

Introduction

WHAT IS REALITY?

On February 5, 1996, Mapquest.com was created as an online Internet site, providing interactive mapping services. People all over the United States and, now, around the world have benefited from the billions of maps available through this Web site—an innovative system for those who need to find directions quickly to different states and cities across their countries. As travelers, whether to nearby cities or faraway countries, we have a consistent need to identify the best route to our destinations. No wonder this company is one of the transformational stories of this generation.

In the same way, God has provided a map for every Christian. His word shows us the best path to great relationships, lasting marriages and faithful living until our final destination: heaven. It reveals truths that are crucial for Christians today and in the future.

A Christian is a traveler—a pilgrim in this world on a passage of faith. As travelers, we, too, need a map to lead us in our faith. While on this spiritual peregrination, we will experience moments of joy, pain, euphoria and despair. It is an adventure not unlike exploring the jungles of the Amazon or visiting the mysterious pyramids of Egypt, and one that will demand perseverance and trust in God.

The Bible opens up an odyssey of the unseen and intangible—for those who dare to look into its sometimes mysterious truths, it reveals answers, hope and grace. Inside its pages exists a reality that lives and breathes in a realm apart from and yet enveloping every mortal being. It is only through the eyes of faith that the clouds of obscurity can be cleared to reveal a reality that cannot be ignored.

From every passage of Scripture, God and his existence are

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paired with miracles, signs and wonders. Those markers give us gauges and even warnings to carry the Christian voyager to righteous and virtuous paths. Sadly, we live in a world that leads us to believe otherwise. It is difficult for us to live against the tide. It takes great courage to live, not as the world lives, but as our Lord did. The world takes pleasure in the “here and now” while the true disciple has his hope set on eternity. God shows us his infinite wisdom in the Scriptures. His realm possesses the true paradise. None will find this hope in temporal gratifications.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what *is unseen is eternal*. (2 Corinthians 4:18, emphasis added)

True faith in Jesus leads to life—eternal, breathtaking and boundless. While a simple knowledge of the Bible can help us in our infancy as disciples, it is not sufficient for a soul who seeks to know the deeper truths. In our walk with the Lord, we are given the choice of exploring and pursuing a deeper understanding of God. As we hunt for genuine treasures in God’s heavenly world, we can grow in our convictions and the certainty of a reality that has always existed around us. We will no longer be controlled by the forces of evil, making us puppets on strings—influenced and directed by worldly opinions. Lyndon Johnson described puppets in the following way: “*Puppets. They simply respond to the pull of the most powerful strings.*”

Instead, as women of God, we will be able to sever the most influential strings and live solely by his everlasting word—not pulled emotionally, physically or circumstantially. Great men and women of faith such as the prophet Elisha lived against the tides of the world. While his contemporaries were blown to and fro by the ebb and flow of idolatry, Elisha stood firm on his hope and confidence in the eternal God. He was, in fact, a bridge between life and death; a light illuminating truth from lies; a source of wisdom apart

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from the foolishness of his era. No army, no commander and no government could prevail against the God of Elisha. His faith overcame despite the times. And we can too. Consider the following passage:

Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

"None of us, my lord the king" said one of the officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

"Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

(2 Kings 6:8-14)

The king of Aram is at war with Israel. To him this war is a physical battle, fought by means of strategy, scheme and design. On the other hand, to Elisha, a man of God, this war is on a spiritual platform where God is the ultimate authority and commander.

The king of Aram is frustrated by the fact that someone is telling his plans to the king of Israel. He believes that it is one of the commanders working under him who is revealing his plans and tactics to the enemy. One of the officers speaks up and says that it is Elisha

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the prophet. He suggests that Elisha knows what the king whispers in his very bedroom, a room only accessible to the king, his wives and his chosen servants. The king then sends horses, chariots and a strong force to capture this one man!

Isn't this the way we are many times? We see difficulties or obstacles and decide that we need to use more "force" or take more "control." Whether we thrust ourselves into having a busier schedule, muscle our way into getting that promotion or manipulate our spouses to get our way, we unknowingly miss the spiritual aspects of the situation. Our eyes can focus solely on the problem at hand and not on God's hand which has been working all along. Even Elisha's servant did not see the true reality of the battle that was being fought.

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered, "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

Elijah prayed for his servant so that he would see the reality around him. As wayfarers in this world, our ability to see truth will come through God's word and through prayer. There is nothing in the world more powerful than prayer to open our eyes to the reality around us. We are bombarded and, as a result, deceived by false beliefs and values. Our society hates truth but loves lies and clever ideas. It revels in our shortcomings and in our weaknesses which cause us to doubt ourselves and, thus, question our faith.

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Moreover, the daily routine of life often prevents us from recognizing the spiritual world around us. We end up relying exclusively on personal experiences and observations from magazines, TV, office gossip, school rumors and other propaganda, which keep us from noticing the miracles close to us—our existence, our children, our friends and so many more gifts from God. Hopefully in these pages, you can experience God's true world around you—a world you might have missed in your walk with him.

I pray that this book can deepen your prayer life and help you to see God and Jesus in a different and clearer way. I am offering you through these pages, a look at a world that you may have only heard about. It is like listening to mystery stories on a radio for years, then, suddenly, someone taking you to a wide-screen color movie theatre. Wow, what a difference between the two!

As you read these pages, I ask you to pray and to have an open mind to the Scriptures. Do not skip over the ones presented, but read them thoroughly, because it will be the Scriptures that bring the truth to light. As a traveler, do not let go of the map: the *word of God*. Keep your eyes on your guide as he guides you through your prayers. At the end of this adventure, hopefully, we will all make it to our ultimate destination and experience the true everlasting reality of God. So what are we waiting for? Let us pray for God to open the eyes of our heart.

Have a great journey!



STUDY QUESTIONS

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1. The beginning of this chapter describes us as travelers in this world. Our map is the word of God. God will guide us through our prayers. Hopefully, our journey will take us to our ultimate

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destination. Think carefully and answer from the heart as you look at the following questions.

- a. Do you really want to see the reality of God's world?
 - b. Do you base your spiritual experience on what you have seen or on what you read in God's word?
 - c. What spiritual truths have you recently seen in your life?
2. Elijah prayed to God to open his servant's eyes so that he could see.
- a. How often do you pray?
 - b. Do you pray to grow in your ability to see God's point of view for your life?
 - c. Are you praying for others so that they can see the truth in God's word?
3. Write down five ways that you want to have your eyes opened by the Scriptures as you study this book.