

Seeking Him with an Obedient Spirit

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[0:00] I've given you a study sheet for tonight, not really a study sheet, kind of interactive, fill-in-the-blank kind of thing, and it's really very basic.

! And really this study is very basic. Not in the strictest sense a doctrinal study or theological study. It's not also in the strictest sense kind of a consecutive, expository teaching time through a block of Scripture.

But more topical in nature and more devotional in nature. In fact, I would really call this a devotional kind of study because what we're looking at and considering goes to the very heart of our personal communion with God and how we experience that and what our desires ought to be in relation to experiencing God on a daily basis.

And so it's entitled, what I've entitled the study, Seeking and Finding God. And we're kind of working our way through a number of ways that I think are very scriptural.

[1:27] Ways to seek God. Right ways to seek God so that we can find Him. Now I want to begin, and you see that in your notes, begin with a couple of questions, kind of thought-provoking questions. And the first one is this.

It may sound a little strange when you get all of it here. And you might find yourself thinking, well, what kind of question is that? What does that mean?

The question is this. Do you want God? Of course, you know, you're going to say, well, preacher, what a silly question.

It's a question that doesn't need to be answered. It doesn't need to be asked. Of course, I want God. Let me ask a second question, and we'll get a little closer to where I'm going with this.

Do you want all of God you can get? Do you want all of God you can get? Do you want God? Do you want Him in your life?

[2:28] Do you want Him? And do you want all of Him you can get? Now I need to qualify that a little bit. I guess I don't have to, but I'm compelled to.

Because I think we need to understand that I'm speaking in terms of experience, of our experience. It's kind of our experiential Christian journey.

Because spiritually speaking and scripturally speaking, as believers, you have all of God there is to get. You have all of God living in you, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

And so in a very real way, spiritually speaking, spiritual reality is that it's not more of God you need. It's God needs more of you. And so really, our Christian journey primarily consists of us giving more of ourselves to God.

[3:30] And that really does fit very well here, especially in the point that we're going to get into here in just a moment. All right, so when I ask the question, do you want God? Do you want all of God you can get?

I'm not speaking. I'm speaking in terms of experience, experientially. See, put in terms of your daily experience as a Christian, do you want God?

I mean, every day. And when it comes to, you know, specific moments of your day that we might call times of communion with God, quiet time with God, or whatever you might call it, whether it's early in the morning or late in the evening or at other times in the day.

When it comes to those particular times in your day, is it your desire to spend time with God, to have God? This kind of really harkens back to our subject last week where, you know, I made the point to seek His face and not His hands only.

It's the seeking His face aspect of this that I'm referring to here at the beginning. Do you want God for God just because of who He is?

[4:44] And do you want all of God you can get? Now, I did not say, do you want all of God you want? That sounds a little strange put that way.

Maybe awkward English, but the simple kind of sobering reality is that most of God's people have all of God they want. And you need to let that soak in just a little bit.

If you would be honest, we all would be honest, and it's good to be honest. And to have very deliberate, reflective times where you reflect upon yourself and who you are and how you're living out your Christian life, you might find yourself admitting that this is true, that you really have all of God you want.

A lot of believers, quote believers, and I think this is something a believer can do. For a lot of believers, they don't want any more of God.

I'm content with the relationship I have right now with Him. Wherever that may be for you, whatever level that might be. Many of God's people, and we all have to kind of do battle with this, that we have all that we want.

[6:13] And we don't really want any more. Now, the problem is, if I understand Scripture, especially the passage we looked at last week, and we're going to look at it here again, the problem is if you have all of God you want, then you're probably not going to find Him.

As you should find Him. And know Him. And love Him. If you have all you want, then not only is it true, you're not going to get any more, but you probably don't have God the way you need Him now. Because of Jeremiah 29.12. And remember, this is our key passage for this devotional study.

Jeremiah 29.12 says, And you will seek me and find me when you search for me with, what?

All your heart. All your heart. When you search for me with all your heart. See, when you search for God with all your heart, when I'm speaking in terms of salvation, the unbeliever is not seeking for God.

Really not. Until God begins to do His work, quickening and bringing life to that unbeliever.

[7:36] But the unbeliever is not seeking for God. So we're talking about believers here who are to be constantly, as a daily Christian experience, seeking after God.

Seeking God. And He said, You'll find me, but only if you search for me with all your heart. And so, if you're not searching for God with all your heart, then you have all of God you want.

And you don't really want any more. I know that's a hard one to swallow, and you've got to think about it a while, so I'll let you do that and we'll go on. Why do we need to seek God?

