

**FINDING
GOD
IN THE BIBLE**

WHAT CRAZY PROPHETS,
FICKLE FOLLOWERS AND DANGEROUS OUTLAWS
REVEAL ABOUT FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD



DARREN WILSON



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I dedicate this book to my children: Serenity, Stryder and River. You three more than anyone have taught me the profound nature of a father's love for his children. If I, being a selfish and flawed man, can love you with such depth and want only what is best for you, I simply cannot comprehend how much more our Father loves us unconditionally and desires good and perfect things for us. Thank you for teaching me about the Father's heart, and thank you for being three terrific kids. I love you and am so very proud of you.

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Foreword

I have been both spectator and participant in the unfolding journey of Darren Wilson. I have seen the sovereign work of God as He selected this man—someone who had seemingly little-to-no interest in spiritual matters. And I’ve also seen what has become a growing hunger that drives this man beyond himself to engage God in a way that confronts all fears. His is truly a remarkable story, one that must be told. God took a complacent college professor and turned him into one of the spark plugs for a worldwide move of God.

Finding God in the Bible comes along at a time when a generation is crying out for a Gospel that will make sense of things in a way that stained-glass windows and Christian routine have not. This cry has opened a door to many messages that carry the name of Jesus, but are not the Gospel at all. They tickle the ears but contain little transformational power. Thankfully, *Finding God in the Bible* is not that way at all. It is real and gut-level honest, yet it is filled with the

things necessary to inspire a person to follow Jesus at any cost. This book is the essence of authentic.

On these pages, you will find great and sometimes humorous perspectives into difficult passages of Scripture. It also contains a roadmap of someone who came alive at Jesus' invitation: "Follow Me." This book provides a perfect blend of inspiration and insight.

Darren asks questions that many ignore. He then gives answers, but not as a "know-it-all." He answers as a man on a journey, a journey of growing friendship with God. One of the great tragedies in Christianity is to have the Bible interpreted by people who are not in love. Darren presents the antidote to that issue by speaking out of the core of his being—his identity as a friend of God. I have no doubt that Darren would have considered himself the least qualified for "friendship with God." Perhaps that's what qualified him most.

For a long time, the Church has tolerated a strange form of dishonesty. It's called "hype." It grieves me to see the Church create a culture in which hype is normal. Hype creates expectations it cannot fulfill. Living with theories and disappointment becomes the norm in that environment. Thus, a generation sits in that condition week after week until finally they choose something that is lesser, but will at least be honest. The raw but honest nature of Darren's books and films speaks more than adequately to this issue. The timing couldn't be more perfect or important.

Darren lives in the pursuit of answers. But the backstory of this book is that where no immediate answers are available, there is a relationship with God that is more than enough.

This posture allows for the peace that passes understanding to guard us and keep us safe in a hostile environment. In other words, the peace of His presence will suffice until we gain insight for our God-inspired quest for understanding. Such faith was at the heart of the issue for all our heroes of Scripture and Church history.

When individuals deal with the matters of the heart, they are making history with God. When they make history with God, they become positioned for God to make history through them. That is the case for Darren Wilson. He has said yes to God on every level. And now his writings and films are both making history and marking history.

I commend to you *Finding God in the Bible*. I also commend to you his films: *Finger of God*, *Furious Love* and *Father of Lights*. They are all life-changing in the fullest sense of the word. And, finally, I commend to you the man Darren Wilson, a personal friend, and, more importantly, a friend of God.

Bill Johnson, senior leader,
Bethel Church, Redding, California



The God of the Bible: My BFF

In case you weren't aware, God is an author. He wrote a book. Not only that, His book is a bestseller. In fact, the Bible is on record as the all-time bestseller in publishing history. If you haven't read it, you should check it out. It has everything you need in a good story: action, adventure, romance, intrigue, betrayal, death, rebirth, the salvation of the whole world—His book is seriously epic. It's so good, in fact, that God never felt the need to write a sequel. His one and only book is pure perfection.

Being an author and professional storyteller myself (although slightly less successful than God), I see His book through a lens that's different from a lot of other people's lenses. While it is certainly the Word of God—and I stake my entire life on what is written on those pages—still, I cannot

separate myself from the fact that it is also . . . well . . . a book.

