

How do you search?

Reference: SHM-S09-050-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 31 August 2014, edited on 2 September 2014)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

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Let us turn to **John 7: 50-52**.

John 7: 50-52

- 50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) *said to them,
51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"
52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

We know that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and he had come to the Lord Jesus before because he recognized Him to be a teacher come from God. He wanted to understand more about what life is all about. He was "one of them", that means he was one of the Pharisees amongst the whole group that were involved in wanting to seize the Lord Jesus. The chief priests and the Pharisees had sent officers to seize the Lord Jesus but they did not.

In this context, Nicodemus said to the others, "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it? It is not right that you should just seize Him, judge Him without having first heard from Him, without knowing who He really is and what He is doing. "

The others answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." These other Pharisees and the chief priests were very confident. They were quite sure that they were right. They spoke with self-confidence and arrogance: "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

What they meant was, "If you search, you will know the truth. If you were to search, you will know that the Lord Jesus is not a prophet from God."

So what did they mean when they said, "Search"? Search where?

In the context, the meaning is reasonably clear: Search the Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures and you will know that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

If they were to search from the Scriptures, would they find out who the Lord Jesus was? Would they be convinced that He was not a prophet from God? Did the Pharisees search rightly?

The Pharisees did not know who the Lord Jesus was because they did not search correctly. They made some assumptions. They assumed that the Lord Jesus was from Galilee but He was actually born in Bethlehem. If the Pharisees had taken the advice of Nicodemus to hear from the Lord Jesus then it is very likely that they would have come to know accurately who the Lord Jesus was.

For example, the Pharisees could have humbly come to the Lord Jesus and ask Him, "Where were You born?" And the Lord Jesus would very easily and likely have told them, "I was born in Bethlehem." Or they could have asked his parents, "Where was He born?" Or they could have searched the records and found out that He was born in Bethlehem.

But they did not search; they did not find out properly. They assumed He was from Galilee because He spent most of His time there.

So they said, "Search the Scriptures, and you will see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." So even if they were to search the Scriptures and it were correct that no prophet arose from Galilee, they would still be wrong because the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the Scriptures refer to His coming.

So why is it the Pharisees searched the Scriptures and yet they did not find the Lord Jesus? Let us turn to **John 5: 39-44**.

John 5: 39-44

- 39 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;
40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.
41 "I do not receive glory from men;
42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.
43 "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.
44 "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God?"

Among the Jews, the Pharisees were religious leaders and they searched the Scriptures, they read the Scriptures, they were familiar with the Scriptures. But here the Lord Jesus helps us to understand that searching the Scriptures, knowing the Scriptures, may not lead us to Him. Searching the Scriptures may not lead to their coming to appreciate who the Lord Jesus was and to trust Him and follow Him.

He said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life..." Was it true – in the Scriptures we can have eternal life?

As far as the Pharisees were concerned, that was not true in reality. They thought that they would have eternal life in the Scriptures but they would not. No matter how they read, they would not have eternal life because the Scriptures in themselves cannot give us life.

It is God who gives us life. That life must come from God. Just reading the Scriptures cannot give us life. This is something very important for us to appreciate. There are many people who study the Scriptures, spend many hours reading the Scriptures and are very knowledgeable in the Scriptures, but they do not have the life of God.

Why is that so?

God does want us to have eternal life through the Scriptures. He does want us to receive life through reading the Scriptures but that is only if we come in the right spirit.

The Lord Jesus said, "...it is these that testify about Me..." The Scriptures in reality testify about the Lord Jesus but many people read the Scriptures without recognizing that, without appreciating that reality. That is God's intention but men, in reading the Scriptures, do not see that.

That is because they are not reading with the right spirit, with the right heart.

He explains: "...and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." Isn't this very strange? "...you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." They were looking for eternal life; they wanted life but the Lord Jesus said, "...you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life."

That is because the eternal life that they wanted was not the real eternal life that God wants to give to us.

Many people are looking for the wrong things. They come to God for the wrong things. God wants to give us eternal life that is of the highest value and quality and meaning, but we are looking for something that is defective, that is corrupted. God does not give us that kind of life.

So they were unwilling to come to the Lord Jesus because in order to have that life from God, there is a cost: We have to repent, we have to give up our own selfish way of living; we have to turn away from the wrong path in order to receive life from God. This is what many people are not willing to go through in order to have that eternal life.

So we want an easier way. We want to listen to something that makes it easier for us to receive that life which we think is very good for us.

Going to heaven is wonderful; we want to go to heaven but we want to go to heaven the easy way. But there is no easy way to go to heaven. Heaven is a place of holiness. To go to heaven, we must first repent. That is why John the Baptist preached: "Repent!" The Lord Jesus preached: "Repent!"