Well, remember our kind of overarching guiding principle for this devotional study. Kind of a very logical truth.

And here it is, and you can fill in the blanks. We did this last week. But when you seek God, you will find God. How do we know that? Jeremiah 29.12 You will seek Me and find Me.

[8:45] When you seek God, you will find God. And when you find God, you will know God. And when you know God, you will love Him. Now, it's not a reference to a one-time event that we're looking for out there and one day hope to experience and then we will have arrived.

This is talking about a daily experience, a daily journey, a daily desire to seek God and find God and find God and know God and know God and love God.

Because when we seek Him, we find Him. And when we find Him, we know Him. And the more we know Him, the more we love Him. And though we'll get more into this later on in the study, but when you love Him, that's the whole show.

That's what it's all about, the Christian life. It's all about that. And then in reverse, it is maybe perhaps even more instructive.

You cannot love God if you don't know Him. You can't love anybody you don't know. And you cannot know Him until you find Him and you cannot find Him if you don't seek Him.

[9:56] That puts it in pretty simple terms. And so here is the instructional part of our study and this is what it all comes down to. You must seek Him the right way.

I mean, if this guiding principle, this precept is true, and I believe it to be true, seek God, find God, find God, know God, know God, love God, if that's true, then seeking Him is pretty important.

And God gives us, I think, some instructions on how to seek Him the right way so that we can find Him and know Him and love Him. Alright? Now, what's the right way to seek God so that we can find God so that we know God so that we love God?

Keep drilling that progression of truth there. What's the right way? Well, number one, we covered this last week and we'll say a little bit more about it tonight. Seek His face and not His hands only.

That's number one. Let me ask you something honestly. Have you thought about that this past week? I have. How easy it is to get away from this truth.

[11:07] And so far away from it that when we hear it again, we think, this is, I've forgotten all about that. It almost sounds brand new. But it's not new.

And anyone who's a lover of the Psalms, and I know there's at least one person in here who's a lover of the Psalms. And you know who that is. Anyone who's a lover of the Psalms, read the Psalms, knows that David constantly talked about the face of God.

Now he was seeking His hands too. That's why I say seek His face and not His hands only.

Because God invites us again, invites us to seek His hands. But see, here's the beauty of it. When you have His face, you have His hands.

And we don't have to emphasize so much the hands and keep our focus on the hands so much as long as we keep our focus on His face. And so I asked you, have you thought about that this past week?

And so I would ask you this, in your prayer life, have you thought about your prayer life? What are you seeking in your prayer life primarily? His face or His hands? Are you seeking only what God can do for you?

[12:17] Or are you seeking God for God? Because He is who He is. And I'm afraid, though I may be a little troubling to put it in these terms, but it kind of startles us and wakes us up.

But I'm afraid that we might all, at some point or another, be guilty of seeking God's hands only as if He were some kind of celestial servant that we just summons in our prayers.

And that's really all that we need Him for. So we need to be careful about this. So seek His face and not His hands only. And I mentioned a moment ago that David wrote about that quite often.

Wrote and sung. Or is it sang? Sung or sang? About the face of God. In fact, I counted them up. 33 times in the Psalms, David mentions the face of God.

Both in a positive sense and a negative sense. In the positive sense, where we're seeking His face and God's face is toward us. And in the negative sense, where God withdraws His face from us.

[13:31] 33 times in the Psalms, David mentions the face of God. And I gave you four of them here. I think four good examples. Psalm 13, verse 1.

To the chief musician, the Psalm of David, How long, O Lord, will you forgive me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Not His hands, His face.

That means the face is a reference to all of who God is. And that includes His hands. Psalm 27, verse 8. When you said, Seek my face, my heart said to you, Your face, Lord, I will seek.

And then, of course, Jeremiah said, You seek, may you find me. Psalm 27, verse 9. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger.

You have been my help. Do not leave me, nor forsake me, O Lord of my salvation. See? A positive sense and negative. The face of God. Psalm 105, verse 4.

[14:36] Seek the Lord and His strength. Seek His face evermore. Seek His face. Dear people, this is not a hard truth to get a hold of.

But it is not a truth that we think of very often. Because we are so needy most of the time.

Really all the time. Even more than we think. So needy. And so when we come to prayer, we naturally, because we are human, and we are needy, people both spiritually and physically and a lot of other ways, that it's just too easy for us, too natural for us, to slip into a focus that is only directed toward the hands of God.

And we are not really taught, you know, really, not really taught to think of our relationship with God in terms of personal, His person, just enjoying Him and knowing Him and loving Him.

