



Pearls of Great Price

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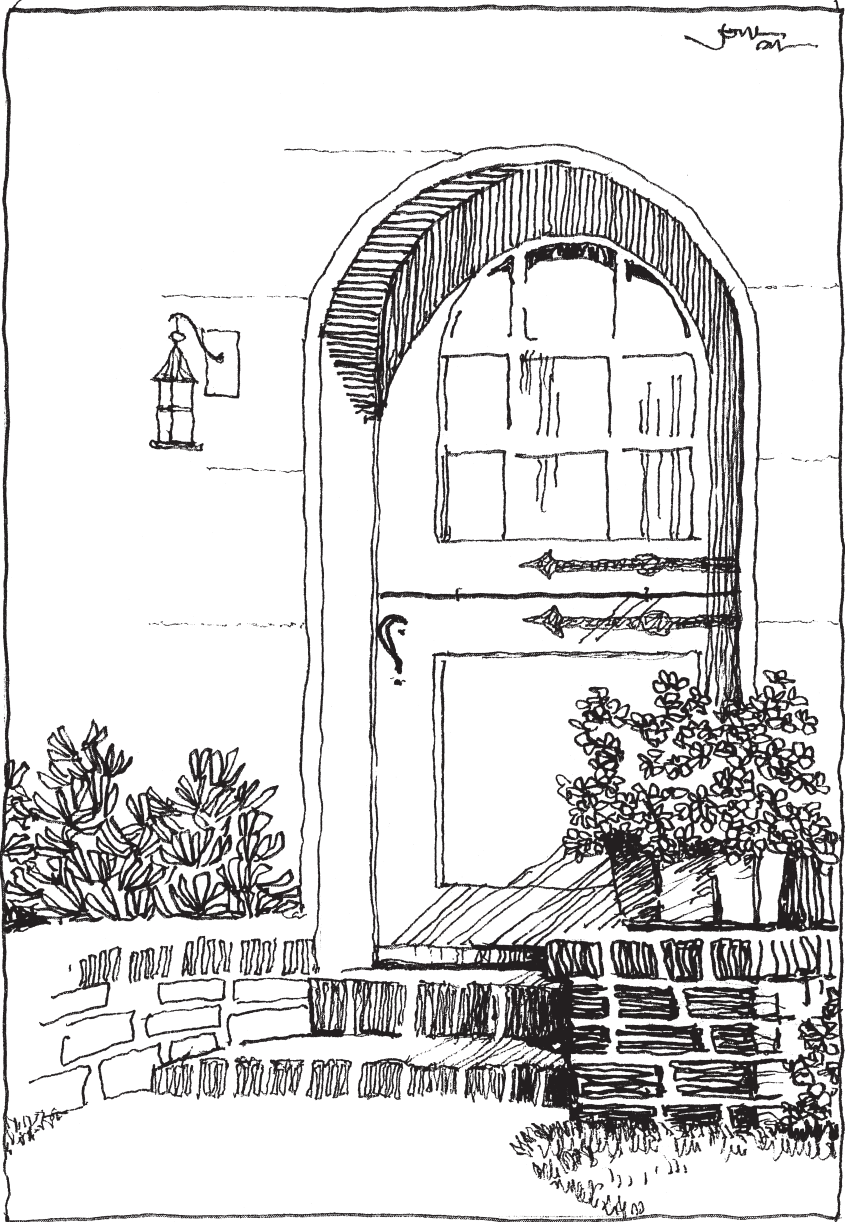
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JANUARY I

An Eternity of Discovery

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 NKJV

It's a new year, a time for the adventure of discovery. And I love it. I'm the first to take a side road to explore a different part of the countryside. There is something about wheeling along a path I've never traveled or driving down a highway for the first time that stirs my excitement and curiosity. What's around that next corner? What's over that next hill? That's what the thrill of discovery will do for you. You feel truly *alive*, with all senses fully engaged.

