



### What does it Mean to Seek God?

Hebrews 11:1-6

November 11, 2018

Recently, Gail and I and a gazillion other people visited Israel. In some sense we were all seeking God. What did we find? And what does it even mean to seek God?

We found it good to get away, see new things, and be with good people in our tour group. We also found some difficulties, like long flights and narrow aisles, steps and stairs, smoke and dust, and “interesting” food. The good, however, far outweighed the bad.

We found a better understanding of ancient history (and modern!) and practices (building, baths, bathrooms, burial). Some sites made history more vivid to us (Qumran, Herod’s palaces, a gate into Canaan, early cities, an inscription about Pontius Pilate).

We found some sites of Bible events that didn’t do too much for us, either because we didn’t think they were the actual sites or due to all that had grown up around them. But we also found some Bible sites that were very meaningful:

Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30)

En Gedi (1 Samuel 23:29; 24:1; Psalm 57)

Megiddo (Judges 5:19; 1 Kings 9:15)

The pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15)

The Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:12-17; John 21:1)

Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23; 21:11; Luke 2:4, 51; 4:16)

Capernaum (Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:21; 2:1)

Jacob’s Well (John 4:6)

All these were “neat” and “cool” and “awesome,” but is that what it means to seek God? At first I found myself saying, “it made the Bible seem more real.” Upon reflection, it’s more accurate to say it helped us see the reality of the events and places of the Bible more clearly and vividly. In some cases, words on pages became images in our minds as we got to actually see what Scripture describes.

Still, I don’t think going to Israel is the ultimate way of seeking God. We saw evidence of things described in the Bible but it did not prove Christianity. You can prove scientifically that Jesus lived, but you cannot prove that he is the Son of God. Hebrews and many other passages teach us that faith is absolutely essential to pleasing God.

Maybe that’s why Christianity is not a religion that requires its followers to make a trek to a holy site each year. Besides, many of us will never get to go. But we don’t have to go to a Temple. We are the Temple, and God lives in us.

Perhaps the best benefit of going to Israel is that it drew my attention and focus to the truths of Scripture. I read and reread and pondered and prayed. That was beneficial to my faith and life. The trip was a catalyst for doing this, but you don’t have to go on a trip to start focusing on Scripture. We can seek God earnestly through Scripture and prayer anytime, anyplace.

We saw many different people who practice faith in many different ways, including us. Instead of merely touring where Jesus lived and forming our own conclusions about how we should respond to Him, it is better for us to listen closely to what Jesus actually told us. He, too, taught about trusting him, leading to obedience, service, acceptance, and love. These are the best and most important ways to seek God. And they are available to all of us all the time.

