

The Searcher

Today, there are many people around the world who recognise that the religion of their parents does not satisfy their feeling that something is missing – that there are aspects of that religion that instructively feel wrong because the fruits of that belief are bitter. Others have delved deeply into their chosen faith and found it wanting because it contains contradictions, or simply fails to provide the answers they need about the meaning and purpose of life, while still others have found themselves being directed to a man rather than the God they really seek, and end up dispirited.

Either way, they have a longing for the Truth and a deep feeling of emptiness unless they find it, having often searched almost everywhere, even sometimes from South American mysticism to UFO's, without success! Well, strangely, the answer is often right under their noses in the most widely distributed book on earth – the Bible!

“What?” They might say – “I started off with that and rejected Christianity”. Well, so did I, only to find that the God ‘Christians’ are most directed to, is actually a deceiver, diverting them from the truth they need, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, *‘But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.’* Revelation 12:9, *‘And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.’*

Nevertheless, we are still left with the recognition that there is a natural void in our lives, and in experiencing that we are not alone. The men and women of the Bible also recognised their need of the true God, for God made us all with the need for contact with our Creator, Acts 17:26-27, *‘And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.’* Job 23:3, *‘Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!’*

God’s word encourages us in our search, Psalm 105:4, *‘Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!’* Those who do, are recognised by God to be meek – that is their yearning for God makes them teachable, and if they remain faithful to their finding, they receive a reward, Zephaniah 2:3, *‘Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.’*

But first, the searcher needs to show God his commitment and diligence, Jeremiah 29:13, *‘You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.’* Deuteronomy 4:29, *‘But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.’* If we will do that God promises that, our search will be successful, Matthew 6:33, *‘But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’*

If we will change our lives based upon what we find, we will also gain prosperity, 2 Chronicles 26:5, *‘He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.’* In addition we will be spared the punishment coming upon this world because of sin. Amos 5:4, *‘For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live’,* and Revelation 3:10, *‘Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.’*

It may be hard to accept, but almost all who think of themselves as ‘Christians’ are *lost* spiritually, having been successfully and subtly diverted from the path that leads to eternal life, Matthew 7:13-14, *‘Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.’*

Sadly then, down through the ages Satan has been most successful in persuading mankind to look to *his* inspired interpretations and additions to the Bible, rather than directly to the word of God. In some cases whole books such as the Koran or the Book of Mormon were subtly added to God’s words by the spirit being who can appear as an angel of light to those who sincerely seek God, 2 Corinthians 11:14, *‘And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.’*

Sometimes, he has been successful in persuading translators or copyists to change or add words to fit in with their own ideas, misrepresenting what God intended. Most commonly he has simply confused sincere ministers who have failed to consider **ALL** of God’s word and so been led to a false understanding of doctrine or prophecy, and then progressed into teaching that only they have the Truth - that their ‘inspired’ teachings cannot be wrong - that they represent the ‘one true church’. Spiritual pride has diverted so many in this way.

But we all need teachers in our search, as we read in Acts 8:31, *‘And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.’* This is especially so when we are spiritual babes, though with time, God’s Holy Spirit, and diligent study of God’s word we grow to spiritual maturity, and can ourselves discern and act upon our recognition of truth. Hebrews 5:14, *‘But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.’* Our Father God expects us to become more spiritually independent as we mature, which we will if we look directly to God’s word, and the pattern and example of our Saviour. 1 Peter 2:21, *‘For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**’* As time goes by we should become teachers ourselves, strong in our relationship with Christ, and no longer needing another mentor except God’s Holy Spirit. Hebrews 5:12, *‘For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.’*

Sadly, as some grow in knowledge, they also grow in pride and their teaching becomes designed to gain a following to their own personal advantage, wealth and power. The historical example is the Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchy and Pope, but there are many more modern versions of this error, all claiming to be the one true church – a sure sign that they are not.

These organisations, for God’s Church is a spiritual *organism*, not a physical organisation with a man or men at the top, entrap their followers with dominion, prohibiting their development and stultifying their growth, and so should be avoided.

Look instead for those who perform the spiritual service of teaching with humility, desiring no control over God’s flock other than the protection of God’s word in that service, as we saw in the example of the Apostle Paul, Acts 20:18-19, *‘And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord **with all humility** and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.’* And the Apostle John, 2 John 9-10, *‘Everyone who goes on ahead **and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.**’* And the Apostle Peter, 1 Peter 5:2-3, *‘shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, **not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.**’*

In the end, the one important relationship which will bring you eventually to the full recognition of the Truth, and satisfy everything you felt was missing, is your direct relationship with Jesus Christ, for He is the one who will return to claim the diligent seekers who find Him and act on His word, cf. Matthew 9:15,

Revelation 19:7. *'And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.' Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.'*

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