



## Seeking and Searching

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I keep a small collection of wall crosses. Each one hangs alone on a wall in my office until the season changes, and another takes its place. The one hanging now will remain until March, when I swap it for a cross covered in shamrocks.

The ceramic cross I selected in January features a favorite passage from Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord.” Because the New Year is often a time for setting goals and determining our path forward, it felt appropriate to have this visible reminder that God’s plans are intended to give us “a future with hope.”

These words can float like magic, promising an easy and prosperous way forward. Read in isolation, God has a plan for us; it’s good; and we can just wait for it to happen. So why doesn’t it work that way? Why don’t our lives unfold in perfect order as we sit in our easy chairs and watch?

I wish my cross bore the successive lines from Jeremiah: “Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”

Those verses place us in a reciprocal relationship with God:

We call upon, come, and pray to God

We search for God

We seek God with all our hearts

I hear you

I am found

I will let you find me

Both parts are active: we call, come, pray, search, and seek. Then, and only then, will God restore us and gather us in. It is not magic; it is foundational to our relationship with God.

In dry seasons, when I wonder why God is so quiet, I am reminded of this passage from Jeremiah. It makes me look closely at myself first, rather than merely questioning God’s absence. I ask whether I am faithfully and regularly praying. Beyond an occasional complaint lifted heavenward to accuse God of being distant, I am forced to ask myself whether I am diligently searching for God. Am I seeking God with all my heart? Or, am I preoccupied with dinner plans, the next episode of Manifest, financial security, the health of my family, the overflowing laundry basket... How else is my heart being led?

The husband and wife sat on opposite ends of the bench seat in their pickup, as they drove down the bumpy dirt road. Looking over at her husband who was driving, the wife remarked, “Remember how we’d snuggle together whenever we went somewhere in the pickup?” She asked forlornly, “We don’t we do that anymore?” From his position behind the steering wheel, the husband replied, “I haven’t moved.”

God hasn’t moved. I have. The words of Jeremiah are a call to return, to slide across the bench seat and snuggle up close. They call me – us – to prayer and deliberate seeking by reordering the priorities of our heart.

Perhaps my shamrock cross will stay in the cabinet a bit longer than usual. I have some work to do.