

# Oasis

Tents of Mercy Network of Congregations and Humanitarian Aid

## What are you Searching For?

**You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.** (Jeremiah 29:13)

We usually think of searching for something that is lost.

I spend a good amount of time looking for stuff around the house or inside my computer—with the accompanying challenge of not losing my cool when it doesn't show up.

But I don't think that's what God meant in this verse! He hasn't moved. So, it's not that we're hard put to "find Him." This searching is yearning for Him, returning to Him and then restoring lost intimacy with our Redeemer/Shepherd.

While we're at it, I need to give full disclosure regarding Jeremiah's extraordinary verse. The context of this promise is quite specific. Please read it. It refers to the seventy-year exile of Judah to Babylon. The prophet is reassuring our people that there is still a hope and a future. He goes on to speak of God gathering us from our captivity outside the land of Israel and bringing us back home. This is our God, pouring out His heart, longing for His people to return. Aaron Shust powerfully expresses this feeling in his song "Zion." I encourage you to listen to it on YouTube.

In so many places the Lord tells us the same thing, that I feel His "thumbs up" to apply this verse to

everyone searching for God, everyone whose desire is centered on Him.

**"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart fail..."** (Psalm 73:25-26)

Seeking God with all my heart is desiring Him intensely, passionately—recognizing the all-consuming need for my heart to be one with His. In this psalm the author, Asaph, admitted that at times his heart was weak, not going after God with full strength. Maybe, like us, he had a tendency to get distracted and lose spiritual focus. Nevertheless, in the next line Asaph proclaims that the real source of his heart's ability to "find God" is God Himself.

**"...But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** (Psalm 73:26)

I love this! God calls me to seek Him with all of my heart, then He actually gives me the strength to do so.

Here are some additional injunctions to help you pursue the Lord with all your heart.

**"Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you."** (Hosea 10:12)

An excerpt from  
Eitan Shishkoff's forthcoming book:  
**With All Your Heart**



**"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."** (Isaiah 55:6-7)

**"...Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face forevermore!"** (I Chronicles 16:10-11)

**"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."** (James 4:8)

I hope you are encouraged by these passages. I am. They activate my heart to desire the Author of the Universe, my Creator, my Father. I was created for this. It is the primary goal of my life to seek after God—to know Him, to love Him, to be near Him, to reflect His healing presence in this world. And...to remember always that He wants me. He wants you, too! You can count on it. ●



# IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS

**“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12)**

**N**o one promises us an easy life. One way or the other, the believer will have challenges, trials or temptations. We will be faced with and go through crisis situations. The question is whether crisis is good for us or not.

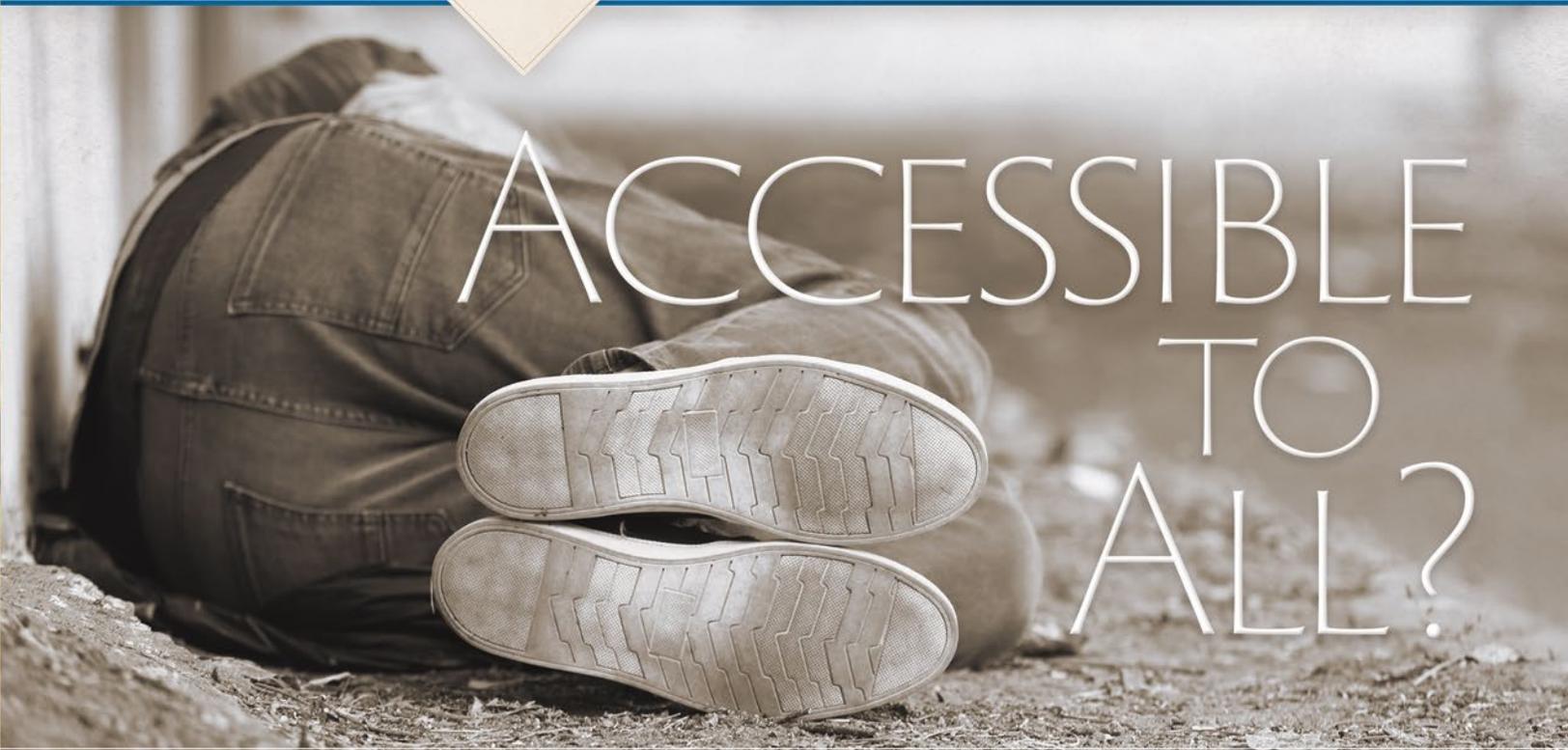
Mankind builds a framework within which we feel secure. It's like constructing a building and feeling good about what you have accomplished. However, when something goes wrong, when there is a crisis, it breaks the false sense of security. *Why is this? God wants us to trust Him, and crisis helps us to grow up, to mature through the difficulty.*

