

If My People Seek My Face Part 4

by Shane Idleman

Seeking God is a vital part of our relationship with Him, and it leads to a deeper understanding of Him, the filling of the Holy Spirit, and a life of purpose and meaning.

Duration: 26:47

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Ezra 8:21, Psalm 27:8, Psalm 63:1, Jeremiah 29:13

Topics: "Seeking God", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God with all our hearts, aligning our lives with His will, and removing hindrances that prevent us from truly seeking Him. It highlights the need for spiritual disciplines, repentance, and prioritizing God above all else in our lives. The speaker encourages a deep, earnest desire to seek God continually, acknowledging that seeking involves effort, fighting against distractions, and maintaining a consistent course of seeking Him.

Transcript

As you know, we're going through 2nd Chronicles 7.14. If my people are called by my name will humble themselves and pray. And now what's the next point we're on? If they seek me, they will find me. And you know, I thought about this message a lot this week because this aspect, seeking, is where we practice what we preach.

This is really where the rubber meets the road. I mean, we can kind of humble ourselves, we can say a few little prayers, but this seeking aspect, this is where I believe the dynamic of really being filled with the Spirit of God, really seeing change take place, happens, is in this aspect of seeking. It's actually also when we slow down and we align our lives with God's will.

That's what I look at when I think of seeking sometimes, I think of just slowing down. Have you ever felt you're going too fast? Too much going on? Just me? Calendars, everything's like, I'm just going too fast. And seeking God has a lot to do with just slowing down and aligning our lives with God's will.

And let me recap something I read a month ago because it's definitely relevant tonight. It seems that we have a form of microwave Christianity. Service times are cut to just over an hour, prayer is glanced over, and worship is designed to entertain the masses.

People are bored, they say, so our services need to be more appealing. Church is boring because the power of God has vanished from many congregations. Like Samson, they know not that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from them.

But there is hope. We can once again position ourselves to seek God. Jeremiah says, you will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all of your heart.

And you know, I've went over this, I almost didn't want to repeat myself, but it's important of what this word seeking means, right? We kind of gave that image of losing a child, and well, guess what happened? A few weeks ago, one of the families here actually, one of their children went missing for a few days. And it was, I mean, it was all-consuming. Every waking hour, and just looking and being on alert.

And that's kind of what that image is, in the Hebrew language, is I'm looking for something until I find it. I have to find it. And sometimes I think, when I think, you know, I used to read these scriptures, seeking God, yeah, I've done that, you know, I just, you know, kind of pray now and then, and read a little scripture and go to church.

But that really isn't an all-encompassing seeking after God. Now also, I realize we have to find the balance, because we all work, most of us, or we go to school, or we've got a lot going on, so God doesn't expect us to just lay on our faces 24-7. I mean, we should be, what's that old saying, you know, you're so heavenly-minded, you're no earthly good.

You know, it's just all this, and no horizontal or parallel relationship with man. So God wants us to seek Him with our time, but what usually happens is our time gets robbed of us, and we end up not seeking Him. Now, I also quote what I read a few months ago, I think a month and a half ago.

I remember when the church sought God in the upper room for days until fire fell. I remember when we were not in a hurry, and extended worship services drove us to our knees. Now this is too radical, too emotional.

We got church services down to a few songs, announcements, but where is that seeking of God? It used to be seeking God through prayer that drove the church. Prayer and seeking God were assets, and excessive media was a liability, but now it's been reversed. I remember when people were excited about seeking God rather than making excuses.

Now on this topic, think of, do you ever buy something for your children that says, some assembly required? And you try not to, you know, I don't need those directions. That happens to me a lot with four little kids. But when it comes to seeking God, some assembly is required.

Some spiritual disciplines are going to be required. Because the more you seek, the more you find. That's what Scripture says, the more you seek Him, the more you find Him, and the more that you find Him, you want to seek Him.

So there's a parallel relationship there. There has to be effort. There has to be fighting against the flesh.

There has to be fighting against the world, fighting against the devil, everything. Seeking God doesn't come naturally, does it? It actually goes the opposite direction. When we don't seek Him, when we don't make it a priority, we go in the other direction.

