

## **12 Ways to Look for God in 2008**

30 December 2007

### **1. Read the Bible like a Novel**

Bible has all the necessary pieces of great literature: plot, character development, drama, song, love, violence, a savior, redemption, etc. Read the Bible as ONE story this year – not as a bunch of stories put together into one volume. See the thread of God’s love woven throughout the whole narrative

### **2. Hit up Blockbuster**

Pay attention to themes like forgiveness, redemption, atonement, the search for love, the call for justice, or the protection of the innocent. Biblical themes are present in movies even if the writers did not intend to put them there. So go ahead and look at the movies you watch through God’s lens and see if you see something new in an old favorite.

### **3. Tune in...**

Turn your radio dials away from KLTU and you’ll be surprised at what you find. Surprised in a good way! There are plenty of artists in the mainstream arena who are using their music to express their longing for the Divine.

God can be found in all kinds of music we listen to. Listen for themes of God’s grace, for an artist’s searching questions of faith.

### **4. Say, “Cheers!”**

*Cheers* was a show that brought together people from various backgrounds in a place that we call a “third space” – not a home and not a workplace, but a third place where life happens.

This year, take the time to get to know someone whose lifestyle, values or beliefs are different than yours. That is, be intentional about building a relationship with someone you’d likely never be drawn to naturally. Look for God in their story and be surprised by the potential crossing of your story lines.

### **5. Listen to Your Wife**

How many times have you been in the middle of a conversation with your spouse and tuned out because they said something that you didn’t agree with? What if what they just said was exactly what you needed to hear, and you missed it because you were too proud to hear them out? This year, take the time to dial in for the whole conversation. What they have to say to you may be the very thing God has for you to learn in that moment about whatever is bothering you.

The next time you’re tempted to become defensive as you listen to your spouse, a friend, a peer, a child or your boss... stop. Ask: is God speaking to me through this person?

### **6. Meet Joe, the Mechanic**

How many strangers do we encounter on a daily basis? How many of them have a story that they would love to tell, if we would take the time to listen and get to know them? Probably all of them. This year, be intentional about getting to know the people with whom you come in contact with on a regular basis – the barista at Starbucks, the auto mechanic whom you trust to take care of your vehicle, or the grocery store checker who rings up your groceries.

There are people we encounter every day who seem to be fine people, but are they really merely a means to get through our day? We have an agenda – they help us or they frustrate us. But what if we paused long enough to take genuine interest in them – even for a moment? Jesus says when we do, it's the same as honoring him.

### **7. Make a Run for Borders**

Read the Bible for sure – start there, but don't end there. Look for God's truth in everything you read. Read the stories of others' search for God, read their encounters with God. Read their discoveries, their findings, their questions. Discover where your life can benefit from what they have learned. Find out where their learnings can impact your life and faith. Ask some of the same questions and see what answers you come up with.

### **8. Break out!**

Take some time this year to see the possibilities of taking new routes in life – perhaps they will provide the catalyst for the change you have been longing for in your life. What if you stopped seeing the same scenery each day and started seeing the subtle signs of God's work and presence in your life? Try a new road to work. Try shopping at a new store. Try a new drink at Starbucks. Try listening to a new radio station. Just do something new to break out of your routine. And see where God is along the way!

### **9. Find a Catch 22**

This year, find a question in life that does not have an easy answer (or any answer at all) and really wrestle with it. Mull it over. Think it through. Take it to its different logical conclusions and see how each one affects your faith, theology, and/or life.

Live in the tension of not knowing an answer. Live in the tension of not being able to put all your questions into neat and tidy little boxes that fit on the shelves in your closet. Grapple with the messiness of life. Struggle with the inconsistencies of humanity. And learn to trust God more along the way, because he's the only one with the answers. Allow the questions to lead you past the answer to God himself.

### **10. Forget the Umbrella**

The next time you have to make a choice between playing it safe and walking in the danger zone...forget the umbrella. Take a risk. Chance it. Step out. Stand in a fountain, sing on the street, order something different next time you eat out. Start that new business. Volunteer for the first time.

You never know what might happen when you are willing to risk it all. You never know what God will bless in your life until you are willing to give up control over it and hand it to him. He has your life in the palm of his hand and he wants you to experience a life that is full, not flat.

Follow Jesus into the wild. He was the king of the rebels. He never did anything that people expected. He was always breaking the rules and seeing how little the people around him were willing to risk for God's kingdom.

### **11. Carpe Diem**

Every day we are on this earth is a blessing from God. Take the time this year to seize each of those blessings. There are things that God has uniquely gifted you to do on this earth and every moment wasted is an opportunity lost. Embrace every opportunity.

Look for God in every person, every circumstance, every scene. Look for God in the people you know well. Look for God in the stranger. Look for God when a new situation arises. Look for God when the familiarities of life overtake you. Look for God everywhere. Seize the day. Every day.

## **12. Radical Hospitality**

Practice reaching out to every new face you see at church. If they are an unfamiliar face to you it doesn't matter how long they have been here – one day or ten years – they deserve to enjoy worship and perhaps make a new friend or two.

Greet guests and members with the same friendliness and warmth. When the people who come through our doors know that everyone gets treated the same, no matter where they are on their faith journey, then they will tell their friends.

Park at Marcus. A guest will need the extra time that a close parking spot affords them.

Stop pointing. If someone asks you for directions to a particular location within the church, don't just point and say "walk down that hall, go around the corner, look for the fish wall, and turn right." That is not helpful! At all!! Take them where they need to go. Talk with the person along the way. Get to know them a little. They will thank you for the attention and they will get to where they are going much faster than if they were to go it alone.

Look for God in our "guest experience" and find ways to show that people matter to us and to God.