

# Climbing the Stairway to Heaven

a guided meditation

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# Climbing the Stairway to Heaven

## a guided meditation

Dear reader,

This is a guide book. It is a guide to a climb, a climb of five steps in the direction of life with God.

The steps are taken by means of simple thinking. Just go to step #1 and read what it says. Give what it asks you to do a chance. Try it a couple of times. Then go to the next step. Though you may choose to familiarize yourself with this whole little book at one sitting, it is best to give each step its own day or even week. The five steps are great for the five regular weeks of Lent. Let's go to Step #1.

## Step #1: “There is more to life than meets the eye”

Most of the time, most of us live like we drive—seeing things around us, including people, as thing after thing we have to get around. Even when we think and feel, we are hardly paying attention to reality; rather, we are looking at the past or the future, never anything that is real right now in front of us.

This is unfortunate because “creation was signed.” In other words, God made the world and us so that when we look at anything closely, we see that it was made.

Try this:

Look closely at something, anything, and look at its precise shape. Then, while still looking, consider the question, What is shape?

Then look at the object’s color. Don’t just decide what word we might use to refer to its color; but look for what makes this object’s particular color a unique version of that word. Then, while still looking, consider the question, What is color?

Then look at the object and try to notice the littlest details, marks, or blemishes that make it different from other objects of its kind.

Surely by now you see that this couldn’t just be here; it must have come from somewhere. You are experiencing God.

Immediately you win. If you know that God is there, you know that God is God. You know that God is good. Knowing that God is good, you know that He made you not for death but for life, life with Him in heaven. Knowing that God is good, you know that He loves you, and you need only to love Him back. Finally, knowing that God is good, you know that He has a good reason for anything that happens, that He is using everything that happens to help you to prepare for life with Him.

## Step #2: “Pay attention to God”

We will begin by recognizing that the Person we were looking for in Step #1 was already looking for us. In other words, God is aware of our thoughts and He is always giving us infinite attention.

Most people do not experience this, even those who pray. Most of those who pray are far more intent on what they are asking for than the Person they are talking *at*.

So, this is what I ask:

1) Before you say anything, take the time to become conscious of Him who is listening. Do what we talked about in Step #1; or just be still and concentrate on the present, the time which is passing *right now*. Now, with your mind clear,

2) speak to God out of your heart and notice that you feel heard. Recognize this as an experience of God and also the truth of all we believe.

Finally, 3) once you have expressed what is really in your heart, be quiet. Who wants to converse with someone who always does all the talking?! Instead, just be quiet and God will move your spirit to where it needs to go. Remember, you are made in God’s image and so when you are your truest, deepest self, your mind, made in God’s image, will know what to do next.

### Step #3: “God loves you—the way you want to be loved.”

Step #3 begins with the observation that the God who looks at us loves us.

In order to understand what this means, we need to get rid of two wrong ideas that many people have:

The first is that God loves them *despite* them. The second is that God loves us like the pope, from a distance and with only a little time to pay attention to any one person.

Let’s look at the truth:

First of all, you cannot love someone *despite* them. You cannot love what isn’t there. (You cannot love a chair.) You can only love what is lovable. Thus, when we hear that God loves us—and we know that this is true—it means that the soul He sees is beautiful. When we hear that God loves us with His whole heart—and we know that this, too, is true—it means that He has put His whole self into us making us according to His plan.

To think that God loves us like the pope is to think of God as a human person, limited in every way, with only so much to give. But God is infinite in every way. What He gives to another takes nothing from what He gives to you. He could not love you more if you were the only person He ever made. This means that God loves you with the greatest love you can imagine. It means that God loves you—the way you want to be loved.

And how is that? It has four elements. 1) It starts with the person whose love you want. You want this person to be wonderful—beautiful, gifted, good.

2) You are enthralled with this person and so, of course, you need this person to be enthralled with you. This other person is fascinated by you, amazed by your abilities and experience, adoring of your goodness, etc.

3) This person has you on her (or his) mind all the time. They think of you constantly and you know it. Your victories are their joys; your problems are their problems.

And, finally, 4) their love is so deep and so based on the fact that is it *you*, there is no chance that they will ever love you less.

If all of this seems a bit too much, try this; experience your soul:

Tonight, once you go to bed, before you fall asleep, and it is dark and quiet and there are no distractions, think about the simple fact that you are alive. Say to yourself, “I am”—not “I am this or I am that” but simply “I am”—and think about what you mean when you say it.

Immediately you will realize that you are much more than you can possibly put into words. You can say certain things *about* you, but what you *are*, what you are being a person, is much too much to put into words.

