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Finding Home

"Bhaiya!" screamed five-year-old Saroo! He tore up and down the moving train car calling out the Hindi word for "brother." Outside the window, central Indian grasslands flashed past and the clicking rails marked the miles being driven between the panic-stricken boy and the only home he'd ever known. Saroo's pockets were empty, his stomach not far behind, and his mind didn't carry a street address. His single mom, two sisters and a brother all lived in a tiny mud brick house in central India that was rapidly vanishing.

Saroo and his older brother Guddu had gone everywhere together. Their mother Fatima, abandoned by her husband, scraped together just enough money by cleaning homes to put some food in her four kids' mouths and pay her rent. The older kids provided the rest by begging, scrounging and stealing. To support the family, Saroo and Guddu specialized in diving under the seats in the old Indian trains that traversed their neighborhood finding dropped coins and scraps of food. His brother had said he'd be "right back." Saroo had fallen asleep on a bench in a train he'd been searching. Surely his brother would come back for him.

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Empty Stomach, Empty Heart

Twelve hours later Saroo's train finally rolled into the massive central station in Calcutta. Somewhere out into the teaming millions of Bengali-speaking residents bobbed a little tear-streaked Hindispeaking boy. He only remembered the

name of a town near his own, Burhanpur, so he hopped train after train heading out of town hoping to find it. In a week he gave up. His stomach was filled with its familiar hungry ache, but his heart had a fresh wound — one that might never heal. Perhaps pain gnaws at your heart too.

Within a month, a man who spoke a little Hindi was able to take him to a local prison for protection. There the deformed faces of strangers — kids without legs or arms — stared back. Deep in his heart, unspoken in Hindi, unformed in words, sending its tentacles throughout his being, crept a question for his mother Fatima: *Are you looking for me?* If you are experiencing that same unspoken question, then I have a secret for you. God says, **"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). That means that Jesus Christ, who deeply loves you, is looking for you.

Officials from a local child-welfare group combed the prison regularly for adoptable children. Six months after his rolling prison had carried him away from Burhanpur, the officials brought him a

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little red photo album saying, "This is your new family. They will love you." Inside smiled a red curly-haired woman and her husband standing in front of a brick home surrounded by a flower bed.

Another photo showed the Qantas airplane that would carry him to Hobart in the Australian state of Tasmania.

Burning Questions

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Soon Saroo found himself sitting in a comfortable air-conditioned bedroom. On the bed sat a stuffed koala, on the wall hung a map of India, in his head rattled a few words of English and the ever-present mystery of his past. "Even though I was with people I trusted, my new family, I still wanted to know how my family was: Will I ever see them again? Is my brother still alive?"

Jesus Christ said, **"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"** (John 14:2). He went ahead of us to the cross of Calvary. There He paid the massive penalty for sin—punishment by a holy God—so that He could offer to take any who will believe on Him to the Father's house. But like little Saroo—despite evidence of love—it's pretty natural to have a ton of questions about God swirling in the brain and heart. Philip, who spent several years as a close associate of the Lord Jesus, said to Him, **"Lord, show us the Father"** (John 14:8), when he heard about the way to the Father's house. You can read how Jesus firmly and gently answered him in John 14.

Years later in 2009, out of college, late at night, Saroo hunkered over his flickering laptop. For the first time he had a fast Internet connection and Google Earth spun up as he zoomed in on his Hobart house. The detail was fantastic, and then it hit him: Could he find the mud-brick, tin-roofed home a continent, a life, a culture away? If only he could get back to ... to ... Brahmapur? Badarpur? Bharatpur? B-something-pur? Then he could find his way back to the mud-brick house.

Give Up?