While countless others have ruminated on the meanings of the stories, concepts and applications of His book, I want to take a look at it from a slightly different perspective. I want to understand more about the Author based on His decisions and actions within the book. Let me explain what I mean.

As every storyteller will confirm, countless hours go into a composition to make sure that it is accurate and entertaining. But beyond that, we also work hard on every nuance to make sure that the story says exactly what we want it to say. This is because a story reveals as much about its author as it does about the characters created within. I always tell my students that they can't hide their true selves from me: All I need to do is read their stories.

I believe that all stories carry various levels of this “author-stamping,” as I call it. Every story I write, for instance, no matter what it is about, will always wind up being about redemption. That is because this is what means the most to me in life. Along the way, I might write about things that push the boundaries of what some Christians deem “acceptable.” I am not afraid to write a swear word, for instance. Nor am I afraid to paint a realistic picture of a terrible act, even if it might upset someone.

This is a reflection of my upbringing more than anything else. I was raised in the home of an artist and taught from a very young age that the status quo is not something I am to strive for. Great art meets people and moves people right where they are. When I write something, I want to explore the tensions of faith and the human experience. My work as

a storyteller involves careful crafting, certainly, but it is also both an artistic decision and a window into my soul.

It is my contention, then, that God, who is the greatest artist of all time, reveals much of Himself in His story. And since He is such a complete artist, I could spend my lifetime searching His book and continue to come up with new revelations of His character hidden inside. The fact is, God basically begs us to pick apart His book in this way, as He not only writes about a wide variety of characters, lowlifes and outlaws, but actually goes so far as *to enter His own story physically*. Only God could dare do such a thing.

Everything we will study here hangs on that assumption—that God is revealing His own character through His interaction with the characters He has created, and what He chose to write about that interaction.

I think, for instance, it's a fairly safe assumption that God had more interaction and conversations with Moses than are recorded in the Bible. One can only conclude that He had a good reason for what He kept and what He cut.

Or what about Enoch? I think that Enoch is one of the top five most fascinating characters in the Bible, and God basically gives us *a couple of sentences* about the guy! “Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and then he was no more because God took him away.” That's it? Enoch is one dude I will be making a beeline for as soon as I get to heaven. I guarantee you that he has some stories that will make your hair stand on end. But why doesn't God tell any of them to us? Anyone who walks with God for three hundred years with that kind of intimacy has to have seen some wild stuff. The only other person in the Bible to get that kind of an

exit is Elijah, and next to Jesus, he takes the cake for wacky miraculous encounters.

So why is God silent on Enoch? You might have different interpretations of many of the things we discuss in this book—which is what makes God that much greater a storyteller!—but in the case of Enoch, I wonder if maybe God is showing us that sometimes He wants things to be just between us and Him.

If God has shown us anything, it's that He is a God who yearns to be intimate with us. That is the whole reason He sent His Son here. He wants a relationship with us, but we are such idiots, so dirty and sinful, that in order for that to happen, someone had to pay for our idiocy. That He sent His own Son to do it reveals much of His character.

The Best Laid Plans

I first discovered this aspect of intimacy in God's character at a moment when I felt like a total creative failure.

I make movies for a living. It just so happens that those movies are about God. This was not something I chose to do exactly. When I was a kid, I didn't stare out the window and fantasize about someday changing the world through movies designed to capture the essence of an invisible God. Being a filmmaker was never a dream of mine, even when I went to film school. I wanted to *write* movies, not make them.

I remember taking aptitude tests when I was in grade school. They were supposed to identify what you were “geared for,” what kind of a career you were most likely to enter into

when you were a grown-up. I remember how nervous I was the first time I took one of those things. It was like filling out an application to have your fortune told. It seemed kind of heavy for a ten-year-old kid. What was it going to tell me? What if I didn't like what it said? My little kid brain could not grasp the notion of personality profiles. All I knew was that this thing was going to tell me what I was going to be when I grew up. I secretly hoped it would come back as "the next Michael Jordan."

That didn't happen. Nonetheless, I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw the results. Even as a kid, it seems, I had an aptitude for writing and teaching. That's what the test revealed anyway. I thought, *Yeah, I can do that. Anything other than manual labor sounds good to me.* I grew up in Monroe, Michigan, a blue-collar, pseudo-farm town, and most of my friend's dads worked up at the Ford plant near Detroit. That was always my worst nightmare: working at the plant. Not because I hated cars, but because I knew that I was built to write stories.

