

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

IN WHICH...

- Our protagonist Elwood Crawley is introduced
- We reflect on the uniqueness of each person's story
- We realize that God is at work ahead of us, in us, and after us

Elwood Crawley was born in Bellevue, Washington in the spring of 1993 to James and Edna Crawley. James, a cardiologist at Overlake Hospital and Edna, a long-time stay-at-home Mom and now an active volunteer at the Renewal Food Bank in the Crossroads neighborhood, raised their children with love and attention. Elwood is the middle of three children. Maggie, his older sister by two years, was a popular student and star Lacrosse player and now works for a venture capital firm in downtown Bellevue. His socially awkward younger brother Arthur is a genius in pattern recognition and computer coding, and still lives at home, making a good living by contracting temp jobs with various high tech start-up companies around the area. Elwood was a happy child, middle-of-the-road student, average athlete, and from his earliest days was an avid lover of the outdoors. He was happiest when hiking or camping in the beautiful Pacific Northwest mountains. Elwood received his B.S. from the University of Washington in Environmental Science with an emphasis in Horticulture and currently works as a Senior Plant Care Specialist and a tour guide for Amazon's unique downtown Seattle urban greenhouse called *The Spheres*, a unique workspace that doubles as a tourist attraction that houses over 1,000 species of cloud forest plants from all over the world. Elwood is single, a registered Democrat, and tends to side with progressives on social issues, though he has formed a worldview more through osmosis rather than through serious consideration. The Crawley home growing up was agnostic toward religion: there were no overt "religious" ideas or values passed on from parents to children. The moral framework modelled was one of

a classic Protestant work ethic: be diligent and responsible, have integrity, treat others with respect and dignity—in short, be a good person and in turn life's karma should return positively back onto you. Sunday mornings for Elwood meant sleeping in, video games, a stroll to the local farmers' market, reading on the balcony, and occasional day hikes and nature drives.

In the summer of 2025, while leading a Saturday tour at the Spheres, Elwood was asked a seemingly harmless question by a child in the group. She simply asked him if the plants were happy to be there. Elwood smiled and said that all of these plants were specially chosen to come live at the Spheres in Seattle, and so each of them felt honored and happy to represent their plant families in this cool place. The answer satisfied the little girl, but it actually jarred something down in Elwood's soul. Elwood left work that day feeling strangely unsettled. *Maybe these plants are miserable*, he thought to himself. Each of them had been shorn from their native homes, away from friends and family, and placed in an artificial environment to be gawked at by strangers, but rarely truly *seen*. They had been brought to create a healthy atmosphere in which Amazon workers and teams could work more creatively and cohesively—but to what end? To make more money for a company already bloated with unimaginable wealth? Before he realized what was happening, Elwood was awash in nascent “religious” questions: what makes existence good? For what purpose does a thing exist? How does a being actually become happy? How are living things to be treated? Is there a *should* underneath things or is life

a series of random events bullied by those with the most money and power? For several weeks Elwood noticed a slight unease in his gut that refused to dissipate. Something like indigestion created a pressure that began demanding relief. On a fall weekend trip with Arthur to Leavenworth in early September of 2025, Elwood discovered a Gideon Bible in the nightstand next to his bed at the Bavarian Lodge. Having never read a Bible before, Elwood picked it up and began thumbing through some of the pages. "I wonder," he thought to himself, "if this old religious book might have something to say to whether or not those plants back at the Spheres are happy. He turned to the first page and started reading, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."



GOD IS AT WORK EVERYWHERE, ALL THE TIME

IF...

God loves everyone and desires all people to be saved:
1 Timothy 2:3

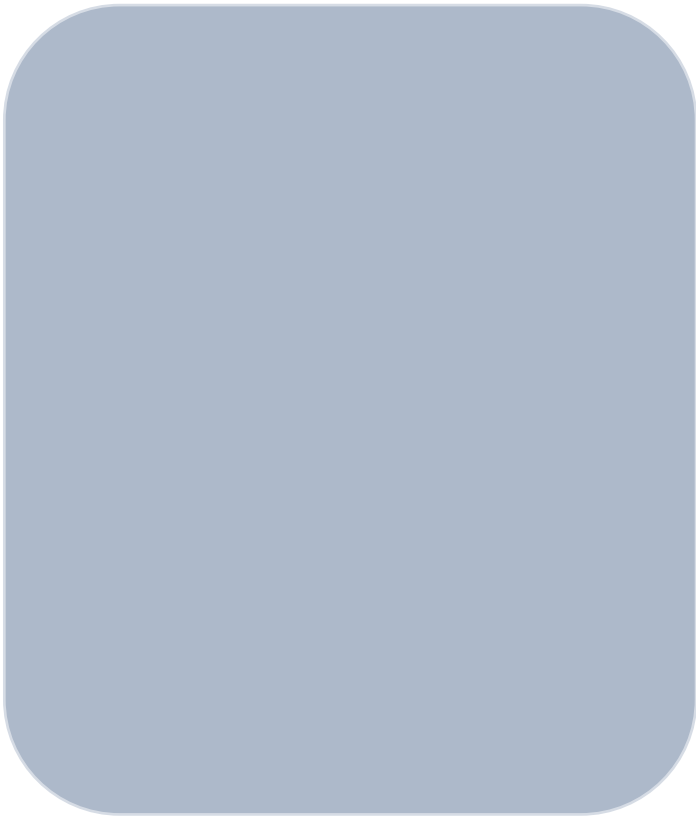
If everyone has a *Psalm 139* story: **Psalm 139:13-18**

God is always at work in the unfolding of history:
John 5:17

The voice of God is crying out from all that He has made: **Psalm 19:1-4**

God has a good end in mind for the project He freely started: **Revelation 21:5**

THEN...



I can afford to be _____

I can trust God will _____ me

I can play a small _____ in what God is doing

All my interactions are _____

I can risk without the _____ of fear of failure