

# Seeking God's Face

REVIEW: I have to ask you to think back three weeks ago, to July 3rd. That is when we introduced what is now our current series. We did so by looking at one of the more misapplied verses in Scripture, 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face..." We said that it is misapplied because too often we take the middle man out. This is a promise that was given to the nation of Israel. While there are principles that we can apply to our lives, and the promise of healing is even true for us, it is true in a different way.

For us to appropriate this verse, we have to see the principles in it. God is calling for humility and repentance from Israel. God still calls for humility and repentance from us today - the principle still applies. When humility and repentance are sought, God says He will heal their land. To Israel this was a direct promise. God's judgements on the people were often on the land because they were an agrarian society. The land was life. To us, God still brings healing when we humbly repent and seek His face. Our healing will probably look very different from how it looked for Israel, but the principle is still valid.

TRAN: One of the key concepts that we pulled out from the verse was the idea of seeking God's face. We say it a lot in Christianity, but do we understand it? What does it mean? We said it means seeking God, understanding who He is. This is what we are going to start today. We want to look at who God is, and why it matters.

INTRO: So this series will be a look at several of God's attributes. We will look at the biblical/theological side of things, but what I really want us to do is think about what difference it makes to us. We can claim the truths about God: He is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient, omnipresent, but why do we care about that? Is it just facts about God, or do we understand how it changes our lives?

So let's dig into this!

- I. The first attribute about God is that He is personal
  - A. By that I simply mean that God is a Person - He has personality
    1. In the peculiarity that is "Keith" I contemplated playing the old song, "Personality"
  - B. There are four things that make up personality by academic definition
    1. A person has to have an intellect
      - a) Psalm 147:5 "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."
      - b) Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord."

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- c) So God has understanding, and He refers to His thoughts - marks of having intellect
- 2. A person has to feel
  - a) Zephaniah 3:17 "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." ESV
    - (1) I love this verse
    - (2) What are the emotions?
      - (a) Rejoicing with gladness - I guess that makes God a really happy guy
      - (b) Love
      - (c) Exult over us with singing
    - b) If that isn't a picture - God is rejoicing, loving and singing over us
- 3. A person has to have a will
  - a) Ephesians 1:11 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,"
  - b) God has a will
- 4. The final thing to constitute a person is the ability to act
  - a) Turn to Philippians 2:12-13
  - b) God is at work in us to help us desire and act to fulfill his purpose
- C. Beyond these four things, think of how the Bible speaks of God, and some of the things He does
  - 1. God speaks, He sees, He hears
  - 2. God grieves, God desires, God sorrows
  - 3. All of these communicate personality
- D. But perhaps the one way to prove God's personhood best is to work backwards
  - 1. Genesis 1:26-27
  - 2. God made man in HIS image
    - a) That means the personality traits that we have, He has
    - b) Of course, He has far more, and His are perfect compared to ours
- E. Hands down, the best way to know and understand the personal nature of God is to look at Jesus Christ
  - 1. Hebrews 1:1-3
  - 2. God used to speak through the prophets and in other various ways
    - a) That was great, and they knew God because of that, but...
    - b) Then Jesus came as the final word
    - c) Jesus was the exact representation of God
      - (1) In everything

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- (2) Remember how I said we could see what God was like by looking at humanity and working backwards - God's image is on us
  - (3) Doesn't hold a candle to Jesus Christ - we are tainted by sin, Jesus was perfect - He was exact
  3. John 1:14
    - a) The Word became flesh (Jesus)
    - b) John could testify to Jesus glory, which He came from the Father - implication - He shares the Father's glory
- II. So now, what difference does it make that God is personal?
- A. Perhaps the greatest thing is that we can experience God personally
1. We talk about many of the other attributes of God, but too often we do not make them personal
  2. We said that because God is personal, God knows
    - a) God does not just know what is happening on a planet billions of light years from here that we can't see with our telescopes
    - b) You can in all honesty say, "God knows ME"
  3. We said that because God is personal, He has emotions
    - a) God does not simply care about the dynamics of the world, or the universe
    - b) You can say, "God cares, God delights in ME"
      - (1) Think of God's care for Hagar after Abraham tossed her out of the house
      - (2) In Genesis 16 Hagar refers to God as El Roi - The God who sees
        - (a) It is a title that shows that God cares because He is watching over Hagar
        - (b) As well as a title that displays God's presence
- B. The fact that Jesus died is a fact of history
1. Regardless of the revisionists, there is overwhelming evidence
    - a) In fact, if you haven't seen God's Not Dead 2, see it
    - b) Then get any book written by J. Warner Wallace - We have *Cold Case Christianity* in the church library
      - (1) Wallace was a former detective that did not believe in God
      - (2) After studying Christianity, he states that he is now a Christian because Christianity is objectively true
  2. So Jesus death is a fact in history, but when you experience the truth that He died for you, that is salvation
- C. What happens if we treat God impersonally
1. In fact, how do we treat God impersonally?
    - a) We treat God impersonally any time we sin