He picked up where he had left off so many years before — "riding" the rails out of Calcutta. And he got the same old result. After weeks of frustrating evenings, he dropped the search and returned to normal life. But Saroo couldn't quit permanently. He thought, *If you give up now, you'll always be thinking later on, on your deathbed: Why didn't I keep trying or at least put more effort into it?*

Finally logic began to creep into his thoughts. He calculated the rough time he'd been on the train—about 12 hours. He added in the time from B-something-pur to the village where he'd lived. Soon he had some estimates on how fast Indian trains traveled in the 1980s. When he'd eliminated areas of the country that didn't speak Hindi, he hunkered back for more late nights over the keyboard. He began to systematically hunt for a bridge he remembered near a big industrial tank beside the railway station in, in ... B-something-pur. Intensely he clicked back out across the miles and down the railroad heading away from Calcutta. Around 1 a.m. his heart rate surged as he registered the sight of a

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bridge he remembered. Tensely he checked the corner of the screen for the town name—Burhanpur stared back at him.

In February of 2012, tired from 20 hours of travel, he began the final mile of navigating by memory, left here, right there, past a café where he'd sold Chai tea. In his mind burned the question he'd wanted to ask his mother Fatima, *Did you look for me*? Soon he stood before the mud-brick house with the tin roof—a lock barred the door of the battered, abandoned house. Hearing the names Guddu and Fatima, a neighbor lady simply said, "They don't live here anymore."

God, by contrast, never moves. He can always be found by someone willing to acknowledge their sin and His remedy. God says, **"Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart"** (Jeremiah 29:13).

Answers

But another neighbor studied a photo of little Saroo when he'd first come to Australia and listened to the names "Guddu" and "Fatima." He vanished, and then he returned and led Saroo, not to the arms of the beautiful young woman he'd seen in his dreams for 24 years—but to an old woman. Fatima saw the scar on his forehead where she'd bandaged him when he fell while being chased by a wild dog and the family dimple on the chin. Soon they were in one another's arms.

They would have talked, but Saroo only spoke Aussie English and Fatima only Hindi. They spoke in cuddles, hugs and through an interpreter. Fatima had

searched for him for months, hopping trains and heading out to every surrounding town within a couple hours' distance, asking questions, searching. And Guddu? Guddu was gone. One month after Saroo had vanished, the police had knocked at the door. Guddu had been found dead on the train tracks—killed by a train. Saroo texted back home to Hobart, *The questions I wanted answered have been answered. There are no dead ends.... I hope you know that you guys are first with me, which will never change. Love you.*

And your search? your answers? your home? Searching God's Word diligently will help you to find many answers. You'll discover, with honesty, where you've refused to follow God and His divine direction in your life. You'll also find two tremendous truths...

1. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

2. "The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

If you're honest, you'll discover that you deeply need the Lord Jesus Christ, who has come from heaven to find you, wash you clean from your sin, and take you home with Himself. When you know you've been found by Him, then you'll also know that you're on your way home—to God the Father's house—not to a place of peace on earth that can't be found.

Is it hard to find God? Well, not really. Find out more in *The Million-Dollar Message*.

Finding Home

The Million-Dollar Message

Questions and more questions. Are we the universe's only child? Do we have cosmic siblings? In other words, Who are we?

These are some of the questions posed by the Breakthrough Initiative, a program funded by Yuri Milner, a Russian entrepreneur. The plan is to survey the one million closest stars to earth and listen in for intelligent communication. Stephen Hawking, at the University of Cambridge, strongly supports the project, the search for extraterrestrial life.

Also, a competition has been launched. The prizes

Nothing transmitted from space could ever come close in importance to a simple prayer from your heart.

total one million dollars for the design of a digital message which best represents humanity and the planet Earth. But if you win, they might not send your message anyway — until after some debate on the risks and rewards involved. The worry is that aliens may not be friendly.

While they begin spending the first 100 million dollars, could I remind you that there is Life out there, in another world? And it is friendly. The one listening to our transmissions is God. You won't need the 64-meter-diameter Parkes telescope in New South Wales, Australia, to send your message. It's busy, in any case, with the Breakthrough project.

You may well wonder, What kind of prayer does God hear? Does He insist on a long prayer? On prayer made in a church? On a repetitive prayer? Must it be made while kneeling or prostrate? Must it be sophisticated or dressed in ritual? Thankfully no, five times.

