

An Encounter with God



Skeptical and concerned about his sister's religious experience, this young college student began to investigate the Bible. What he found surprised him!
By Darrel Lee

While I was a student at Oregon State University, I took a class called, "Ten Ways of Being Religious." I was not particularly concerned about the first nine ways, but I was very interested in the last one we studied—Christianity. During the session on Christianity, the professor challenged the class and said that the only way an encounter between God and man could be experienced was if God initiated it. A young girl who sat at the front of the class declared that wasn't true, and that she could initiate an encounter with the God of Heaven. At that moment, I wasn't worried so much about who initiated the encounter but that an encounter could, indeed, happen at all! As I thought about it, I began to be afraid and wondered what

would happen if God spoke to me.

The reason I had enrolled in that class in the first place was out of concern for my younger sister, Ginny, who was a Christian and was getting more involved in a church. I didn't really know too much about her church except that I had the feeling they were somewhat unconventional in their style of worship. To be specific, I heard that they prayed during their services! I had never been to one of their meetings, but I thought she was getting entirely too serious about the whole thing, and I determined I was going to learn a bit about what she was getting involved in.

A good upbringing

My three brothers and three sisters and I had been brought up in a good, moral home on a farm outside the city of Roseburg, Oregon. Our folks were the best parents you could ever hope for. They taught us to do what was right and not to do wrong to anyone. They didn't drink or smoke, and we never heard them fight. But they did not know about being saved or about praying and repenting of sin.

Then one summer, Ginny, who was eleven at the time, came home from a church youth camp and spoke to some of my siblings about their need to be saved. I was a smart-aleck fifteen-year-old at the time, and when she finally cornered me up and told me that I needed to have Jesus come into my heart, I just laughed at her.

About four years later, I started college. There were somewhere around 15,000 students at that university, and it seemed many of them lived from weekend to weekend, from one good time to another.

The good times, however, had begun to grow stale for me. By this time, I was getting tired of the sin in my life and wanted out, but I did not know there was a way out. I began to observe the other students, and they seemed to be living in a phony world. I would say, "I never want to be like them," but then a shocking realization hit me—I already was like them!

Facing reality

During Thanksgiving vacation of my sophomore year, I went home for a few days, and I noticed Ginny's faith again. She had been maturing as a Christian, and God had been teaching her about modesty and behavioral issues. By Christmas, some of my family members were concerned because they had observed that the way she looked, how she dressed, and the things she did were different than before. I remember telling her that she was trying to escape from reality by going to church. But she told me, "I am facing reality." That year, when I returned to OSU following the Christmas break, I signed up for the class on religion.

The next time I went home, the concern had not abated. Since I thought Ginny went to church entirely too much anyway, I began to worry about her mental stability. I wanted to help her, so I determined to read the Bible for the first time. Since I had heard that the Bible was full of contradictions, I began reading it with the intent of finding those discrepancies. To my surprise, all of the passages simply seemed to make common sense. Through that, God began to deal with me, though I was unaware of what was happening at that time.

When I was home for spring break, Ginny invited me to go with her to a Sunday morning meeting at the Apostolic Faith Church. I went to church with her for one reason—I felt sorry for her because it seemed she was standing alone in our large family. I walked into that meeting not knowing what to expect. I was braced for anything except what I found—the simple Gospel.

In that meeting I heard something I had never heard before. As I sat there, I recognized one fellow who used to play basketball with my brother. He stood up and testified about something God had done for him. The smile on his face seemed to confirm the peace of Heaven that he said was in his heart. A lady stood to her feet and testified of how she had been sick and had prayed for God to heal her—and He did! I could not deny what they were saying.

The minister who preached that morning was an unpretentious man with a sincere and hopeful message from the Bible, and I believed what he was saying. Then, when the sermon ended, people knelt to pray. I had never seen anyone pray. I did not know what it was or how it all worked, yet I could not help but think that they were sincere in believing that God had done something for them. It still did not register that He could do the same for me.

Life turned around

That night, before retiring for the evening, I read the Bible as I had been doing for the previous two or three nights. After I turned out the light, God initiated an encounter with me. The Spirit of God flooded my room. Though I did not know how to pray, God gave me the right words to say. I asked Him to forgive my sins. I told Him that I would try my best to serve Him if He would help me. In that instant, on March 17, 1974, God changed my life. I did not know that what happened to me was called salvation, but things were completely turned around from that time on.

I did not know how a Christian was supposed to live, but when I returned to college, God gave me victory over the old habits and appetites that had been in my life. My temper was gone. Nobody had to tell me not to do the sinful things I had done before—God cleansed me of those things. Nobody told me I needed to make restitution, but before long I was sending out letters and paying money to make things right.

It was a couple of months later before I was able to go to another church meeting in Roseburg. I talked to the minister and listened carefully as he told me what God could do in a person's life: "When a person gets saved the old things of life will pass away. You will be a brand new person." It finally clicked with

me, and I told him, "That happened in my life two months ago!" Without my knowing what to call it, God had given me two months of victory.

In July of 1974, I attended my first camp meeting in Portland, Oregon. It was at that altar of prayer that God sanctified me. What a wonderful experience it was! The Lord moved in my heart, and a great change took place right then.

Soon, I was hearing that I needed to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. I was hungry for more of God, and while still attending OSU, I spent a lot of time in prayer asking God to help me. In January of 1975, after a Monday night Bible study in Roseburg, the Lord came down and baptized me with the Holy Ghost.

Those experiences, and the many blessings God has given me throughout the years, have helped me in my service to Him. He has given me wonderful victory in my life. He has blessed me with a lovely wife and helped us to raise a daughter and a son who both gave their hearts to God when quite young. He has been our healer and protector. From the moment God saved me I have had such peace in my life. I love the Gospel, and I thank God for His goodness.



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