Now ... just think of heaven! Think of all there will be to learn and explore. And because God himself is eternal, the discovery will never, never end. We will delve into unknown worlds and perhaps even second and third universes. All of these discoveries will magnify the greatness of our Creator.

On this earth explorers and scientists will continue to make new discoveries, and for those who honor God, we will marvel again and again at his character, his handiwork, and his creative genius. But just imagine what God is saving for us to discover about himself and his creative might throughout all eternity! Understanding his glory—and responding in worship—will be a never-ending adventure.

Commit to entering this New Year fully alive with all your senses engaged! You are about to learn and explore God's perfect plan for you for the next 365 days. And one more thing: If you find yourself in a drab, humdrum moment today—perhaps standing at the gas pump—turn your thoughts toward your future home. Do you have loved ones on the other side? Imagine the awe and joy they are experiencing right now! Let your visions of a radiant heaven awaken your sense of adventure for this year ahead.

Lord of all eternity, give me a sense of adventure about the new year. Help me to see that this year brings me closer to my Eternal Home where I will enjoy your presence forever!



JANUARY 2
What's Up Ahead

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

—PSALM 37:5–6

T sit so tall in my wheelchair that I need a van with a raised roof. The trouble is, I can't see the road. My friend Careen and I once drove from Chicago to Urbana and I didn't see a single cornfield or farmhouse for three and a half hours! She kept describing lovely country landscapes, but it only frustrated me. I wanted to *see*. I'm the sort of person who likes to know what lies ahead. If I can't see the whole road, then at least a few feet?!

We are like that spiritually. We say to God, "If you don't mind, please show me where I am going. I don't need to see the whole road, but at least a little bit." We think our faith *has* to be supported by a bit of evidence. A hint, a signpost, a whisper . . . *something* to give us a clue as to what God is doing. We wrongly assume that faith is the ability to take a couple of puzzle pieces and be able to envision the entire picture. Not so. Faith that must be supported by the five senses is not genuine. Jesus said to doubting Thomas, "You have believed me because you have seen me, but *blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*"

Our insistence upon discerning what's up ahead is natural, but it is a hindrance to real faith. It's why God constantly encourages us to trust him in the dark (Isaiah 50:10). True faith means resting in who God is. He has charged himself with full responsibility for your eternal happiness, and he stands ready to take over the management of your life. He is wise and good. Trust him with what's ahead.

No ifs, ands, or buts, dear God. I trust you with the road ahead!



JANUARY 3

The Bread of Tears

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

—1 JOHN 4:4 NASB

*Y*ears ago my missionary friend Gesina was thrown into a communist prison in the Balkans because they caught her with Christian literature in the trunk of her car. Sitting in that pitch-black cell, surrounded by a sickening stench with filth and trash on the floor that she couldn't even see, she suddenly thought of a verse of Scripture. That very morning, she had read Psalm 80:5 in her quiet time: "You have fed them with the bread of tears."

The verse came back strongly to her heart in that dark moment, but—it wasn't particularly comforting in her present circumstances! Frightened and overwhelmed, she had no idea if her friends would realize what had happened to her. Just then, the jailer opened the small food door and shoved through a stick of salami and a chunk of bread. Frustrated that she couldn't even set the meat down on the dirty floor in order to tear off a piece of bread, she began to cry. Without thinking, she wiped her tears with the chunk of bread. And suddenly the verse she had read that morning flashed before her. She laughed out loud. *God knew!* He hadn't forgotten her! She could eat her tear-soaked bread knowing that he had specifically given it to her. She didn't mind being fed the bread of tears if it had come straight from his hand.

Today, Gesina has a marvelous ministry among the disabled in Albania. And to the end of her days, she will remember how—in the worst and darkest of circumstances—God came near and reminded her of his constant presence and care.

Whatever your circumstances, difficult as they may be, remember:
God knows precisely where you are and how to care for you.

Oh Lord Jesus, what joy this brings! Because you live within my very spirit, nothing but nothing in life can truly defeat me.