The pressures that believers experience help us to lean on God, to be open to the

changes God wants to bring to our lives. Without crisis we could not grow; we would become stagnant and weak.

The seasons of trials and crises may often be more than difficult or painful; they can often be *pure torture*.

The reason is that they require us to change, and man's nature resists change. However, our breakthroughs come only when we do. This is when we must remember that God will give us the strength we need. He wants us to leave our place of security, our comfort zone. To do this, we must change our *thought patterns*. This is uncomfortable because we think we know everything, when in reality we don't. He wants us to learn to lean on Him. ●



# ACCESSIBLE TO ALL?

**I**n the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), Yeshua was asked, “**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**” Part of His answer was to “**love your neighbor as yourself.**” Yeshua was asked to clarify who He meant by neighbor. This is when the parable of the Good Samaritan was given.

In the Torah, priests and Levites were called to a life of holiness which forbade them to touch the dead and even to enter a cemetery, etc. This is still followed by the religious Jews of our time.

In the story of the Good Samaritan we see this in action. Both the priest and the Levite passed by the man who had been beaten and robbed, lying in the road. Part of the reason they passed him by was that he could very well have been dead, and touching him would have made them ritually unclean.

Only the “pagan” Samaritan loved his neighbor as himself by coming near to the man in need and caring for him.

- Who found favor in God’s eyes?
- The priest and Levite whose focus was on ritual purity?
- Or the “pagan” Samaritan who ministered to this man’s needs asking for nothing in return?
- Who touched God’s heart?
- Whose heart and thought patterns need to be changed?

If we, the New Testament priests, those who believe in Yeshua, are more focused on our perception of holiness rather than the immediate needs of those God puts in front of us, we may be setting ourselves up for a crisis.

**Are we creating a framework which keeps us in and others out, or are we making the love of God accessible to all?**

[By the way, this parable of Yeshua convicts me on an additional personal level, because my family name is Cohen (priest in Hebrew), and therefore according to the Old Testament I am a priest.] ●

# The Way of the BURNING HEART

An excerpt from Eitan Shishkoff's forthcoming book: **With All Your Heart**



**And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'**" (Luke 24:32)

**"But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones."** (Jeremiah 20:9)

What a tangible description of the effect of God's Word inside of me! If you've ever had a thought or a feeling that was burning in you, you can fathom the account of the disciples who encountered Yeshua on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, or the sensation spoken of by Jeremiah. This penetrating phrase, **"fire in my heart,"** challenges me to ask myself "Is the fire of God's truth burning in MY heart? Or am I merely reading the pages for content and to 'check the box' that I've read the Bible today? Is my faith a flame or a fizzle?"

The returning King makes a tough statement in Revelation 3:16. **"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."** Why is Yeshua turned off by lukewarmness? It's the same reason I don't enjoy hot coffee that's cooled off. This

doesn't mean that we are to maintain a fake froth of spiritual enthusiasm. But it does point out our tendency to be dragged away from a passionate heart for God by a thousand and one amusements, anxieties, and aspirations.

What then is the key to fanning the flames of my love for the Lord, and keeping that fire burning? The quotes that opened this chapter hold some helpful clues.

When did the disciples' hearts burn? It was while Yeshua talked with them on the road. OK. I want to invite you right now to take a walk. If it's not convenient this moment, then very soon. Get outside and begin walking. Tell the Lord that you want to talk with Him "on the road," like those disciples going to Emmaus. Ask Him questions. Pour out your troubles and your longings. Then listen. He is waiting for you! Once you sense Him speaking to your heart, allow your heart to warm up. It may not happen the first or second time. But my experience is that when I truly seek Him, I find Him (Jeremiah 29:13). Being in touch with the One who fashioned the universe and Who shaped me to participate in His plan, thrills

me. THAT catches my heart on fire.

Then, during that same walk from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, He opened their eyes to "all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). And that was before they knew who He was! Yeshua is eager to reveal Himself through the pages of the Book. A surefire way to experience this burning sensation is to take your time ingesting His word. If you're like me, sometimes reading the Bible can be dry. But more often, if I open myself inside and I yearn to hear what the Spirit is saying to me, I find Him "reading my mail" and touching my heart. No one else knows what I'm going through in such intimate detail. **"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"** (Hebrews 4:13). It blows my mind repeatedly, but God actually cares about my moment to moment well-being. His desire is to interact with me heart to heart. ●

\*Chapter title borrowed from "Hearing God" by Dallas Willard, 2012, IVP Books.