At first I was sure I would be a famous author. Then I was determined to be a successful screenwriter (because there is really no such thing as a famous screenwriter). But never did filmmaker, director or movie producer enter my head. Not once did I dabble in home movies. I liked movies, but simply because I liked stories. As a teenager I read the classics. For fun! I was such a nerd.

But as we will see in this book, God always knows us better than we know ourselves. His genius astounds me every day. Somehow, He saw a public speaker in this quiet kid who couldn't talk without tripping over his words. He

saw a filmmaker in a writer who had no interest (and still doesn't) in cameras. He saw a heart that would be wholly devoted to Him even when friendship with Him was the last thing I wanted.

The Most Unlikely One

So it was with a sense of career failure, on a cold December night in 2005, that I sat in my crummy townhouse just outside of Chicago, staring at the fading embers of a fire in my crumbling fireplace. It was a perfect metaphor for my life. My hopes for success as a writer were about as dead as they could be. The coals of ambition were not even hot anymore. I kept churning out stories because I enjoyed the process, but reality was settling in. As I neared thirty, my life was coming into focus. I had been a college professor since age 23, and that was all I was ever going to be. Not a bad gig, but not what I had always wanted. I had no more ideas left even to try. I was blocked. It was over. The smoke was rising from the ashes of my hopes and dreams.

I trudged upstairs to bed. My wife, Jenell, had gone up a while before. We had just fought, again, about something I thought was totally stupid. She wanted me to ask God for an idea to write about. She saw my blockage, saw a husband who could barely tolerate church anymore, and she had tried everything to jump-start my heart and passion for God. I had endured passive-aggressive conversations, shaming, strategically placed books around the house, open begging, silent treatments—the works, really. I told her the only thing that

ever really helped was when she left me alone and prayed for me, but that was always hard for her because it felt as though she was giving up.

I didn't want to do it . . . ask God for an idea. It felt like the ultimate end to a failed dream. I wasn't even sure I believed in God anymore. Well, not the God I grew up with. It all seemed so contrived. Church had become a subculture built to keep itself alive. I was overwhelmed by the fake smiles and the fake handshakes and the fake conversations. I wanted something real.

But then again, I didn't. I knew that if I ever got something real, I'd be responsible for it. If something is true and you find out about it, then action must follow. If God could really be the Friend that I had been hearing about from my family and my wife, who kept attending all these crazy charismatic conferences, then, man, that was seriously going to change things. And as much as I wanted to succeed creatively, I wanted that much more for my spiritual life to remain the same. I might have raged against the status quo in my creative life, but I fully embraced it spiritually. Why? Because it was safe.

By the time I got into bed, though, I was a defeated man. As I sank my head into my pillow, I prayed a shallow, unbelieving prayer.

“God, if You've got an idea, I guess I'll take it.”

Like a bombshell, the idea exploded in my brain. My eyes flew open. I jumped out of bed and ran downstairs to write it down. The words that poured out formed the opening salvo for my first feature film.

Many of the events that happened next—from my encounter with an angel five months later to entering the world of

film directing and production—are told in my book *Filming God*. I saw and heard things during those four years that not only ignited my cold, stale heart for God, but also drew me slowly, relentlessly, into newfound and wholly unexpected friendship with Him.

I started my first film, *Finger of God*, wondering if God would do anything at all when I turned on the camera. During my second film, *Furious Love*, I knew He would probably do stuff, and I started to believe that He would show up wherever I went. With my third film, *Father of Lights*, I knew He would back me up. By the time I reached the end of filming that movie (the wild Dome of the Rock sequence) I was asking things of Him and expecting things of Him that only a friend would. My journey from skeptic jerk to friend of God was complete.

In essence, this book is about friendship with God. All of the stories that we will explore here reflect His great desire to be intimate with us, His children. I believe that He wants to have a broad spectrum of relationships with us—Father, Lover, Mother, Teacher, Savior, Protector. But it is my contention that His chief aim, the reason He took such care in giving His marvelous book to us, is so that we might know Him, forever and ever, as our devoted, loving, trustworthy Friend.