God hears prayer when it comes from an honest and humble heart. The Bible says, "If My people,

The Million-Dollar Message 0

which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

When Peter was sinking in the water (Matthew 14), he prayed three words. He didn't have time to get to church or wax eloquent. He spoke what was in his humble heart. **"Lord, save me."**

The Lord took his hand and helped him up. Of course, the Lord has done that many times since and maybe you know people whose lives God has changed in answer to this prayer.

For 35 years the space probe Voyager 1 travelled within our solar system. But in 2012 it broke the sun's influence and entered interstellar space to collect more data. What will it all mean in the end? Very little! Nothing transmitted from space could ever come close in importance to a simple prayer from your heart. But if you bowed your heart in prayer today

to the God Who Is There, you would be transformed from the inside out, forever—a prize worth more than many millions.

Sometimes we put barriers between our hearts and the God who loves us. Learn about one of those barriers that really wasn't in *There'll Be Hanging for This.*

There'll Be Hanging for This

A gentleman was preaching the gospel in a large English town. He told the story of God's love to lost sinners fully and clearly. Slowly some listeners drifted away and others filled their places. The newcomers showed too plainly that they had come only to cause trouble.

After a while they gave vent to their anger in loud, rough interruptions, and as the preacher continued speaking, their rage overcame them. One hurled a stone at him. This signal led to a general onslaught, and all of them rushed at the defenseless man and overpowered him.

It was a short struggle before one powerful man knocked the preacher to the ground, where he lay stunned and, to all appearances, dead. In the stunned silence that followed, the rough mob looked awestruck at the still figure. Turning to the one who had delivered the blow, one of the men remarked, "I say, there'll be hanging for this." The criminal cast a terrified glance around and ran for his life. On, on, he rushed through unfrequented alleys and byways of the great town, and at last he ducked into the filthy place he called home. A little boy was the only occupant.

"What's the matter, Father?" he asked timidly. "What's that to you?" the man replied harshly, but then he added nervously, "I must hide, Willie. Where can I go?"

The child looked around the room in a terrified way and pointed to the attic. The man, after some fierce threats as to what he would do if the child allowed him to be discovered, climbed up into the only place of concealment.

Night came and slipped slowly away. The words, "There'll be hanging for this," rang in his ears until he was almost frenzied with fear. Hanging meant death, and death was a terrible thing. It meant the end of life, the end of everything. But was it the end of everything? Something told him it wasn't; something whispered back the nearly forgotten words: "After death the judgment." And the preacher had just been telling them the way of escape from judgment. Why had he not listened?

Morning came and found him still hiding. He didn't dare to venture out, so he sent his little boy to buy him a little tobacco for his pipe.

The child returned from his errand with the tobacco wrapped up in a page of an old Bible, which the shopkeeper was tearing apart to wrap up her products. Anything was welcome to break the monotony, and he turned gladly to read the page. It was

Hebrews 9, and as he read slowly down, he stopped suddenly at verse 22: **"Without shedding of blood is no remission."** What did it mean? Did God say that he must die? Was there no forgiveness for him, even from God? He knew he deserved the death penalty from man, but had his sins forfeited his life to God? Those were dreadful hours! At last he could bear it no longer, and he sent the boy once more to the shop for more tobacco, hoping to receive another leaf which might tell him more.

Meanwhile other customers had come and gone; the woman was tearing away at the Bible. This time the tobacco was folded up in the first chapter of John's first epistle. The words of the seventh verse met the man's eye: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." What a message from God to his sin-burdened soul! Blood had been shed for his sin—the blood of God's own Son. But how much of his sin did the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanse away? Not—surely not—the sin of last night. Yes, the words were "all sin," and in this fact the man who was hiding from human justice found refuge from divine justice in the blood shed for him.

Finally news reached him that the gentleman whom they had left for dead had not been killed, as they supposed, but he had recovered and was preaching again. He immediately went and confessed everything, and he was welcomed and forgiven.



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we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while

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