

SEARCHING
FOR GOD

Topic:	Wholeness
Main Point:	Every one of us has a God shaped hole in our lives
Intended Response:	Allow Jesus to fill your heart
Key Verse:	Ecc 3:11, Luke 15:11-32

Introduction

Have you ever felt a longing for God? A vague feeling or restlessness that makes you wonder 'there's got to be more to life than this?' This message considers the God shaped hole inside every person, how Jesus can fill, and highlights God's sheer delight when we place our trust in Him.

A. A God shaped hole

- A God shaped hole exists in every person.
- Jesus is the exact representation of God.
- Jesus is our missing piece.

Point One: Only Jesus can fill the God shaped hole in our lives.

B. Choosing God

- Allowing God to fill our heart is not automatic.
- Not everyone will turn to God when they find Him.
- We all have make that choice to put God first in our lives.

Point Two: Choose God and allow Him to fill our hearts.


C. God's delight

- The story of the prodigal son.
- God constantly searched the horizon for His son's return.
- The father was overcome with joy to have his son back again.

Point Three: God is delighted when people place their trust in Him.

Teaching Illustrations and props:

This sermon uses a shape toy as the illustration aid. You may have one in church for Mainly Music, or you can refer to the image included in the PowerPoint slides. **More resources for this sermon, including PowerPoint slides are available at** www.SArmy.org.au

Introduction:	<p>Welcome everyone to church. It's great to see you all.</p> <p>Well I'm excited! It's December and Christmas is just around the corner. It's a great time for kids and family, it's a great time for us to get into our community and share the love of Jesus. We have our Carols service on (insert date) so make sure you invite your family and friends to church.</p> <p>Today, we are continuing our new series today called 'Searching for God'.</p> <p>Christmas is a time when people are in "search-mode". People are looking for the perfect present, the over sized chicken for Christmas dinner, the Christmas lights tucked away in the garage, or the shoe box with old decorations your kids made. I remember last year my girls really wanted a particular toy – I searched everywhere for it.</p> <p>When I think back to the Christmas story, it stands out to me that a lot of people are searching for things as well.</p> <p>Mary and Joseph searched for a place to stay. The Magi from the East came searching for new born King. Herod was searching for answers to where a potential rival had been born.</p> <p>And the search for God continues to this day. Maybe it's because of the Christmas carols, or the TV specials, or the spirit of generosity – but I find most people are open to hearing about God at Christmas time.</p> <p>People all around us are searching for God. For some, the search for God is restlessness, a vague feeling that there must be more to life than this. For others, they watch Christmas carols on TV, place an angel on top of their Christmas tree, or go to church – maybe for the first time since last Christmas.</p>
Transition	<p>Have you ever wondered what causes this restlessness?</p>
A God shaped hole	<p>Did you ever give or get one of these toys for Christmas as a kid...</p> 

The way the toy works is you have to match the yellow shapes with the correct blue or red holes. No matter how hard you try, only the correct match will work.

There's no cheating - the triangle and square seemed like they will work together ... but no! The circle and oval – close, but try again! No other shapes will fit. It has to be the right shape for the right shaped hole.

In the Old Testament, there's a book called Ecclesiastes and in it we read, "[God] has placed eternity in the human heart"(Ecc 3:11). From this we get the idea that there is a special place in our heart for eternity – a place that only God can fill.

Over the years, many Christians have thought about this verse and someone came up with the phrase, "there is a God shaped hole inside every person".

I like that - a God shaped hole. I believe it's true. There is a hole inside all of us that only God can fill.

Friends, there is only one thing that can make us complete – and that is God. The God shaped hole I mentioned before is shaped like this:



The God shaped hole is in the shape of the cross. It's Jesus. He is the only one who can bring us back to God.

Jesus is the piece that fills that God shaped hole inside all of us. He is the eternal one - He's is the right shape. Hebrews 1:3 tells us, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. His Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature" (Heb 1:3 MSG).

You can search far and wide for other things to fill that God shaped hole, but nothing else truly fits. Only Jesus can fill the God shaped hole in our lives.

St Augustine said, "we were made for friendship with God and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Him".

Point 1.

Only Jesus can fill the God shaped hole in our lives.

Transition

But humans have a tendency to try and fill the God shaped hole with other things...

Choosing God

Have you ever tried to fill a sink with water but you didn't have the plug?

	<p>This happened to me the other day. I needed to clean my shoes and I was trying to fill the laundry sink with water, but I didn't couldn't find the plug anywhere!</p> <p>So I tried using some gladwrap but this didn't work because as the sink filled with water it just floated away.</p> <p>I then tried using a cloth. I soaked it first, then I pressed it into the hole and turned the tap on. And it worked for a while, I had about an inch of water but I noticed after a few minutes the water level was slowly getting lower and lower. It was just seeping through the cloth.</p> <p>I gave up in the end and just used a bucket, because without the right shaped plug to fill the hole, the water would drain away until the sink was empty.</p> <p>It reminds me of a Scripture. There once was a person who came to Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when the young man heard this, he turned away – the Bible says it was "because he had great wealth" (Matt 19:21-22).</p> <p>Allowing God to fill our heart is not automatic. Not everyone will turn to God when they find Him.</p> <p>We all have to make that choice to put God first in our lives – to allow Him to fill the gap in our lives.</p> <p>It's not a once off decision. Saying a prayer to Jesus twenty years ago doesn't mean much if we're not living for Him today. Everyday we are challenged with things that want to take God's place in our heart.</p> <p>In life, all sorts of things to plug up the God hole: work, sport, travel, drugs, relationships, even religion. I've seen many people try and cram other things into their hearts to plug that hole but it's like using gladwrap or a cloth in the sink – eventually – these things just don't work.</p> <p>Only God can fill that empty space of eternity in our hearts. Scripture tells us we are all made in the image of God, so it's fitting that what we are looking for will be found in God.</p>
Point 2	Choose God and allow Him to fill our hearts
Transition	I know the challenge for some people is that they just don't feel worthy enough to allow God into their lives. I was speaking to someone the other day and they said, "oh I couldn't come to church, the roof would cave in".