You will not read here an exhaustive listing of things God has done. Rather you will find a smattering of examples from the Bible that I feel best reveal this aspect of His character. From Moses to Abraham to David to those wacky prophets, we have much to discover about Him by looking at the way He treats His friends.

I have written this book as much for myself as for anyone else. Having spent the last six years on a personal journey of discovery of the living God, and having met countless amazing people around the world who have had mind-boggling encounters with Him, I wanted to weigh all of these experiences against the Scriptures and try to see where God has revealed Himself as Friend throughout His story.

In the end, everything points to God. As Jesus said to the religious leaders who were trying to get Him to quiet the worshiping crowds, “Hey, if they don’t do this, the flipping rocks will cry out!” Well, that’s kind of what He said.

So let’s start looking under some rocks, shall we?



Creation and Kisses

As a storyteller, I am acutely aware of the importance of a good beginning. If you don't start your story off with a bang, you are in big trouble because more than likely your audience is not going to have the patience to stick with you. There is also a level of trust implicit in all beginnings, a kind of nonverbal contract where you promise your readers that (1) you know what you're doing, and (2) you're about to take them on a fun ride.

If all great stories need to start off with a bang, God, as usual, shows all of us mere mortals how it's supposed to be done. Like a seasoned rocker who wants to show all the upstarts what real rock 'n' roll sounds like, He starts His story with the biggest bang imaginable. The Big Bang. Literally. He speaks and—*bang!*—the creation of the universe.

Scientists tell us that the universe is not only expanding, but doing so at an ever-increasing rate of speed. This is a testament to the fact that God's voice from the very beginning continues to echo through space and time. As for the increase in speed? I'm no physicist, but from the looks of things I think we can fairly safely conclude that when God gives a command, it not only gets the job done but also carries a little something called momentum. So don't be surprised when God works through you and it continues to grow bigger and more wonderful and sometimes faster than you ever dreamed. It's just God's momentum. He is like a steam locomotive picking up speed, and He is unstoppable. This aspect of His character is built into the very fabric of the universe.

So God decides to open His story with the creation of the world. Not a bad start. Now let's take a closer look at some of the "firsts" of His book. We'll find that they are both descriptive and revealing of His nature and character as Friend.

A Creative God

Here is the first line from God to humanity. It is the first thing He is going to reveal of Himself to the world, so we can assume that He puts a lot of thought into this, His introduction:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

I find it fascinating that the first thing He decides to tell us about Himself is *not* that He is a God of love. Or covenant.

Or goodness. Or forgiveness. Or patience. Or grace. All of that is soon to come—and, in fact, the rest of His book takes great pains to show us those aspects of Himself in detail. But for some reason, the first thing God wants us to know about Him is that He is creative.

Created. It's the fifth word in the Bible, and the first word of any real substance (aside from God's name, of course). This is the opening shot from the storytelling bow. God takes aim at an aspect of Himself that is often overlooked on Sunday mornings: God is creative. In fact, God is creativity itself. Why does He start His book with this? The answer, I believe, goes to the heart of His hopes for us as individuals, as well as His collective Body.

As we will see throughout God's book, He is wildly creative in the ways He goes about His business. In the Person of Jesus, we see this creativity constantly in action. He's always taking people by surprise, always using creative stories to illustrate His point—and He rarely heals anyone the same way twice. One blind man gets spat upon; another is simply told he is healed.

Man often tries to take these creative acts and turn them into formulas for healing and ministry. I understand the concept: If this is the way Jesus did stuff, then how can you go wrong by copying the Master? (I'm still waiting to hear about a "spit ministry," though.) The problem is that if God is creativity incarnate, then by His very nature He cannot be placed into a formula. There is no five-step program to getting God to show up or listen to you. He is not a caged animal to be brought out by the beating of drums or the playing of flutes. He is a wild lion here, a meek and quiet lamb there.

He is an eagle one time, a gazelle the next. By showing us at the very start that He is creative, God is trying to tell us that He cannot be put in a box.

But of course, the Church has been trying to do just that for quite some time now.

A God in a box is much easier to deal with than one who is wild and unchained. We can understand a captive God, and, most importantly, we can *control* Him. But God cannot and will not be caged, controlled or boxed in. We can try all we want, but as soon as we do, God, in essence, hightails it out of there. He wants no part of captivity. So we continue with our rituals, with our formulaic Christianity, all the while thinking that God is pleased with us, that He is just loving the fact that we are the chosen ones who understand Him and are putting on such a fine show for Him. Unfortunately, we're usually the last ones to realize that God vacated the premises long ago.

