

Chapter 2

Looking for the Loophole

One day in Heaven, God decided to take a stroll. Just as God was nearing the entrance to Heaven, He heard a most distressing sound. There, right outside of the pearly gates, He found St. Peter sitting on a rock crying his eyes out. God stopped and looked down at St. Peter and asked, "What's wrong, my son? Why are you crying?" Trembling in fear, St. Peter looked up at God and cried out, "Father, do you punish people for something they did not do?" God was quite taken back by this question, but lovingly answered, "No, my son I would never punish a person for something he did not do. Why would you even ask such a question?" St. Peter then confessed, "Well, last night I forgot to lock the gates, and all Hell broke loose!"

As a child growing up in the Midwest, I attended church every Sunday. I admit I found the church service boring, but I loved going to Sunday school. Being the middle child in my family, I was a natural-born instigator. Also being inquisitive, I remember asking my Sunday school teacher the question, "What are we going to do when we're in Heaven?" Being sincere, she answered, "We're all going to stand around in robes and sing." I quickly responded, "That's Hell!"

I was never satisfied with her answers and was persistent to the point of being a pest. I asked her yet another question, "If God is love.....why is he sending all those innocent people to Hell?" She must have had the patience of Job but by now was getting agitated with me. Without hesitation, she said in an authoritative voice, "Well, you just have to accept it!" Rebelliously, I answered, "I can't. How can I be in Heaven when I know all those people are suffering and burning up down there? Who's gonna put out the fires?" Then I remember she just gave up, rolled her eyes, and shook her head.

In 1991, I had just turned 40, at which time I began seriously thinking about what life was all about. Just like everyone else, I had many unanswered questions: What is my purpose down here? Where was I before I was born? What's going to happen to me when I die? So, in earnest, I began looking for the "loophole" which would make it possible for me to get into Heaven.

After trying on many religions for size, I came to the conclusion that religion just wasn't cut out for me. I discovered that many religions were judgmental of each other. They each thought they were right and everyone else was wrong. Why do people have to fight and kill each other over religion? Frustrated, I asked myself, "Why doesn't God just step in and stop all this madness?"

Finally, in 1992, after still not finding the "perfect" religion, I just gave up and stopped searching. Still trying to believe that there was "someone in charge," I remember standing alone in my backyard one sunny afternoon thinking about God and all of his crazy religions. I then looked up to the Heavens and defiantly shook my fist (at God) and said, "I would rather there be *nothing* than this!" Thinking that I'd had the last word, I put God and ALL thoughts of religion on the back burner and stopped looking for the loophole.