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- (1) In essence we think that God is more a concept than a personal being that is grieved over our sin
  - (2) This is why it is so easy to rationalize sin - God is not personal, we are not grieving or making Him sad in any way, so we can do this little thing
    - (a) Besides, its not like I'm \_\_\_\_\_
    - (b) Then we name some heinous sin
  - b) We treat God impersonally ever time, I repeat, EVERY TIME we come to church and just go through the motions
    - (1) We are not here to really worship our Creator, and Savior - our personal God
    - (2) We come, we sing (ish), we stand up, we sit down, we put our offering in the offering plate, and we go home
      - (a) We did our bid for king and country
      - (b) What we didn't do was engage with our Savior who desires to have a personal and intimate relationship with each of us
    - (3) So are you living your Christian life just to conform to an external obedience?
    - (4) Or are you living your Christian life as a loving relationship, with a personal God?
  - c) One more (These are all illustrations of how we treat God impersonally) - we treat God as impersonal when we pray as if to an impersonal force or as if we don't really expect an answer
    - (1) Each time we pray we should have an understanding that we are praying to a Person - just as if we are talking with another human being
      - (a) The best conversations I have ever had with God is when all the trivial is stripped away, and I talk with Him as if He is sitting next to me
      - (2) When we pray, not thinking that God will really answer
        - (a) We are passively stating that we do not think He is powerful enough to answer our requests - thus making him impersonal
        - (b) We are passively stating that we do not think He really cares - stripping away part of His personal nature
2. So how do we stop treating God impersonally, and treat Him as the Person He is?
- a) First would be develop a friendship with Him
    - (1) Did you realize that Jesus already gave us the key to friendship with God?

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- (2) Turn to John 15:14 "You are my friends if you do what I command."
  - (a) In the past I have read that verse like Jesus was rather demanding
    - i) "You want to be friends with me, easy! Do everything my way."
    - ii) That is not what Jesus is getting at - read vv. 15-16
    - iii) Jesus gives us all we need to please God
    - iv) God is the one that initiated the friendship
  - (b) So friendship with God is a loving relationship that God initiated with us, asking us to follow His desires, His commands
    - i) That is how we prove our love
    - ii) As in any relationship - we display our love for another person by doing the kinds of things we know pleases them
- (3) Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:9
  - (a) He wanted to please God
  - (b) That is friendship with God - seeking to please Him
- b) Second would be recognizing how deep this relationship really goes
  - (1) One of the benefits of being in relationship with God is the gift He gives us at salvation - the gift of the Holy Spirit
  - (2) I know most evangelicals treat the Holy Spirit more like the long lost uncle no one remembers is part of the family, but the Holy Spirit is a tremendous gift
    - (a) The Spirit helps us the desire to follow Christ's commands - John 14:26 - The Spirit will teach you all things and remind you of everything Jesus said
      - i) Biblically that promise is to the disciples
      - ii) However, I firmly believe that is part of the Spirit's job, to help us learn - to illuminate God's Word for us
    - (b) The Spirit confirms that we are God's children - Romans 8:14-15
      - i) This is adoption
      - ii) We are a part of God's family, and the evidence of that is the Holy Spirit at work in our lives
    - (c) The Spirit allows us to cry out to God as our Abba Father
      - i) It is like Daddy, but really richer than that
      - ii) It is a term of a close intimate relationship
      - iii) That is what the Spirit helps us with - is to have and maintain the close, intimate relationship with the Father

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- (3) I strongly recommend that you study the Holy Spirit for yourself
  - (a) A good book would be Francis Chan's *The Forgotten God*
  - (b) It is also a Bible study series on RightNow Media - PLAY TRAILER
  - (c) Understanding your faith better - what we believe is a great thing
    - i) Understanding why it matters is even better
    - ii) And Francis Chan is very practical and gets down to the why it matters stage

## III. Embracing the personal God

- A. The sermon is short on purpose this week
  1. I wanted to leave some time at the end of the message to respond to our personal God
  2. We are going to do that in two ways
- B. First, take out the sheet in your bulletin marked, "Responding to our Personal God"
  1. There are two stages to this response which all of us will participate in
    - a) I will lead you through each
  2. The first stage is to take a passage of Scripture and personalize it
    - a) Too often we make one of two errors in reading the Bible
      - (1) We personalize it too much - so we think every Scripture was written directly to us
        - (a) It may feel that way when you are down and you read a passage that really lifts you up and speaks to your heart
        - (b) But the reality is the Bible was written to specific people in specific places - the principles are mostly transferable to us, but it was not written directly to us
        - (c) However, that is usually not our problem - we tend to lean the other way
      - (2) We de-personalize it too much
        - (a) We read it and understand the truth, and even praise God for the truth, but we do not let it mingle deep down into our soul
        - (b) We keep the truth at arms distance for whatever our reason, and it hurts us by not allowing us to understand how personal our God is, and how intimate He wants to be with us
    - b) So I have written up a few passages of Scripture with blanks where you are to insert your name
      - (1) What I want you to do is choose one, read it slowly, and try to read it as if this was a letter you just received in the mail

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- (2) This letter is about you, and you need to let the truth of it sink deep into your heart
- (3) You can read it quietly to yourself, or even out loud if you wish - but let the reading of the words transform your heart
- (4) After you are done reading, I want you to meditate on the words for the next few minutes of silence - then I will close the time in prayer
  - (a) Before you choose a passage I want to pray for us all
    - i) Guidance to a passage to read
    - ii) That the Holy Spirit would minister to our hearts
3. The second stage is also written on your sheets, and that is taking the time to pray
  - a) There are instructions on the sheet so you can remember, but I want you to think about a couple of things, and converse with your Heavenly Father
  - b) Q #1: How have you treated God impersonally?
    - (1) Maybe a way I mentioned, maybe some other way I have not thought of
    - (2) Confess that to Him, let Him know you are sorry for keeping your relationship de-personalized
  - c) Q #2: In what ways do you want to see your relationship with God become more intimate?
    - (1) Talk to God about that
    - (2) Ask Him to impress on your heart and mind ways you may need to change, thoughts, attitudes, actions, habits to pursue Him better, and become more intimate
  - d) After a few minutes, I will close us in prayer, then we will sing praise to our intimate, personal God