When you remove the opportunity for God to be creative in the Church, you are left with religion. Religion in its most grotesque form is a system built upon principles, rules and empty theology; the heart has been ripped out. It's like zombie church. We are walking around, interacting with people, doing "churchy" things, but we are stiff and stale and not particularly pleasing. In fact, most people run from us when we're doing zombie church. Zombie churches don't attract people; they simply live to survive.

We know it is possible to "do church" without heart, as the church in Ephesus was told:

"You have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I

have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen.”

Revelation 2:3–5

Here God is saying, in no uncertain terms, that no matter how good our intentions are, no matter how much we endure and how hard we work for the Kingdom, if we don't operate the way He wants us to operate (that is, abounding in love) then He is actually going to hold that against us!

Then, of course, we have the famous admonition to the church in Laodicea given in Revelation 3:14–22—which is the church most closely associated with the Western Church today. This is where God tells us that if we're lukewarm, He will spit us out of His mouth. You only spit stuff out that you don't want to be a part of you anymore. God doesn't sugarcoat it—if you try to peg Him as being this way and only this way, and if you're more interested in playing church than you are in Him and His kids, then He is going to have to move on from you (not personally, but corporately). You have probably heard of the term *dead church*. This (a church bent on activity over relationship) is one of the main reasons for that deadness. As the lead singer of U2, Bono, once said: “Religion is what's left when the Spirit leaves the building.”

The Breath of God

Returning to our story, as God is creating the world, He does so by simply speaking things into existence. When God speaks, His words become law. Nothing in the universe can

undo His words because the entire universe was created by His words, which makes it subject to His words. But when it comes time to create man, God takes a different approach:

The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

Instead of simply saying, “Let there be man,” which seems logical given His track record for creation up to this point, He now gets on His hands and knees and scoops up a pile of dirt and forms man as a potter would form clay. It is as if God is intentionally telling us that even amidst the glories of His universe, we are the thing He takes the most time with and are, therefore, His prized possessions.

What happens next, though, changes the whole game. As I just mentioned, up until now God is speaking things into existence. It would make sense, then, that after creating Adam, He would speak the word *Live* and Adam would begin breathing. Adam’s body would have to obey God’s command, and His heart would have to start beating, and his brain would have to start functioning. But God apparently has something else in mind for this creation of His. I think He also wants to show us His intentions right from the start.

Genesis tells us that God “breathed the breath of life” into Adam. In essence, He breathes part of Himself into us. And at this point, remember, the only thing we know about Him is that He is creative. This means that if you are breathing right now, you, too, are a creative being. Don’t

forget: This is one of the major things that separate us from the animals.

But even more profound than His breathing Himself into us is the fact that He chooses to breathe anything into us at all. Think about it: What is the only way you can breathe your breath into someone? Your lips must touch the other person's lips.

God's first act toward mankind is a kiss.

Lest there be any mistaking God's intentions toward us, lest we forget that the thing He desires above all else with us is relationship, we need only look at this first act. It is loaded with symbolism. If it isn't enough that He gets His hands dirty shaping us into existence, then the fact that He stoops to our level and places His pure, holy lips upon ours so that we might have something of Him inside of us, whether we believe in Him or not, is heartbreakingly beautiful.

But it doesn't stop there.

Ignition

Next we see God's first words to man. This is it: the moment of truth. I can just see Adam and Eve standing there, naked, holding hands as their Creator settles in to speak to them for the first time. The nervous energy crackling in the air—the aroma of God's love pouring over them. What is He going to say? What is He going to do?

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”

Genesis 1:28 ESV

The first sentence to man: *Be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth*. On the surface, it may seem like a letdown. That's it? A weird, vague command? Yet, in reality, this statement is dripping with meaning.

God is far too good a storyteller to overlook even the tiniest detail. We can assume, therefore, that the order of His words carries a message as well. I don't think it is by random chance that He chooses to say "Be fruitful" first, followed by "multiply and subdue" next. I think God understands all too well the people He has just created. We would get the second and third parts of His first sentence quite well, thank you very much. Sex and power. We're on it, Captain. Those are orders we can happily follow.