And seeking involves spiritual disciplines. And what I want to do tonight is read a lot of Scripture, I hope that's okay, to give you a hunger for seeking more of God. But seeking God involves spiritual disciplines.

And what I mean by that, the Bible, when the Bible says fast, when the Bible says devour the Word of God, when the Bible says seek after Him, all these spiritual disciplines point us towards God, and it's part of that seeking. You can't seek God without spiritual disciplines. And that's why spiritual disciplines are so difficult, and that's why nobody wants to do it, and that's why when I talk about these things, people are like, oh, I don't want to do that.

But that's how we find God, is to seek Him with all of our heart. Ezra 8 says this, 821, When I proclaimed a fast there at the river, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him a safe journey for us, and for our little ones, and for all of our possessions. There was a fast proclaimed, there was a prayer made, it's part of seeking God.

And also in this area of seeking, the call must be answered. Psalm 27.8 When you said, seek my face, my heart said to you, your face, oh Lord, I shall seek. So there's a call out there.

Psalm 27, when you said, when God said, seek my face, my heart said to you, Lord, I will seek. So God calls us to seek Him. He calls us into that relationship.

There's a call there that must be answered. And we all know, why are most of us here tonight? Because we want to seek Him. Answer that call.

And remember, it's conditional. God says, I will hear, I will heal, and I will restore. Are there areas in your life where you need healing? Are there areas in your life where you need to hear from God? You need things restored? It's conditional though.

If my people do these things, then I will heal, then I will hear, then I will restore. It's a conditional, if, if, if. How often have we seen that throughout Scripture? If you do this, if you make no provision for the flesh, if you flee, if, if, if.

So this aspect of seeking is conditional. The heart, and I'm going to get into the application right now, the heart has to be open and receptive. The heart has to be open and receptive.

And sometimes on Monday nights I feel like I'm preaching to the choir, right? Because, oh yeah, Shane, we know all this stuff. Yeah. But sometimes the choir needs a little preaching too.

And sometimes we need to be awakened. And I think a lot of people think they're seeking God, but they're not. I think they have a form of seeking God, but they've never really embraced seeking a full relationship there in this area.

And here's what has to happen. The heart has to be open and receptive. There has to be a turning to Him.

And I like what Leonard Ravenhill said, you can't live wrong and pray right. And I want to add there, you can't live wrong and seek God. You see how they oppose each other.

If somebody's living wrong, opposing God's will, going in this direction, they can't seek God. Actually, they're going in the wrong direction. Part of seeking God means we're going in the direction He wants us to go, and we seek Him and you will find Him.

We can't fill our mind with garbage and expect purity to be in our heart. We can't seek the filth of the world and wonder why we don't feel clean. We can't watch darkness and expect the light to shine in us.

In short, we can't seek the world and find God. There has to be a change. There has to be a turning.

There has to be a seeking. 1 Chronicles 22, 19. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.

You know that this word here, now set your heart, it's like setting, have you ever broken a bone? And what did they have to do? They had to set that bone. They had to set it in the right spot so it could grow back. So that's what this is.

Now set your heart, but we have to set our heart. Our heart is broken, right? It's going away from God, so we have to set our heart in the right direction. And that's one advantage to the Monday night studies is because we have to come here, we have to set our heart in the right direction because we get here in bad moods, I know, right? We're rushing here.

We've got this to do. Our mind's going in this direction. We're preoccupied with that.

So we have to set our mind back on, if you just set your mind during worship, you would see God move in a powerful way. The songs we're singing, allow that to change your heart. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.

So there has to be a setting. And then Psalm 63, Oh God, you are my God, I shall seek you earnestly. My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

There's an earnestness there. Once we set our hearts in that direction, once we set to go in that direction, there has to be a passion and an earnest desire that has to keep going. Though I fall, I get back up.

David said, where may I dwell in the house of the Lord? All the days of my life, I just want to dwell in his house. And that earnest desire to follow him and to seek him. So you see how that works? There's a turning of the heart.