I've used the illustration way back when, you know, you were dating your future husband or wife. and you could spend time together.

[16:09] Time would just go by so quickly. And your desire to spend time together was not so the other one would do something for you or give you something or answer some question or meet some kind of need.

It was just, you just enjoyed being together. And, you know, God's people really need need to refocus on that kind of communion relationship with God and seek His face and not His hands. Let me say just a couple of other things about the face. I was thinking this past week about how important it is to see a person's face.

Have you ever thought about this? And it made me remember, you know, whether you're talking about personal relationships, you know, you have a personal relationship with someone, it's their face that's most important to you, or whether it's just a casual conversation.

When we were in Colorado Springs and at the church and I remember the very first day we were there and the church has a coffee bar. They have to do that one of these days.

[17:28] But anyway, coffee bar and off to the side they had all these little tables, a lot smaller than these, just a little sitting area and on each table they had these tall bases with artificial flowers.

I mean, and they, you know, they stood about that high and the tables were only about that big around. So here we are, we're sitting around them and, you know, several people in different places are speaking and, you know, I'm looking around and, you know, someone right at my table several times throughout the week.

You know, somebody would be sitting across from me at the table and I'd have to take that vase and set it on the floor because you don't want to sit there and carry on a conversation with someone and not be able to see their face.

You know, isn't that strange? Now think about that. It's not any different than it is with God. Now, we can't see the face of God physically, but the face of God is a metaphor for His person that we want to experience His person.

And so the face is very important. When our boys were little, I was thinking about this as well and it made me wish that I had little children again. Kind of. Kind of. Grandkids would be alright.

[18:43] But, you know, we would just wrestle all the time. Or is it rattle? Depends on where you're from. But we'd, you know, we'd play hide and seek, you know, and I remember we'd wrestle on the bed and not hide under the covers.

My whole body would be out except for my head, you know. But they're ripping that, you know, that blanket away from the face because what's important to them? The face. No matter whether they see the rest of it.

See, they're not satisfied they don't see the face. And we know people. We know people by their faces. By their faces. A bunch of years ago at church I was pastoring we had a, every year we had a Valentine party.

And it wasn't just a dinner, it was fun and games and silly and stupid things, you know. And I, I, one year I did several things and I made up this big cardboard thing and had painted on the front of it just figures of people or a person of just one.

And, and then there would be a hole, there was a hole in the cardboard just about that big right where the nose is for that caricature that I put on.

[20:04] and, and this was the name of the game pick your hubby's nose. That was the name of the game pick your hubby's nose. And so we'd pick, you know, two or three husbands you know and they would go out and or, excuse me, the wives would go out and then the three husbands would come, yeah there were three characters aren't the three characters and they would stand behind there and just stick their nose through and then the wives would come out and have to pick their hubby's nose.

Do you know your husband by his nose? You'd be surprised how many times they got it wrong or didn't have any idea which nose was, the nose that belonged to their husband.

But, you know, they could get it right sometimes because they'd memorized the nose. The face is so important. That's the point I guess I'm making. We know people by their faces. And so, how important it is in our communion with God, daily communion with Him, and in our prayer time, and in our Bible study time, that we acquaint ourselves with who God is, His whole person, and that we desire to enjoy His person.

Not the things always, only the things He can do, but His person. All right, I've spent enough time on that. Let's go to number two. Seek Him with an obedient spirit.

Seek Him with an obedient spirit or a spirit of obedience, if you want to put it that way. Isaiah 66, verses 1-2. Did I put that verse on there for you?

[21:48] All right. Thus says the Lord. This is an incredible verse. Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that you will build for me or could build for me? That is, what house could hold me? I mean, literally saying the whole heavens, that's my throne.

You know. And the earth, pretty proud of the earth, that's my footstool. So, what kind of house could you build for me? And where is the place of my rest for all those things my hand has made? And all those things exist. I mean, you can build anything you want, but even all the materials, God made them. And so, this is what the Lord says.

But on this one will I look. Now, that's a reference to personal connection. This one will I look.

[22:48] Though the point here in this part of our study is not the face, but it still comes into play here. It's God looking, considering. On this one will I look.

On Him who is humble or poor, if you have New King James the poor, humble, and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word.

And you put those two things side by side. what this verse, verse 1, says at the outset. You know what? The whole heaven is my throne.

The earth is my footstool. What kind of house could you build that could hold me? Or, really, literally, what kind of place, what kind of house, sanctuary, could you build that would be impressive to me?

But, this one I will look to, I will commune with, I will make myself known to, the one who is of a humble and contrite heart and trembles at my word.