But "be fruitful"? I think He says that first because it is dearest to His heart for us. While we as a race may care most about sex and power, He cares most about our fruitfulness, our sense of meaning in the world. He wants us to strive for excellence, to use our time well, to be intentional with our gifts—not so much for His and His Kingdom's sake, but for our sake! What we do on this earth means something to Him. It should, therefore, mean something to us as well.

But God has not finished teaching us through His interactions with Adam, not by a long shot, because what comes next takes that whole notion of fruitfulness and gives it an injection of righteous steroids.

Time to Go to Work

God has created man. He has breathed life into him, and that life carries the essence of His creativity. So it is only natural

for God to want to take His new creation out for a test drive. Which brings about the first job given to man:

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

Genesis 2:19 NIV

Man's first assignment is a creative one: Give all the animals on earth names. God is showing all of us that we are not created primarily to plow the fields or build shelters or tend the flocks; nor are we even created primarily to do His bidding. We are free agents right from the start, and He hands us the wheel of His new creation and tells us to take it for a spin. He passes the creative buck of naming all the animals to us. This shows both God's immense humility as well as His trust in our abilities.

The implications here are profound. For one, our words carry weight with God. He pays attention to what we say and what we proclaim. It's why the Bible tells us that a man who can tame his tongue is perfect (see James 3:2). Our mouths are our biggest asset as well as our greatest enemy. We can bless or curse, and the reason for that is because God cares about what we say. He has given us an amazing and dangerous authority over His creation and each other (more on that later).

Even more telling is the implication that God feels joy and anticipation in letting Adam be creative. You can just see Him leaning forward, interest piqued, a smile spreading across His face as Adam takes a deep breath and dives in.

But it also implies something that should free us all in our quest for fruitfulness. God is showing here that He is interested in what Adam is about to do.

Which means that He derives pleasure from Adam's creative act.

Which means that He derives pleasure from our creative acts.

Which makes our creative acts . . . worship.

God Giggles?

Maybe it's the strange way my brain works, but to me, we come now to one of the coolest sentences in the Bible. I'm not sure how important it is in the grand scheme of things, but, then again, this book is about uncovering some of the smaller details peppered throughout the Bible that reveal aspects of God's character, and this one is a perfect example:

They [the man and his wife] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

Genesis 3:8

First, the obvious. Not until Jesus shows up on the scene will God again so openly and brazenly walk on the earth in our midst. Who knows if He still does it on His own, out in the wild somewhere, just for old time's sake? It's probably best for us not to conjecture too much on that and turn God into some kind of holy Sasquatch. Let's stay focused on what this says about God's character and the kind of relationship He desires with us.

We all know that the pre-Fall Garden of Eden was the way God *intended* for His creation to be. No death, apparently (meaning no steak—a serious flaw in the system if you ask me), and this curious little admission on God’s part. He walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. The God of the universe took human form and came down just to hang out with Adam and Eve. Who knows what kinds of conversations they had? Maybe He taught them biology. Or algebra. Or the way His world works. Maybe He had to explain the birds and the bees to them. Maybe He just listened to them. Maybe He told them jokes.

I have to stop here and tell you a story. If you have seen my film *Father of Lights*, you’ve met Ravi, whose friendship is one of the most unique gifts I’ve ever been given. He hears the audible voice of God every day. I mean it, audible. He wakes up and God tells him whom he’s going to meet that day and what he’s supposed to say to them. Sometimes He gives Ravi GPS turn-by-turn directions to head somewhere and save a lost or kidnapped child. Ravi has a million stories of crazy stuff God has asked him to do, but this particular story bears telling because it shows exactly why God gave Ravi this gift and not someone as simpleminded and moronic as me.

I was filming with Ravi in India for *Father of Lights*, and we were driving somewhere—I don’t remember the particulars. Ravi is my friend, so I feel comfortable enough to ask him stupid questions all the time. I mean, how many people am I going to meet who have audible conversations with God every day? So, my mind going to its usual strange place, I asked him:

“Hey, Ravi, is God, like, super serious all the time?”

“Well, He’s very funny, but when He’s talking business, He’s all business.”

“Has He ever told you a joke?”

