

CHAPTER THREE

The Bell Ringer

The next morning I heard the bells again. They continued to ring for several minutes after I was fully awake. This time I decided that I must talk to the bell ringer himself. I felt there was a possibility that he might somehow hold the keys to this mystery.

I drove over to Albertsons again, and there he was, faithfully ringing his bell. I felt nervous about approaching him but forced myself onward.

I put a couple dollars in the pot and managed to say, "How's it going today?"

"Fine," he replied.

"Has anyone commented that the sound of your bells seems to be different than the other bell ringers in town?"

"Several have commented," he smiled, with noticeable pleasure in his eyes. "The reason my bell rings differently is that I have my own bell."

"I didn't know any bell ringers had their own bell."

"I've used this bell for a very long time. Here. Take a look at it." He put it in my hand.

It felt warm, almost tingly to my touch. I peered at it and said, "It looks like there are some ancient hand-carved hieroglyphics on the surface." I looked closer. "This one here is interesting. It looks like a crop circle I remember seeing recently. Do you know what they mean?"

"The meanings are layered and are interpreted in levels. I understand several of the levels," he said.

After he said this, I seemed to sense that my suspicion was correct, that there was something hidden about this man. I rang the bell gently against my ear. "It has the most beautiful sound I have ever heard," I said.

"Yes," said the man, smiling. "It really helps with the donations. Just because of that beautiful sound this location receives over three times the donations of any other in town."

"Interesting," I said. "Has anyone told you they heard your bells in their sleep?"

The man looked visibly shaken. "Not for a long time," he said. "Why do you ask that?"

I told him my experience with the bells.

He smiled and said, "Then you are the one I have been waiting for."

I stared at him wide-eyed. "You've been waiting for me? Why? This is too weird to be true."

"If you think this is strange now, just wait a while. What is your name, my old friend?"

"What do you mean by *old friend*?"

"I'll explain later when you are ready. Now tell me your name."

I figured there could be no harm in telling him. "My name is J. J. Dewey. My friends call me Joe."

"So the first J stands for Joe, or is it Joseph?"

"On my birth certificate it is Joseph, but as you know almost all Josephs call themselves Joe. Joseph seems a little pious. About the only person who ever calls me that is my wife."

"It is good that you are not pious. Nevertheless, Joseph is a beautiful and ancient name. Do you know what it means?"

"I think I read somewhere that it means *added or added upon*."

"Whoever came up with that did not really understand the Hebrew. In ancient days, when a father named his son Joseph, he did so with the understanding that his son would have great increase -- that whatever good was in him would be amplified and eventually bring forth an

abundance of all the earth has to offer. Joseph of the Bible, who was sold into Egypt, was the perfect example of this. He increased in knowledge, virtue and eventually became the richest man on the earth."

"Sounds like a good destiny," I said. This man was unusually knowledgeable for a bell ringer.

"Your second initial is J. What does that stand for?"

"John," I said.

"How appropriate! That is also my name. Do you know what this name means?"

"I don't think so."

"This name comes from the Hebrew *Yowchanan*. Any dictionaries that define the word miss the full meaning. Basically, it implies that a man with this name will attract the attention of God to the extent that God will befriend him as an equal. Some say it means *favored of God*, but the meaning is more like *friend of God.*"

"So would you say that the apostle John is the great example of this, since he was called the *beloved* of Jesus, or perhaps His best friend?" I asked.

John's eyes widened in surprise and he smiled. "He was an example, perhaps. I don't know if I would call him a great one."

I pondered what he said. The comment seemed rather strange to me. Of course John the Beloved was a great example, I thought.

He shifted my attention again toward his bell. "See this symbol here?" he asked, holding up the bell.

I looked and answered, "You mean the two intertwined circles?"

"Yes."

"One has a dot in the middle," I remarked.

"That is my name," said John.

"So this symbol means John?"

"Yes and no," he said. "It identifies me, and I am John, but it doesn't necessarily mean John."

"You seem to speak in riddles," I said.

"All teachers do at times," he said, smiling. "Did I hear right that your last name is Dewey?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what that means?"

"I'm not sure."

"The medieval Welsh altered the name of David, or the Greek *Dabeed*, to something like *Daw ee* and finally to *Dewey*. Do you know the meaning of David, my old friend?"

I wondered again why he kept calling me old friend, but I was too interested in the names to backtrack. "It seems like I remember learning back in Sunday School that it means *beloved*."

"The standard meaning is close here. It means *beloved* as in the sense of a family member or close friend. King David of the Bible was called a man after God's own heart, and God had compassion toward David in his weaknesses just as a Father would toward his own son."

"How do you know all of this? You almost sound like you know this from personal experience." This man was really arousing my curiosity.

"That doesn't matter right now," he replied. "The point is that you are blessed with three meaningful ancient names which will help you accomplish your mission."

"Mission?" I asked, startled. I would have walked away at that point if the man had not been so captivating.

"Your full name is strong with meaning. Put together, it goes something like this: *The desires of your heart will be amplified and fulfilled by attracting the attention of God or his servants.* If you use your power of increase for good, you will enter into the Kingdom of God and become part of the family of God."

"It's a good thing I didn't know the meaning of my name earlier. I might have gotten a big head," I laughed.

"You are far from being alone in having a beautiful meaning behind your name. Almost all names have a lot of beauty and meaning in them. It is sad that the ancient science of names and the power of their meaning has been lost to the world. But this loss is temporary. Mankind will soon learn the power of names again."

I studied this wise man closer. "You aren't just a bell ringer, are you? Who are you really?"

John sighed, looked heavenward for a moment and then looked at me. "I guess it's time to tell someone, but I can only tell you if you heard the bells as you were waking from sleep. You did hear them, didn't you?"

"Yes, I heard them loud and clear."

John shut his eyes for a few seconds as if he was reading a page from a book within his head. He opened them and said: "Yes. You did really hear them. I do not doubt you. This is a great day. Would you like to get a cup of coffee at Denny's when I finish my shift? It's only a few minutes away."

I didn't know if this guy was for real or not -- *probably not*, I thought -- but, like I said, I'm a very curious person. I replied, "I don't know why I find your words so fascinating. Yes, I would really like to talk more..."