

Have You Ever Been a Seeker?

by J. R. Bronger

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). What does this passage mean to YOU? In all your life, have you ever had to really seek, or is your spiritual commitment something passed down to you? Is your "faith" something you grew up with or are you where you are because you spent time seeking?

Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Have you ever had a ravenous craving to know the meaning of righteousness and to experience it in your life? If you have, you know it. Those spiritual hunger pangs will keep you awake at night.

In my teenage years, the only time I went to a church service of any kind was when I was asked by a girl I was interested in. Having a love of the world (1 John 2:15-17) would have described me. Growing up as I did left no room for God. My wife, on the other hand, had been raised attending the Church of the Nazarene; her grandfather was a Nazarene preacher. Religiously, this was all she knew. Upon our marriage, the world conquered religion as we both engaged in carnal pursuits resulting in marital strain. My wife decided to return to her spiritual moorings and again started attending the Nazarene Church. After several Sundays I went just to be with her at first, but this changed as I listened.

One Sunday I felt a need to respond to the altar call, convinced I was a sinner in need of salvation. The choir was singing, the minister was pleading and the atmosphere was soul stirring. I was brought "under conviction" and hurriedly made my way to the altar, fell on my knees and began praying that God would save me. I wanted Christ in my heart and in my life. My life changed dramatically after that night. I became involved in the Nazarene Church as a Sunday school teacher. I sang in the choir, participated in the Nazarene Young People's Society, and helped with the "bus ministry." I gave salvation "testimonies" both at work and at church. We also had Bible studies in our home several times each week. These Bible studies would forever change our lives; they became the first step in a long journey.

We did not leave the Church of the Nazarene because we found the people to be insincere hypocrites. Nor did something happen to offend us. The truths we learned in those Bible studies led us away from denominationalism and into Christ. Those studies were like a double-edged sword. At first they comforted our hearts, but then slowly we began to be cut by learning we were not saved, despite our experiences at the altar—this was devastating. Feeling like children lost in a forest we did not know where to go or how to find our way. "Seek!" We attended Baptist Churches, Assemblies of God, and several other denominations; we were seeking!

One day while driving we tuned our radio to a religious program hosted by a gospel

preacher and paid for by a local church of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky. "What is your question?" was the way the preacher/host took calls. After weeks of listening we realized these were people who "respected the Bible as the authority of God." Authority? What's that?

Over the next several weeks we learned! We also learned the sinfulness of division; that there was no Bible authority for choirs, sprinkling for baptism, women preachers, and a host of other things we had believed and practiced. We learned that baptism is essential for salvation.

Our home Bible studies intensified; our seeking took on a sense of urgency. Gradually our close friends lost interest in those studies. The "Pastor" began to ignore our questions. Upon learning that we had been listening to a radio program paid for by a church of Christ, we were soundly warned not to have anything to do with "those people."

Despite the warning we visited the church of Christ for the first time on a warm June Sunday morning. We found a loving group of people who participated in simple acts of worship. They observed the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), sang psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19), prayed (Acts 12:5), had preaching (Acts 20:7) and took up an offering (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The local preacher came to our home each week to study the Bible with us. After a few Bible studies, we were baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). When we were, the Lord added us to His church (Acts 2:47), and our seeking bore the fruit God intended. Our hunger had been satisfied and our thirst quenched.

All this happened to us while in our early twenties. "Kids" with no desire but to love and serve God and with no guidance but the Scriptures; "kids" who were simply seeking to know the saving will of God.

I return to my initial question: In all your religious life, have you ever had to really seek?