[24:04] Alright, so, God is saying big, impressive church buildings. We've got a really nice one. I thank the Lord for it. God says, those kind of things don't turn my head.

Those are not important to me. Ornate sanctuaries, I would call ours that, but there are a lot of churches that spend buku's numbers of dollars to make very elaborate, ornate sanctuaries for worship.

And, that's not important to Him. On another level, human achievement, achievements, no matter how grand they may be, those, God's saying, won't make me sit up and take notice.

What then does God pay attention to? He looks to the one who is humbled and contrite and who trembles at His word.

Do you want God to look to you? I don't say that, I don't mean that in any kind of prideful kind of context. I want God to look to me.

[25:20] You want God to look on you? Look upon you? I don't know if you look at Job. Huh? I don't know if you look at Job. I'm not sure I want all that. Well, we're going to get to that here in a minute. Do you want God to consider you?

Ah, you should. You know, that what you're seeking, that kind of personal connection with God, that's what we all ought to seek.

Well, what does God say about it? He says, to this one will I look? to him that has a humble and contrite spirit and trembles at my word. In other words, and we could do a word study and spend a lot of time looking into the word humble and contrite and you know, this whole idea of trembling at his word.

Obviously, it's not trembling in the sense of quaking and fear. It is a holy reverence and respect for God's word. Really, all this could be summed up with the word obedience.

Obedience to God. And so, you know, a humble and contrite spirit says, and really, this is how we should define the kind of seeker's obedience that God desires.

[26:40] I'm not talking about seeker church, right? Maybe I shouldn't use that expression. It has a different connotation for many. I'm talking about those who are seeking him. A seeker's obedience.

How do we define that? Well, a humble and contrite spirit, one that trembles at God's word, is one who says, here's where you're ready to fill in a blank.

It's the one who says, can you guess? Yes. Yes, Lord. But I want you to get the whole thing because it's important how this is worded. Yes, Lord.

Now, what's the question? the yes comes before anything else that God might say and want you to do. It's yes, Lord, now what is it you want me to do?

Now, this is getting close to something Mike brought up because we might feel this is pretty dangerous. I mean to have the yes on the front end, you know, before we find out what God wants.

[27:43] Now, obviously, this isn't going to necessarily work itself out just the way this is worded. I mean, you're, you know, I'm not suggesting that in order to seek God in the right way and find God so you know Him and love Him, that you need to get on your knees tonight and say, God, yes, the answer is yes.

I don't know what it is that you want me to do, but the answer is yes. There's nothing wrong with doing that. I'm talking about the way you approach God and where you approach your relationship with Him.

It is, and we'll get to this in a moment, it's utterly absurd to approach Him in any other way. And yet, more often than not, we do approach Him in other ways, not this way.

Yes, Lord, now what's the question? Or yes, Lord, now what is it you want me to do? A few verses, Psalm 51, verse 16, speaking for you, do not desire sacrifice or else I would give it.

This is David speaking. And if that's all you want, God, sacrifice, that's no problem, I can do it. In another place I think it's in, oh, I don't remember now, you know, he set up a thousand bullocks.

[29:04] I've got them right here. That's not what you want. You do not delight in burnt offering. He doesn't say this again, but the idea is here, if you did, then I'd give that.

So what does God desire? The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. That's parallel to the passage I read in Isaiah, humble spirit, broken spirit.

These are the sacrifices of God. a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, oh God, you will not despise. Short of it, the principle is again, seeking God with an obedient spirit.

Psalm 34, 18, the Lord is near to those who have what? A broken heart. And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Isaiah 57, 15, for thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.

That's an incredible version. He says, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also, and really the idea is also, with him also who has a contrite and humble spirit.

[30:26] To revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Put that verse, put the two movements of that verse, side by side, what an incredible shift, and almost causes whiplash.

In a sense, if you just really take it all in, this is the high and lofty one, or exalted one, really would be a better word there. Who is this one? One who inhabits all of eternity.

We just inhabit space and time, and we're just temporal. that is in terms of our existence in human flesh. We're just kind of a vapor and we're gone.

But God inhabits all of eternity. That means no beginning, no end. So here's the high and exalted one inhabits eternity. That's who I am, God says, and my name is holy.

I dwell in the high and holy place with him also who has a contrite and humble spirit. What a shift. All this grandiose description of the existence of God.

[31:39] And then here is where he dwells, inhabits those who have a contrite and humble spirit. And that's where he wants space. So do you want the high and exalted one, the one whose name is holy, to inhabit you?