Yet, as much as you are now “seeing,” to have a better idea of what God sees when He looks at you, picture a person standing on the sea shore looking out into the ocean. Though what he sees is vast, it is really only a tiny part of what is out there. We can say something similar about what you see when you experience yourself. As vast as your spirit may seem, what you see is only a tiny part of the ocean of goodness and potential that God sees in its entirety.

## Step #4: “Even the hairs on your head are counted”

Our fourth step will begin with a closer look at the fact that God loves us with His whole heart because He put His whole self into making us according to His plan.

Let’s face it: Most of us think of God’s plan in terms of the big and obvious elements of our lives—my birth to these parents, with these eyes, in this country, and, perhaps, my membership in this church.

But God gives infinite attention to every element in His plan. This means that His plan for me is not only that I belong to this church, for example, but that I came to this church today, by the precise route I took to get here, step for step exactly. God’s plan included everything that happened on the way, and everything I saw, including many things I was not conscious of seeing. This means that we should do two things:

1) Let us recognize ourselves as a work of art, a work of the most finely crafted art. Let us recognize all that went into making us who we are. Not only was every hair on our head precisely carved, but, since everything that affects us has a history, we were present in God’s work from the beginning of time and in almost infinite incidents. We were a big part of the reason for God’s suffering with all His children in every moment of their most terrible pain.

Then, 2) let us recognize that whenever we sit down, at that moment, we are exactly where we were meant to be; we are exactly on course to the wonderful and important destiny for which we were made. (Tomorrow, of course, it is still to be decided; but right now we are exactly where we were meant to be.) To think of this is to be relived, and inspired to live better. It is to be inspired to a greater role in the making of heaven than we had seen coming.

## Step #5: “Dream your dreams in joy”

Our fifth step begins with a look at all we have already experienced. We have experienced that God exists, that He listens to us, because He loves us, because who it is He made us. Experiencing this, one might hope, should give us greater confidence in what to expect once our life here is finished. Therefore, our next step is to think about life with God. And one more time, we can learn from a contrast.

Many people think of heaven simply as a place, a beautiful place, with beautiful weather and no dead trees. Certainly they picture it as a place with no war, where no one is sick or poor. If they have strong opinions about the state of society, they picture a place where certain specific moral evils have been conquered, and everybody now knows better.

But heaven means more than that. We were made to want more than that—we can see this easily if we are honest with ourselves about what we dream (or have dreamt) when no one is looking, and we are looking the world’s richest or most famous.

Let us be honest: These thoughts are already there. Let us add one more: God gives us no good dream that is not going to come true.

Therefore, dream your dreams. Imagine the greatest life you can imagine *you* having—if anything were possible.

Do not limit yourself to what you might do if you won hundreds of millions in the lottery. This might be nice but it wouldn’t say anything particularly good about you, or about how others saw you. It wouldn’t necessarily give you any particular personal gifts or experiences or success at anything that really matters.

It would be better to imagine the truth: If you had all the wealth you could possibly use, every ability that you might want, and the attention and admiration of everyone everywhere, what would life be like? In heaven, then, what *will* life be like?

## Epilog

Dear reader,

Thank you for reading this little book.

I hope that you have tried what I asked, and that you have made your way to excitement about what to expect from life with God.

I ask you, now, to want this life.

To make clear exactly what I am asking, let us again consider a contrast.

For most people, life with God, that is, heaven, is a fall-back. It's what you turn to if you lose it all and still have to live here. It's your desperate plea when life here is soon to end.

We can do better. We can live for heaven. We can make heaven the true, great goal of our lives. We can make it the main thing that affects our mood and thus be joyful for the thought of its coming; and this joy can be so great that the absence of other things will mean almost nothing.

Now, I know that no one is born wanting to leave here. Indeed, new to this world, we are interested only in staying.

Nonetheless, if we grow in faith, we will want more. Our hearts will go where they belong. We can want this to happen. We can want to imitate the saints who wanted to go to heaven as soon as possible. So, this is what I ask: Want to want it. Pray to want it. Use [The Weekly Prayer](#) for Monday: "Make heaven the true, great goal of my life, and not just some feeble hope I turn to when everything else is gone." If nothing else say, "please, God, make me want heaven."

If you would like “The Weekly Prayer,” just go back to [www.thefaithkit.org/panorama](http://www.thefaithkit.org/panorama) and click on “Mini-Books.

If you would like to see “[The Stairway to Heaven](#)” that inspired this mini-book, just go back to [www.thefaithkit.org](http://www.thefaithkit.org) and click on “Check Out The Faith Kit.”