There's a setting in that direction. And then there's a maintaining course. Because many people set the heart in the right direction Saturday night and then come Sunday morning, it's broke again.

We're off track. But as a word of encouragement, nobody does this perfectly. We all fall.

The key is to fall forward, back into God's arms of safety and forgiveness and seeking him. It has to be a priority. That's what this word earnest means.

Earnest is a priority. Psalms 27.4 One thing have I asked from the Lord, that shall I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Can you honestly say that? One thing have I asked of the Lord, that shall I seek, that I may dwell in his house all the days of my life.

One thing. And it parallels right with Matthew 6.33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. I was amazed at how many Bible verses talk about seeking God.

So many I couldn't go over them tonight. I think it was like 85 of them. Just in seeking God.

But this one really stood out. How many of us have heard this before? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And I've noticed that most problems are priority problems.

Right? Most problems in our lives are created because of priority problems. We don't have things in the right priority and that results in problems. Whether it's mentally, physically, emotionally, whatever it is, a lot of times, not all the time, careful not to say all the time, but a lot of times not having the correct priorities and seeking God first.

Because when I seek God first, I don't have to win the argument. When I seek God first, I make better financial decisions. When I seek God first, you take care of the temple.

When you seek God first, all these things of seeking, seeking, seeking, when that becomes a priority, everything else falls in place. When I seek God first, guess how my day is going to be starting out in the morning? CNN? Fox News? Any more cases of Ebola? You know? And the reason I make this point often in Saturday night service is because people are going crazy on this stuff. It's distracting people like I've never seen before.

I mean, they'll get caught up on this for weeks on end. And you can tell the relationship with the Lord is suffering. They have no passion for the things of God.

Why? Because they're taking their focus away from seeking first the kingdom of God. I often, before I post something on Facebook or send something out, I often think, okay, Lord, do I need to invest my time here? Do I need to invest in this news article or this? And now everybody's sending me the article about the pastor in Idaho who won't perform a same-sex marriage and now he might have a jail sentence and fines. It's like, oh wow, what are you going to do? I'm like, I don't know.

I'm not going to cross that bridge yet. We've got a lot of time. Let's just pray about it.

Let's seek God. But it's being inundated with what's going on in the world. And it's good to know, but when that information begins to draw me away from God, then I have a seeking problem.

I'm no longer seeking Him because I'm seeking all these other things. And you know, even throughout your day, right? At work or with the kids or the media. All those things can really pull us away from God unless we put Him first, making that a priority.

1 Chronicles 16.11 Seek the Lord and His strength. This is interesting. In the seeking of God, we look to His strength.

So are any of you feeling weak right now? Paralyzed? Ineffective? Look to His strength. As you seek Him, that strength will increase. Seek His face continually.

And it's not His hand. It's His face. Seek His face continually.

What He can do for you. Who He is. Deuteronomy 4.29 But from there, you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all of your heart and all of your soul.

And I'd say many people love to read that verse, but isn't it difficult? Can we say we seek God with all of our heart, with all of our soul? You see where all this is pointing, right? It's pointing us back into this deep relationship with God. And over the last few weeks, I've been talking about the filling of the Holy Spirit. Many of you have been to the Saturday night service, right? About this outpouring, this filling of the Holy

Spirit.

And I've seen that mighty fillings of the Holy Spirit often occur during these times of seeking God. It's when you seek Him, not just for five minutes, but when you take time and seek Him, that's when you receive these fillings of the Holy Spirit. In the same way you can't empty a swimming pool and fill it back up in five minutes, you can't empty yourself and fill yourself back up in five minutes.

There's a process there of seeking and seeking and seeking. I mean, I don't mean to say that a person cannot be changed instantly because they can. God can change a person.

You repent. You get right on track. You're filled with the Spirit of God.

But often through the seeking process, through seeking God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength, it takes time. It takes time. Even worship tonight.

I mean, sometimes it takes three, four, five songs. And that's why we want to dedicate even tonight to a little bit more worship so we can just focus in on seeking God because it's not a quick thing. You can't just come in and work it up and then leave.

