

What Do You Seek?

One sunny Saturday afternoon in St. Louis, Missouri, near my 10th birthday, the doorbell rang, and my dad did two things I had never seen him do before: He got up from his recliner and answered the door.

My sister and I looked at each other in full-on shock and awe. The deeper surprise? He invited the man at the door into our home. Obviously, these events attached themselves to a long-term memory cell somewhere near a Halley's Comet image in my mind.

Our guest sold my dad a set of encyclopedias with an annual bonus book. He told me it was my birthday present. I wanted a Kodak camera to capture Kodak Moments.

Thus began my season as a Google boy: "Look up the Erie Canal. Tell me what you found." We did this nightly for a while. Thankfully, Bonanza and Perry Mason gave me a couple of nights off from my human Google duty. Today, I shake a little when I hear someone say, "Just Google it."

According to estimates, over 2 trillion global searches occur every year. I Googled it.

The search starts with a word, phrase or question. We call the words we use for searching "keywords." Keywords matter to marketers, researchers and people who cheat in trivia games. The study of key words has become an industry in itself.

Wouldn't it be helpful if we could Google spiritual truth? Sometimes I just want a quick answer from the Lord. At the crossroads, like a child, I want an audible voice.

When two disciples first met Jesus, He asked them a question that stirs conviction:

"The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned, saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' (John 1:37-38a).

When we find ourselves mired in a search, His question reverberates.

In my devotion this morning in the book of Acts, I read again about Tabitha (Dorcas).

"Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which when translated means Dorcas); this woman was excelling in acts of kindness and charity which she did habitually" (Acts 9:36, NASB).

Tabitha worked with habitual acts of kindness and love. When she became ill and died, her friends sent for Peter:

"So Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the room upstairs; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them" (Acts 9:39).

The widows showed Peter Tabitha's resume of tunics and garments to persuade him to pray for her. Leaders leave a legacy of helps. Now that's spiritual truth.

After reading these passages I searched the simple word "kindness." I called on the best keyword, Google-tool I've ever used: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.

I once carried Strong's Concordance and the Scofield Study Bible to every church service. I've used these books for almost 40 years. Neither is in great shape today. You may recall the hardback version of the concordance as broad and bulky. I used it as I listened to sermons, in small group discussions and for arm curl workouts.

I used the concordance as a tool to find every verse in the Bible with the keyword from a verse. It's amazing how one word in a verse can affect personal theology and behavior.

Today, we search the Bible for a keyword from our smartphones. I'm not sure how many people in the church want to do a word search these days. But I remember my charismatic church of the '70s had a building full of seekers who knew countless verses and Strong's word numbers.

Thankfully, most of us do not need to do a word search for kindness. We know it when we see it. We know how to do it. We don't need to watch a YouTube video for further instructions about human kindness.

I want more of Tabitha's model of habitual kindness. Random acts of kindness appear in man's encyclopedia. Habitual kindness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus is the answer to every search. {eoa}

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