

The Doctrine of the Perpetual Seeker

Following are the first four items listed in the What We Believe section of the UCC website:

We believe in the triune God: Creator, resurrected Christ, the sole Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit, who guides and brings about the creative and redemptive work of God in the world.

We believe that each person is unique and valuable. It is the will of God that every person belong to a family of faith where they have a strong sense of being valued and loved.

We believe that each person is on a spiritual journey and that each of us is at a different stage of that journey.

We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction.

What many of us believe here at Eden Church – Edwardsville, IL:

In general, the first three of these statements reflect traditional Christian principles (assuming that in the second statement it means a Christian family of faith. If not, then there is another problem imbedded in statement Two). However, the fourth statement is in error and essentially contains one of the heresies that are common within the Progressive Christian church. There is no amount, quality or focus of seeking that can produce an authentic relationship with God. Searching for God is certainly a fine thing given that it is what may lead someone to Jesus. Anyone who is part of a Christian faith community, who is regularly reading the Bible and praying for God to reveal what God wants them to understand, might, in time, recognize that God has a plan for salvation and that the details of this plan have been arranged by God to provide that which is being sought. God will reveal to a seeker that Jesus is the answer, and the only possible answer to their question.

It becomes apparent from some of the prophecies in the Old Testament coupled with reading any two of the Gospels and any two or three of the letters of Paul or other New Testament authors that God understands our problem, has provided a unique solution which only requires us to surrender our rebellion, followed by our belief in and acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice.

We do not suggest that simply reading these words will result in salvation, or that the first time one reads them that they will understand what salvation includes. However, a seeker who reads these words, talks with other Christians about their faith attends worship with these other Christians and prays for God to reveal what He wants them to know is. in time going to understand God's plan for salvation and may develop the spiritual conditions necessary to accept it (God, meanwhile has a lot more to do with this than we do)..

For some people, this can happen very quickly. I heard Billy Graham speak about God's plan and Jesus' solution during June of 1966 and within about 20 minutes I was completely convinced and asked Jesus to be my savior. The fact that I had spent 10 years in Sunday school learning the stories of the Bible, that my father read a story from a Children's Bible to my siblings and me after supper every night for many years, that I had been to church about 400 times and was part of a Christian family that discussed faith issues certainly set the stage for this acceptance, but once I heard it presented by Billy Graham, things happened very quickly.

For others, this process may require many years as part of a Christian community, many conversations with other believers and much time praying for God to give them the faith that is needed. There are as many ways of coming to the place on one's journey where it is possible to accept Jesus as there are souls that have been created (the Calvinists will surely choke on this assertion).

However, there is only one way to salvation. Spending a lifetime seeking some different plan for salvation or some better plan for salvation than the one God has already provided will come to nothing in the end. The UCC is saying that the persistent search for God is what results in the relationship. Since God loves everyone, if you stick with the UCC and keep seeking, not to worry, everything will turn out fine in the end. This is heresy. It would be a very chummy sort of concept for us to be able to promote and we could all have a very nice group hug around this perpetual seeking idea but it would be man's attempt to do what only God can do.

God is willing, and waiting to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We only have to come to the place on our journey where we are ready to ask Him to do it. But no amount of persistent seeking is going to resolve our separation from God unless it brings us to a personal relationship with Jesus and enables us to be Born Again. The modern progressive Christian theologian (sometimes Christian in name only) will turn up their nose in disgust when confronted with the term Born Again as some rustic, backwoods concept designed for the simple minded. However, it is the metaphor that Jesus used to describe what takes place when one accepts His atoning sacrifice.

We believe that the persistent search for God produces an authentic relationship with God, engendering love, strengthening faith, dissolving guilt, and giving life purpose and direction. (UCC website)

The persistent search for God engenders love? You cannot change your personality enabling you to become more loving. Jesus can and does once you are on the other side of

a decision. Certainly, one can choose to behave in an ethical manner, one can choose to act justly toward those who are oppressed, one can treat others with kindness and compassion, but if you want to become more loving you are going to need Jesus to help you do it.

The persistent search for God strengthens your faith? You cannot strengthen your faith...faith is a gift from God. You can read the Bible, you can read books about the Bible, you can attend worship, you can talk with Christians about their faith, you can pray for wisdom and understanding, but if you want to strengthen your faith you will not make much progress on the front side of a decision to trust Jesus.

The persistent search for God dissolves guilt? You cannot dissolve your own guilt. No amount of psychobabble is going to resolve your guilt problem. Jesus can and will. He understands your problem and knows everything that has ever happened to cause the guilt. He can provide a fresh start, *though your sins be as scarlet you will be white as snow*, with the memory of all that has happened *as far as the east is from the west*. This is all in the Bible. God knows we need to have these images in our minds to understand his solution to our guilt problem. That is why it is in the Bible.

The persistent search for God gives life purpose and direction? The persistent search for God gives one only a persistent search for God. On the other side of a decision to trust Jesus one will find purpose and direction but no amount of persistent seeking on the front side of a decision to trust Jesus is going to give you purpose and direction unless you see your purpose and direction as being a perpetual seeker.