective of heaven. Resentment and disbelief come easy when we linger with magnifying microscope upon every uncomfortable event—even those occurring to others, but especially those that come our way. But when we widen our perspective, placing the immediate event within not only a global scale, but within the context of history and God's word, it is easier to perceive the contemporary pain as only one small thread in the larger tapestry of humanity dwelling on earth. Widened even more, seen as if from the edge of heaven, our disaster—real as it is—becomes smaller still, and almost imperceptibly we begin to interpret all events, both pleasant and unpleasant, from a timeless, eternal perspective. God's perspective.

And only then can this fragile and muddy platform upon which we dwell become for us the beginning of heaven.

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A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,  
In the city of our God, His holy mountain.  
Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
Is Mount Zion in the far north,  
The city of the great King.  
God, in her palaces,  
Has made Himself known as a stronghold.

*Psalms 48:1-3*

## EVENSONG

I don't remember listening to the birds while growing up. I suppose I did; living in a small town during the 1950s, in the fertile heartland of America, doubtless there were many times when the winged filled the air with song. But it is not a prominent memory.

The stuff of pleasure and delight changes over the years. As a child I took delight in things I could play with: a favorite stuffed animal, a metal toy truck, my tricycle. I found pleasure in my tree house, the many inventions dreamed up down in the basement of our house, and the stories of adventure and conquest read under the covers at night. These were the pleasures of my childhood, and I remember them well. I still know what they felt like to touch; I can still taste the joy they brought to my life.

Adults experience life at a pace that does not encourage such small pleasures. Even those of us who live outside the accelerated pace of the big city—who live with the company of nature rather than the company of concrete, asphalt, and honking traffic—know living that flies by too fast for such innocent contemplation.

Which makes the evensong of the birds so precious. Springtime evenings—as the sun is setting behind the distant hills, leaving in its wake swirls of pinks and purples, and fading whites to paint the darkening sky—is the time (after the similar dawn) when the bird minions are at fullest voice. Stepping out into the evensong chorus is the stuff of pleasure and delight for one encrusted with the insulation of years. The songs of the brown thrashers and cardinals, diminutive wrens and red-winged blackbirds reawaken joy, and revive a muted holiness lying dormant in the breast.

For the beasts of the field remain one of our connections to God. Their song—no matter what they are really saying—to the ear of man is a sampling of pleasure and joy sent down by the Father of a higher kingdom. To pass along, beneath their lofty neighborhood, is to pass beneath the vicinity of God's throne, where angels and elders sing out His praise in unending song.