Ravi laughed. I’m pretty sure no one had ever asked him that before. “No, sir.”

“You should ask God to tell you a joke.”

Ravi laughed some more.

“I’m serious! Can you imagine what a joke from God would be like? It would have to be the funniest joke in the history of the world!”

Ravi continued laughing. Then he thought for a moment. “You know what? I think I will ask Him to tell me a joke.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes. I will ask Him the next time we talk.”

At that point, I was feeling quite pleased with myself. And secretly, I couldn’t wait to hear that joke. Of course, I wasn’t expecting God to *actually* tell Ravi a joke, but even the thought of asking God for one struck me as hilarious.

A few days went by, and during the filming a lot of crazy stuff went down. But toward the end of our time together I asked Ravi about the joke. He told me he kept forgetting, that every time God talked to him it had been all business. Shoot, it was enough for Ravi simply to remember everything God was telling him.

So I headed back home to Chicago. But every few days I sent an email to Ravi to see if he had asked God for a joke. He kept telling me no, he had not had the chance to bring it up. I got busy with life again, and a few weeks went by. One day I remembered that I hadn’t asked Ravi in a while, so I

wrote him again. This time he told me that, actually, yes, he did ask God for a joke.

And?

He told Ravi one.

And?

Ravi wasn't going to tell me the joke.

I could have punched my computer screen. I begged, I pleaded, but to no avail. Ravi refused to tell me.

I asked him if it was at least funny.

He said yes, kind of.

At that point, my curiosity was raised to the boiling point. I was never going to let this die. So when our good mutual friend Will Hart (whom I filmed with in *Furious Love*) told me a few months later that he was heading over to India to see Ravi, I told him the story and instructed him to get Ravi to tell him the joke. He promised to get it out of him (he has known Ravi much longer).

When Will returned, I called him immediately.

"Wilson," he said, "he's not going to tell you that joke."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, but he wouldn't even tell me. I have no idea what his problem is."

More months went by, and Ravi came to visit me in Chicago. Now I had him cornered. I was like a rabid dog, hell-bent on prying that stupid joke out of my friend. It was no longer simple curiosity driving me, but raving madness.

"Ravi, you have to tell me the joke."

"I cannot tell you the joke, sir."

"But it's my joke! You wouldn't have even asked for it if I hadn't told you to. If anyone on earth deserves to hear this joke, it's me!"

“I can’t.”

“Why?”

And that’s when I started to get an inkling as to why he wouldn’t tell me.

“Well,” Ravi began, a little warily, “I asked Him, and He kind of laughed.”

“He laughed?”

“Well, it was kind of a giggle.”

“God giggles?”

“Yeah, like a cross between a laugh and a giggle. I could tell He thought the idea was funny. So He was quiet for a moment, then He starts telling me a joke. It starts off really funny, and I’m laughing. It was a story joke, you know? But as He’s telling the story, it keeps getting more and more funny, and I’m laughing out loud. But then it gets to the punch line and . . .”

“Yeah?”

“And I realized it was a joke about me.”

I stared at him for a moment. Have to admit, I wasn’t expecting that. So God told Ravi a joke, but it was a joke about Ravi. And then I understood why he was never going to tell me. Ravi is an intensely private person. He knew that if he ever told me the joke I’d probably wind up putting it in one of my books (which I would—and, in fact, did), and the last thing this humble, private man wanted was for the whole world to read the one recorded joke told by God in human history, and he’s the punch line.

This also shows the genius of God. He granted my request, but in such a way as to make sure the joke He told never saw the light of day. It was a personal moment between

two friends, and it was intended to stay that way. While I'm disappointed, a big part of me is more than a little satisfied to know that the God I love and serve actually told a joke.

And that I made Him giggle.

So what's the point of all this? When we look at God's character as displayed through His creation of the world and His first interactions with the men and women He created, we can understand that, from the very beginning, He has been a God who desires friendship with us. He is not an absentee landlord. Nor is He some deity up in the sky, looking down at this world with clinical distance. He is a God who desires to walk with us in the cool of the day; whose first act toward us was a kiss; who sees us as more than just worker bees; and who is far more relatable than we give Him credit for.

In essence, He is a God who, if nothing else, shows us right from the start that He actually *has* a character; He *has* a personality. It is up to us, then, to discover it.