Without repentance, we cannot properly receive eternal life. Without giving up what we recognize is of the world, that which is not pleasing to God, we cannot receive receive eternal life. Even a man like the rich young ruler, who was so eager to have eternal life; he came to the Lord Jesus and yet he went away sad, sorrowful, grieved in heart because of the cost involved. He was not prepared to leave the world and to follow the Lord Jesus.

So no matter how the Pharisees searched the Scriptures, they would not find God because in the first place they were looking for the wrong things. They were not willing for the cost involved to find that eternal life.

The Lord Jesus said, "I do not receive glory from men". This is the great difference between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees: "I do not receive glory from men".

But the emphasis of the Pharisees was glory from men. That is what they wanted. They wanted the chief places; wherever they were gathered, they wanted the chief places. They wanted to be honoured, they wanted to be addressed in a very respectful way; they wanted glory from men.

But the Lord Jesus did not receive glory from men. Glory from men is tainted, is not pure, is not good for us. Unless a person truly loves what is good, he cannot give us any glory that is of value. It will always have a self-centred element in it.

So the Lord Jesus continued: "...but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves." That is the heart of it. They did not have a true love of God in themselves, but they were searching the Scriptures.

What were they seeking? They were seeking for knowledge that they could teach other people, that they could exercise authority over other people. It was not the love of God that motivated them to search the Scriptures to understand the ways of God and to help others to love God and to follow Him. That was the problem. If within their hearts they truly loved what was good, then God would reveal to them what was in the Scriptures. God would show to them who the Lord Jesus was.

"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him." The Lord Jesus came in the Father's name, in the name of the Almighty God. He is God become Man dwelling in their midst. But they did not receive Him. But if someone else were to come in his own name then they would receive him. Why was that the approach? It is because they received glory from one another: "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God?"

So men seek glory from one another.

When you are great in this world, I praise you, I associate with you. When I am great in this world, you praise me, you associate with me. So we give glory to one another and we enjoy that kind of glory that the world can give.

In that kind of state, with that kind of spirit, we cannot truly believe because at the heart of a true belief in God is the giving up of the useless glory of this world. All the things of this world will pass away; all these things will be destroyed. Satan is the ruler of this world in terms of the world system, the spirit of the world, the direction of the world, the kingdoms of this world. At the end of all things, all this will be destroyed.

God wants to establish a kingdom of righteousness, of holiness, of true divine love and meaning. We need to understand that if we want to know the Lord Jesus as He really is, we must first of all give up ourselves, give up the things of the world, truly repent and come to God; seek His guidance, seek His revelation, seek the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise we can end up like the Pharisees: searching the Scriptures, knowing much about the Scriptures and yet not knowing God.

The Lord Jesus said, "...it is these that testify about Me..." The Scriptures testify about the Lord Jesus. Therefore it is very important that we read the Scriptures. There is so much in the Scriptures God wants to teach us. But it is only if we love Him, if we want to know in order to live by every word that proceeds out of His mouth that we can benefit when we read.

Many people do not spend sufficient time to ponder over what God has revealed and so we may follow the ways of the world, use our own natural reasoning to live the Christian life. And in so doing, we can very easily live according to the flesh, follow the ways of the world. We cannot develop a deep fellowship with God unless we appreciate what is in His heart, we love what He loves, we are conscious of the true and ultimate meaning in life.

"How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another...?" We have to discard that. Let us not seek for glory from one another, from this world. Satan offered all the glories of the kingdom of this world to the Lord Jesus, to tempt Him. The Lord Jesus rejected that totally: **"YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY."**

Are we prepared to do that? Are our lives given to worship God and serve Him only; seek the glory that is from the one *and only* God? It may sound wrong to seek for glory. But this kind of seeking of glory is right: seek the glory that is from the one *and only* God.

Why is this kind of seeking of glory correct? It is because God will never give you glory that is not good. He will not give you glory that puffs you up.

God will give you glory that at the heart of it has to do with the transformation of our character, the development of our being; that we become like Him. And if we do that, the true glory in our being will be the character of God, the character of the Lord Jesus: true humility, love, perseverance, righteousness, goodness.

That is the glory that God will give to us if we are prepared to give our lives to seek for that.

So as we seek to appreciate who the Lord Jesus is, as we come into His presence, let us ask Him to help us to understand ourselves accurately.

Are we seeking in the right way? How do you search? How do you search in the things of this world; how do you search in this life you are living; how do you search the Scriptures?

The way you do it will determine the outcome. If we do not do it the right way, all our searching will be in vain. If we do it the right way, God will reveal to us, He will teach us. We will find life, we will be transformed if we are prepared to live by what God shows to us.

So then let us ask Him to help us to understand the right way to live. And if there are aspects that are not right in our present approach to life, let us humbly ask Him to correct our lives so that our focus will be on Him and not on man and on ourselves and on this world.

Let us learn, as we look at the Lord Jesus to understand who He truly is, that we may follow Him and live for Him.