	<p>It's such a shame people think like that. God is desperate for people to come back to Him...</p>
God's delight	<p>In Luke 15 Jesus tells a story called the Parable of the Prodigal son. It's about a young man who asks his father for his inheritance early.</p> <p>The father gives it to him, but instead of living an honorable life, the son travels to a distant land and squanders all his inheritance on immoral living. Soon, a famine sweeps the land and having spent all his money, the son thinks he is going to die of starvation. Eventually he decides to go back home, beg for forgiveness and ask his father for a job.</p> <p>Next, we see the father standing in a field, searching the horizon for his son, looking for his to return.</p> <p>When the son comes home, instead of his father being angry at him for leaving and wasting all his money, he comes running towards him, gives him a big hug, throws him a party for him and welcomes him back into the family!</p> <p>The father didn't make him feel guilty or bring out a list of his bad behaviours to show him how evil he was – he was just so overcome with joy to have his son back again.</p> <p>Jesus told this story to highlight that God is always delighted when we come back to Him.</p>
Point 3.	<p>God is delighted when people place their trust in Him.</p>
Transition	<p>Insert personal testimony / testimony from corps member of how Jesus filled the God shaped hole in your life.</p> <p>Try and mention as many of the elements from the introduction about searching as possible.</p> <p>Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your external search: speaking to friend about faith, going to a youth camp, visiting a church, reading parts of the Bible, • Your internal search: did you think about God, question his existence, how did you have growing awareness? <p>For example:</p> <p><i>I knew of God growing up but I didn't know Him personally. One day, a friend of mine shared their faith with me and it was like a fire was lit in my heart. I just had to find out everything about God:</i></p>

	<p><i>I read the Bible, I talked to other Christians, I asked every question I could. Then one day I ran out of questions – everything I wondered about was answered in the Bible. My friends then challenged me: they said the only thing left to explore was a life with God. So I prayed and asked Jesus into my life. Ever since then, I’ve known God is real, and I’ve been following His ways and learning about Him ever since.</i></p>
Conclusion	<p>You know, Jesus shows us what God is like.</p> <p>In the Bible, we see Jesus searching for people that no one else in society values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus saw a blind man that other people told to keep quiet and not bother him - Jesus saw him and healed him (Lk 18:41). • Jesus saw a widower whose son has recently died. The Bible says, “His heart went out to her” – and he raised her child from the dead (Lk 7:11-15). • Jesus know about a man driven into isolation and He went looking for Him and restored him back into community (Mk 5:1-20). • Jesus walked through an entire crowd, found a paralyzed man lying near a pool, and healed him (Jn 5:1-9). <p>Jesus sees you. God is searching for you. He knows what you what you need, what you are searching for.</p>
Call to Action	<p>The Bible says in James 4:8, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you”</p> <p>Moving closer to God can be as simple as praying to Jesus daily, or reading the Bible and discussing it with a friend, or coming along to church.</p> <p>If you are still searching there are many ways we can help guide you along your journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join a weekly Bible study and ask questions • Get involved in church and learn why we do what we do and who we do it for • Listen to Bible podcasts or books • Join an Alpha group • We are always happy to catch up for a coffee and have a chat <p>When we come back to God there is so much joy in God’s heart, and all the angels in heaven sing and erupt with victorious shouts when we place our trust in God.</p> <p>I wonder, “are you ready to come home to God today?”</p>
Prayer	<p>(Select an appropriate worship song) For example, Softly and Tenderly (NSB: 436, OSB: 264)</p>

Luke 15:11-32

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

Lk 18:41

"What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied.

Lk 7:11-15

Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. surrounding district.

Mk 5:1-20

They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine.

And they began to implore Him to leave their region. As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

Jn 5:1-9

After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.

In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.

James 4:8

Come close to God and he will come close to you.

Gen 3:8-9

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Ecc 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Matt 19:21-22

Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

John 16:8-15 (MSG)

"When he comes, he'll expose the error of the godless world's view of sin, righteousness, and judgment: He'll show them that their refusal to believe in me is their basic sin; that righteousness comes from above, where I am with the Father, out of their sight and control; that judgment takes place as the ruler of this godless world is brought to trial and convicted.

"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you.

Col 1:15

The Son is the image of the invisible God.

Col 1:15 (MSG)

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen.

Hebrews 1:3 (MSG)

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. His Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature.

Prov 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.