

*Wayne Bruce Miller,
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I was born and raised in upstate New York near Utica, in the town of Mohawk on the edge of the Mohawk River. I had deeply religious and loving parents, and a wonderful, caring older brother. Our family went to church every Sunday, and during the week I would often attend our church's youth-group meeting.

In 1960, at the age of 11, I saw Jesus in church one Sunday. He appeared as a shining gold silhouette, but he seemed very distant, as if he were not inside the church itself, but far away. After church, I told my father what I had seen and asked him if he thought I was crazy.

He told me that I wasn't crazy, and that perhaps God had a special plan for my life. He advised me to pray and ask God what it was He wanted me to do. So, from that time on, I prayed every day, asking God to guide my life and my choices. Only much later did I understand the meaning of the vision that I had seen, i.e., that Jesus was no longer in the Christian church, and that, if I wanted to follow him, I would have to leave traditional Christianity.

One night, I had a very realistic dream in which my father called out to me. The dream was dark, and I couldn't see anything, but my father seemed to be dying or in great pain. He called out: "Wayne, Wayne, please help me, please help me, please!" The plea in my dream was so heart-wrenching that I jumped out of bed, even while I was still half asleep and ran into my parents' bedroom, saying: "Daddy, Daddy, what's wrong?" But my parents were both sleeping, and my father was snoring as usual, so I thought that it was just a dream. It was only much later that I realized that it had been my Heavenly Father calling out to me that night.

As I grew older, I became increasingly disillusioned with Christian churches. I saw that many of their teachings were inconsistent and did not even agree with the Bible. In college, at the University of Rochester in upstate New York, I began to think much more seriously about my religious beliefs, and particularly about the importance of physical life. While many orthodox Christians believe that earthly life is not really important, or that it is just some kind of test, it seemed to me that, if God created the physical and spiritual worlds, there must have been a purpose to that creation. Therefore, I was certain that our physical life must have some critical importance for our eternal spiritual life. As I thought more about this, I began to ask myself what was the purpose of my own life.

As I was finishing my second year of college, I began to have dreams in which I saw myself standing on a large, outdoor stage, speaking to thousands of people. In the dream, there was a feeling of great social and international turmoil and danger, and I could hear myself saying urgently: "I have the truth; please listen to me. If you listen to me, everything will be okay, but you must listen to me, because I have the truth." I couldn't understand what the dream meant, other than that God had something important for me to do. So, I continued to pray that God would guide my steps. As I did so, I became even more turned off by traditional religion. I prayed every day, but I rarely went to church.

One day, as I was sitting in my dorm room (during the height of the Vietnam War), it suddenly hit me that the world was plagued by wars and rumors of wars, that nations were rising against nations, and that because wickedness had multiplied, most men's love had grown cold – all the things that were prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24:6-13. And I thought: "This must be the time of the second advent of Christ. Christ might be on earth right now!" And then I had a most alarming thought, namely: "What if I am the Messiah? What should

I do?” For about 30 seconds, I was literally scared stiff – I could not move and could hardly breathe. But, then I thought, “Wait a minute – if I were the Messiah, what would I have to do? Well, the Messiah is the one who has to understand the cause of all the world’s problems and of all human suffering, and then has to show us the way to solve all the problems and heal humankind. So, then, do I understand all the problems? Do I know how to resolve everything? Absolutely not!” I then breathed a very deep sigh of relief, and thought: “Thank God, I’m not the Messiah.” But, in my mind the thought had been deeply planted that the Messiah might, in fact, be on earth, and that he is the one who knows God’s will, God’s ideal, and knows how to achieve it.

Later that year, in the summer of 1969, while I was home from college, I formed a rock band with four of my high-school friends. We were fairly good by local standards and were hired to play every Friday and Saturday evening in a local tavern. One day my parents informed me that, at the end of July, they were planning to visit my father’s relatives living in California, and that they would like me to come with them. My first thought was that I couldn’t go because of my commitment to my band and all the good times I could have while my parents were away. However, because I was committed to asking God for His guidance, I told my father that I would pray and ask God what to do. So, I went immediately to my room and knelt down and asked God whether or not I should go with my parents to California.

As soon as I prayed, I remembered an experience I had had two years earlier. I recalled that, when I first went off to college, I was very sad for the first week or two. One night, as I was going to sleep, I thought about my parents and began to shed tears – not only because I missed them, but because they were such incredibly wonderful parents, and because I felt I had never had the chance, or taken the time, to tell them and show them how deeply and truly I loved them, and how much I appreciated all that they had done for me. That night, in my first weeks at college, I vowed that, if I ever had a chance to show my