There's a process there of slowing down. I would just encourage you to find a way to slow down. And I left my phone at home today, this morning a lot, and it almost feels like there's an addiction, there's something wrong.

I've got to find a computer somewhere. I've got to find a computer somewhere. Something's going on, right? And we get hooked on this thing.

Nobody else does, just me. Try leaving your phone at home tomorrow. I bet there'll be a big, you know, looking forward trying to get on the computer.

But we're so busy in these things. Again, fillings of the Holy Spirit often occur during these times of refreshing. The Bible calls them times of refreshing from the Spirit of the Lord.

Seeking begins with prayer. Here's where it begins. You can take a lot of this in, but this is where it really begins.

Matthew 7, 7. Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened. So I want to just encourage you tonight, during the closing worship, that you would pray that prayer and say, Lord, I want to seek You. I haven't been doing a good job of this.

I want to seek You. Lord, would You help me? Would You show me I'm seeking, I'm knocking, I'm asking. Lord, open that door.

Open that door to a deeper relationship with more of You. I want more of You. I want to be filled with Your Spirit.

I just want my life to be consumed with what You want, and not what I want. It begins with that prayer of putting the heart in the right direction. And that's interesting.

I noticed also that seeking is involved in salvation. Isaiah 55, 6-7 Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon His name while He is near.

And that's why often at Saturday nights, even I encourage people, if you've never cried out to God, if you've never sought Him, the Bible says, Call upon Him while He is near, while He may be found. There's a seeking in that. You have to seek after God.

I think some people are so hungry spiritually that they'll eat anything. They'll consume anything. And that's why a lot of people go in the wrong direction.

We're so hungry spiritually that we just consume anything and everything instead of the one true and living God. And the Bible also talks about seeking to find wisdom. Proverbs 8, 17 I love those who love Me.

Talking about wisdom. And those who diligently seek Me will find Me. Those who diligently seek wisdom will find it.

It's a good time to remember that where we seek determines what we find. Where you seek determines what you find. Many people are seeking for truth outside of God's Word, so guess what they're finding? Many people are seeking for God in their own way and against His Word and against truth, and guess what they're finding? They're going against Him.

So where you seek is what you find. Where are you seeking God? Is it in those quiet times of renewal? In the time of worship and prayer and daily Bible study? I know everybody's too busy, right? We've got busy schedules. There's a way to work around that.

Just replace it with the media, the TV time. Oh, that's hard. Yeah, I know it's hard, but how bad do you want it? I mean, I wish I could just preach on that.

How bad do you want it? I sometimes feel that God is saying, how bad do you want a relationship with Me? Do you want it bad enough to remove those things out of your life? Do you want it bad enough to make this a priority? Do you want it bad enough to remove those destructive habits? Do you want it bad enough to remove that attitude? How bad do you want a relationship with Me? Seek Me with all of your heart. You will find Me. That's a promise that He will answer, but it involves engagement on our end.

And that's one of my concerns for the church in America is we're so complacent, and it's hard. We can be in this complacent mode because we're blessed. We've got comfortable chairs.

We've got air conditioning. We have a wonderful heater in the winter, and we've got sofas at home and media. We're so comfortable that somehow God has to shake us out of that comfortable state in order that we seek Him.

And that's why oftentimes I talk to people that are going through tremendous difficulty whether it's moving or loss of job. And I try to see the light at the end of the tunnel because a lot of these things are key shaking moments in a person's life that will actually point them back to God. You see a death in a family or you see somebody got a call, bad news, or I'm losing my job.

What am I going to do? And then that's what it takes to get them back on track. It was funny this afternoon I looked at my, I've got a whole bunch of biographies. And one of the biographies I picked up I think for a few dollars was Jim Baker.

Remember him? Who was on TBN and he just, oh man. But the title of the book is I Was Wrong. And it talks about his time in jail and how he just, I mean you've got some of the stuff I was highlighting.

He just repented of his prosperity message and he could see that, you see a really changed heart in there. But it's interesting, he said, had not I ended up in prison I probably would have never changed. And so sometimes we look at these difficulties through the lens of the world instead of the lens through God.