Of course. course. Of course. Well, here is how you must approach God. Yes, Lord. That's how you approach him.

Yes, Lord. Now, what is the question? Now, what do you want me to do? Kind of like signing a blank check and letting God fill in the amount. Or signing a blank contract and letting God pin in all the details of the contract?

Now, Mike, and all of us, does that make us feel a little apprehensive about this? Anything stir inside of you?

You know, like, if I do that, I mean, really approach God in that way, what will God require? Do you ever fear what God would require of you if you truly have a spirit that says, yes, Lord?

[32:55] Now, what's the question? Do you ever fear that? You know, what will God want from you? Will He make your life tougher than it already is?

Will He make you sell everything and give it all to the poor and, you know, get on a plane to the darkest part of Africa and spend the rest of your life there?

more like Job? Will He take your family away from you and all your material possessions and livelihood and just...

Now, those are extreme, obviously. You're the one that brought up Job, okay? Am I... Those are extreme things, but yet, let's all admit, there is naturally within us that kind of bubbles up this kind of apprehension that if, you know, I say yes, just give a carte blanche yes to God even before I know what it is He wants.

I approach God always in that way. Then you cannot help but have some apprehension. So God's going to kill my children or, you know, or burn down my house or...

[34 : 28] But you know, really when you think about it, and I'm not criticizing you, Mike, but that really is kind of a warped conception of the person of God.

And let me give you an example. Suppose Jonathan, my son, not Jonathan back there. Suppose he came to me, and it would be wonderful if he did, but he came to me and he said, Dad, he was just very serious and said, Dad, I know that you've been alive and in the world a lot longer than me and you're very wise and so forth.

And I know, Dad, that God has placed you in charge of me, responsible for me, and you are my father and you are my authority, and so, Dad, I want you to know that I will do everything you tell me to do, everything, all of it.

But what am I going to say? Goody, goody, goody. from now on, you must eat broccoli every day and no more video games.

Is that what I'm going to do? So why do we think that God, God may require some tough things of us, but why do we naturally kind of think, well, if I am going to be that consecrated to Him, so that it's just whatever, that somehow, you know, God might want something for me that would be a little too much.

[36 : 14] We ought to think about God in a different way. And, all right, so, this whole thought or this whole idea of approaching God with this kind of commitment, yes, or, now, what is it?

Whatever it is. Think, on the other side of that, the absurdity, and really, I would say, the utter futility of approaching God without an obedient spirit.

On the front end, think of the futility of that. God said, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart. All of your heart.

That's a heart that says yes. It's a contrite heart, a humble heart, one that trembles at God's Word.

Think of the futility, the absurdity of approaching God on any other basis.

It's kind of like seeking God with a question mark. Think about it. There's a difference. What a stark difference between approaching God with really, I guess we call it exclamation mark.

[37 : 35] Yes, Lord. Now, what is it you want me to do? As opposed to approaching God with a question mark. My answer is yes, God.

Or, no, really, God, you tell me what you want me to do and then I'll tell you whether I'm going to do it or not. Really, when you think about it, in our typical search for God's will, we usually seek what God wants us to do before we really pray about whether or not we're going to do it.

We have to have that first. But what a difference to first say yes and then whatever God says, we'll do it. Whatever it is.

I was looking at some of the awesome pictures on the internet that came from the Hubble telescope. Have you ever gone to that website? You ought to.

The Hubble telescope. And all these galaxies way out, wherever, and I have several that are my favorite. I think my favorite is the Sombrero galaxy.

[38 : 45] Look that up. It's incredible. all these huge galaxies and stars and groupings of stars and such.

It's just really awesome. And you look at those pictures and it kind of makes you think like Job, for example. Job 7, 17.

What is man? This is what Job said. What is man that you should exalt him? that you should set your heart on him? Or like David in Psalm 8, verse 4.

What is man that you are mindful of him? Or again, David in Psalm 144, verse 3. Lord, what is man? What is man that you take knowledge of?

Let me just go out on some night, maybe later when it's not so hot. and just look up, if it's a clear sky, you've done this before, and look at the stars, and just incredible.

[39 : 50] And that's what David was doing, I think. Consider the heavens, the works of your hands. It led him to the question, who am I? What is man that you would even take knowledge of me and consider me?

But God says, yes, all the heavens, is my throne. He says, the earth is my footstool. But to this one I will look, to him that is humble and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word.

So here are two principles already. Seeking God so that you can find him, know him, love him.

Seek his face and not his hands open. Seek him with an obedient spirit.

One that says, yes, Lord. Now, what's the question? . Thank you.