

Looking For God

A recent story on national news featured a victim of a sweat lodge ceremony that had taken place in the western part of the United States. A sweat lodge is a ceremonial sauna, usually made from a tent or small earthen lodge. Its origins are in the Native American culture. The purpose of the ceremony is for physical cleansing and spiritual purification. Earlier peoples used the ceremony to invoke wisdom and understanding as well.



In the ritual, large rocks are heated in an outdoor fire, then placed inside the tent or lodge. Water poured on the heated rocks produces steam and the interior of the structure quickly heats to temperatures that are unsafe. Sweat lodges must be carefully constructed and used according to exacting specifications to be considered safe.

A self-help guru's spiritual retreat recently charged this man and others almost \$10,000 per person to perform a two-hour sweat lodge ceremony that promised, among other things, spiritual enlightenment. After days of fasting and sleep deprivation, participants began to feel ill, and expressed concern over the level of heat in the tent. The leader admonished them and cajoled them into staying. When it was over, three people were dead and 20 more were seriously ill and injured.

When one of the injured victims, who was initiating a law suit, was interviewed by a national news program, they asked why he would subject himself to such treatment, when a good sauna would probably give him the same benefits. He replied that his main objective had been to gain spiritual insight. His law suit was not because he was injured, but because he had not found the truth!

How sad to look around and see all the difficult – and dangerous – things people do to attempt access to God. Spiritual enlightenment books, courses and guides portray complicated, long and tedious meditations and rituals. Numerous methods to achieve enlightenment are Meditation, Yoga, Contemplative Prayer, Martial Arts Kata, Fasting, Exhaustion, Sweat lodges, Psychedelic drugs, Despair, and Near Death Experiences. Many of these are rooted in some form of 'religion'. How heart-rending to see people who cannot recognize the God who made them, knows them and is interested in them.

The Bible tells us *"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29:12-13)

Not all seekers go the way of the extreme in looking for the truth. One young, highly educated professional man felt that taking the Bible and the beliefs handed down by his family were not enough. He wanted proof. And so he set about studying the Bible in detail so that he could produce the evidence he needed to discount and dismiss Christianity. A praying wife and the Holy Spirit never gave up, and after almost a year of long nights in the local library and on the Internet, the truth did indeed reveal itself. With clarity unlike anything he had ever studied, his spiritual eyes were opened and led him to bow before a Holy God who knew him and loved him, and he received the wonderful, unimaginable gift of salvation.

Where is God and how can we know He exists? And what comes next, when we die? If you struggle with these questions, we invite you to call us and speak to us about it. You may want to read some good material, such as that found on <http://www.allaboutgod.com/where-is-god.htm>. But be wary of the Internet. Some so-called 'paths to God' found online can result in consequential detours. If you don't have a Bible, get one. Call or email us and we will send you one. The best way to learn who God is, is to read His book, the Bible. Get in touch with a local church, and ask about study materials that will help you on your journey. Most of all, in the quietness of your heart, ask God to reveal Himself to you, and He will. It will be the first step that leads to knowing God. And once you know God, you will have no desire to seek enlightenment anywhere else.

Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open unto me, I will come in unto him.." (Revelation 3:20)

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. (John 14:6)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24)