And I often say thank God for my past and if it costs me all that to get here then I thank God for it. Because he uses those difficult challenges to break addictions. He'll use those difficult situations to get a marriage back on track.

He'll use a difficult work environment to shape and mold and conform us into the image of Christ. I remember I had a very difficult work environment when I was in construction. It was, I mean, you never not want to go to work? I'm sorry, let me reword that.

Do you ever not want to go to work? Because work just stinks and you've got to face the boss again. You've got to face the employees. You just don't want to go to work.

But looking back, I see how God used a lot of that to chip a lot of the things away from me and to develop humility. Because you don't just become a Christian and become humble. Humble takes being spit on.

Humble takes being told this. Humble takes being demeaned. Humble takes having your paycheck messed up about a dozen times.

Same thing with you. Everybody smile on that one. I guess that can relate to hard workplace environments, right? Or difficult challenges.

And that's why it's always good also not to make a decision when you're emotionally, in an emotional state. In other words, I probably quit that job I think a half a dozen times. You know, I get home, I'm done with this.

And I quit. And then I go, I'll go back. But when you leave something, God will open that door.

But I said all that to say this, that he'll sometimes use difficult situations. And I would say more often than not, it's usually the difficult situations that get us back into the Word of God. That get us back into church.

I mean, I don't know too many people who just walk in here and say, man, I'm making \$300,000 a year. I'm just bored on Saturday. Everything's good.

Think about it. It's usually the opposite, right? My life's falling apart. This is falling apart.

I've just been given this diagnosis. I need God. I need God.

And then we come and we seek Him. And it should be actually the opposite. We should be able to seek Him just for who He is.

That's why the Bible says set your heart on Him. Set your heart towards Him. So the good news in all this is also that seeking is a sign of repentance.

Did you know that? Seeking is actually a sign or a fruit of repentance. 2 Chronicles 14. It's a pretty incredible story if you get time to read it.

It's about King Asa. A-S-A. It says, He did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God, for He removed the foreign altars in high places, torn down the sacred pillars, cut down the ashram, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment.

In a nutshell, Israel had built up foreign altars in high places where they would sacrifice their children even and Molech and Bel and they would sacrifice all the things. They had these temples. They were drifted so far away from God.

And this king comes back and says part of seeking God is we're going to repent and we're going to return and we're going to remove these things. For He removed the foreign gods. He removed the high places.

He removed the destructive areas of His life. And that's what I want to do tonight. I want to shorten the sermon up a little bit.

And Chelsea's got some extra songs to do tonight. But to remove things from our life that we know maybe are hindering that walk with God, hindering that seeking of Him with all of our heart and removing whatever we've built up in our heart from pride and lust and bad attitude and no time and thinking this. Whatever it is that draws us away from God, the first step is to pray and to seek and to return to Him and to remove those things.

Whatever is polluting and diluting and stopping the seeking process, has to be removed. We can't continue to allow those things and still think we're going to seek God. Those things have got to be removed.

They've got to be dethroned in our hearts. And then as we pray, God can answer those things. And you know what they are, don't you? I have a long list here.

I could go down. But we want to repent and open that door of communication again with God. So I'll just have Chelsea come up again.

She's going to do a few songs. And I thought, you know, there's so much. I could have added two more pages.

But I was thinking that we don't need more knowledge about seeking God. We just need to do it. I was almost tempted to really just give a few Scriptures and go into a time of worship because so many of us, myself included, I'm not just pointing fingers.

We can sit there and go, oh yeah, that verse makes sense. Yep, I've heard that one before. Oh yeah, absolutely.

I've got to make those changes. Yep. And we just get knowledge and shaking our heads.

But at some point, we've just got to say, enough of that. I'm just going to seek God. I'm just going to seek Him through worship.

I'm going to seek Him and get my heart right. Because I've often said, 20 minutes in heartfelt worship can do more than months of studying. I love studying.

And we need it. But it can change your life. Prayer and worship can change your life and get you redirected in the right direction more than anything I know.

The Word of God points us to God. We've been pointed. But that's it.

The heart has to be engaged now. The heart has to embrace what we read and what we want to do.

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