

Chapter 3

A seeker after truth must “shun no science, scorn no book, nor cling fanatically to a single creed.”

-- First Epistle of the Brethren of Purity

The next morning I was up before sunrise. I couldn't wait to call David. Unfortunately, in my enthusiasm I had forgotten that most people don't get to work until at least eight o'clock and some don't arrive until even later. I spent the next few hours going over the list of my questions and concerns. As I thought about this quest, I started feeling a little guilty. I mean, should I even be doubting my faith? Was it wrong to question? Was it the devil putting these ideas in my mind in an attempt to drive me away from my faith? I thought about abandoning the search altogether and going back to believing what I had always believed; continuing to ignore the questions that troubled me. *The truth will make you free.* The phrase kept echoing in my mind. Deep down, I knew that if I abandoned the task now I would just start searching again sometime in the future. I was not the kind of person who could live with unresolved issues. Devil or not, I had to have answers.

At eight-thirty I picked up the phone and dialed David's office. I could tell by the sounds in the background that the person who answered was actually in his office and not someone from an answering service.

“I'd like to speak to David Beckstein if he's in.”

“Who is calling, please?”

“This is Derrick Holt. I'm a friend of David's.”

“One minute, please.”

The line went quiet. Thankfully, they didn't have music playing while I was on hold. I hate it when they play music while you wait. It's supposed to make it seem like time goes by faster; make you forget that you've been on hold for about an hour, but

it doesn't work. You just get really sick of hearing the same old music over and over. About thirty seconds passed when I heard the line open.

"Derrick?" I knew it was Dave's voice.

"Yeah, Dave. Have you got a minute? I don't want to take your time but I have a question for you?"

"Sure, what's up?"

"I'm kind of struggling with some personal issues and I was wondering if you might have some time to discuss them? I don't mean today, of course. I know you're really busy but I was thinking if you have some time later maybe we could talk." I really hated to ask him to give me his time when discussing these kinds of issues was probably something he got paid to do.

"Personal questions, huh? Can you tell me a little more?"

"It's kind of difficult to explain over the phone."

"Is it serious?"

"Well, it is to me. I mean, it's not life threatening or anything. I can tell you that it involves religion."

"Religion, huh?" The line went quiet for a few seconds. "Look, I'd love to talk with you but I'm not sure I'd have any valuable input. Religion's a topic that I'm not really qualified to discuss in any depth."

My hopes were dashed. My heart sank. I was afraid I had hit a dead-end on my first call.

"But listen," he continued, "I have a good friend, Dr. Samuel Lester. He's a retired college professor. He taught religious studies and he's really in touch with mainstream religion. He's spent a lot of time studying religious history. Why don't I give him a call and set up an appointment for you?"

My hopes were rekindled. "That would be great if it's not too much trouble."

"No problem at all. I'll give him a call today."

“Thanks a million,” I said. After I hung up, my enthusiasm was revived. At least this call had led me to someone who might be helpful. I couldn’t wait to hear from him.

Hardly an hour had passed when my phone rang. It was Dr. Lester. Obviously, he and Beckman were very good friends. I told him about my situation. He listened as if he were actually interested. I told him that I would love the opportunity to visit with him. I explained how I had questions about certain aspects of religion for which I had not been able to find answers.

“I’ll tell you what let’s do,” he said when I finally finished rambling on. “Are you doing anything this weekend?”

“No, not that I can think of. My wife, Sue, is in Chicago so I’m pretty free.”

“Now that I’m retired, my wife Brenda and I live in Wimberley, in the hill country. Why don’t you come up and stay for the weekend. It’ll give us a chance to talk.”

“I couldn’t do that. I don’t want to impose.”

“You won’t be. David tells me that this is important to you and I want to help if I can. I’ve got plenty of time. So you’re more than welcome. My wife paints for several hours everyday so it can get pretty boring around here. A good discussion will give me something to do.”

This was more than I had expected. “Well, okay, I guess, if you’re sure it’s not an inconvenience.”

“No, not at all. I’ll look forward to it. I’ll email you directions. We’ll plan on you getting here Thursday evening and you can stay for the weekend or leave any time you’re ready. However, it’s important for you to know that you still might not have your answers. Religion is a complicated issue.”

“I understand. Thanks, Dr. Lester. This means a lot to me.”

“Please, call me Samuel. And don’t thank me too soon. It might be a waste of your time.”

“Oh, yeah, right,” I said sarcastically. “I’ll look forward to it, too. See you then. Thanks.”

“No problem. Goodbye.”

I hung up. It was all I could do to keep from exploding with anticipation. Luckily it was already Tuesday so I only had to wait one more day before making the trip to Wimberley. I must say it was one of the longest days of my life. It seemed to drag on and on. And then I thought, what if he was right? What if he wasn’t any help? What if he ended up giving me the same old “faith” speech? What if he turned out to be some kind of fanatic for another religion and tried to convert me? Boy, would that be embarrassing! What would we talk about all weekend? I began to stress out. You know, it’s true what they say, most of the time we stress about things we can’t do anything about or things that never happen. But I was an expert at stress. I’m one of those who stresses over not having anything to get stressed about. But what could I do? I had made the commitment. And really, this could be the greatest weekend of my life. Little did I know how true that would turn out to be.