

Worship-based Prayer

Lesson 2 - Intimate Fellowship with God

Welcome back to *Worship-based Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face*. My name is Pastor Mike. We will continue with Lesson 2, which is entitled *Intimate Fellowship with God*.

This is a short lesson focused on the heart of prayer, which is a deepening, intimate relationship with the God of the universe.

We begin on page 8.

We cannot have intimate fellowship with one who we do not love, and we cannot love one we do not know. Therefore, we must press on to first know God. Our depth of love for God is directly related to our desire to seek Him. The word love is the pivotal word in the Bible. Whatever or whomever we love should motivate us.

The greater our knowledge of God, the greater will be our love for Him. Likewise, the greater our love for God, the greater the motivation to continue to pursue Him.

The chart on page 8 helps to illustrate this ever-deepening desire to love God as we seek Him continually.

There is a natural progression from seeking God, to knowing God, which leads to loving God, which leads to a life of obedience and intimate fellowship with God.

The one thing to understand in that God initiates this entire process by revealing Himself to us. If God did not reveal Himself to us first through creation and then through the Word of God, we would know nothing about Him.

There are many passages that speak about God being the one revealing himself. There is no one who seeks after God on their own. There is no one who is righteous, no, not one. God is the one who created us and He is the one who is pursuing us.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

Motivated by God's love, He is inviting us to seek Him. In this lesson, allow God's Word to help us understand this relational process of seeking, knowing, loving, and obeying/abiding.

Here are a few passages that remind us to respond to God's initiative as we first begin to seek Him.

Jeremiah 29:12-13

*Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. **You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart,***

Hebrews 11:6

*And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

Hosea 10:12

*Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; **for it is time to seek the Lord,** until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.*

Isaiah 55:6

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

1 Chronicles 16:8-11

*Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; **let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.** Look to the Lord and his strength; **seek his face always.***

Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, finding the Lord as we seek Him with all our hearts in a wonderful promise.

The chart of page 8 illustrates the relational process of **seeking, knowing, loving, and obeying/abiding**. I might also use the phrases of **looking, learning, loving, and living** in relationship with God. At each step in this continual process, there is a deeper commitment. There is a progression, a depth of intimacy and relationship that is growing as we pursue this process of coming to know God in a more intimate way.

In Psalm 27:8, we have a royal invitation from God. God says to David, “Seek my face.” In response, David says, “Your face Lord I will seek.”

As we seek God, we come to know him. Not just know about Him but to know Him personally. We received a taste of this when we read Psalm 103 together to start this course. We know God better as we learn more of how He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture.

The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8, “What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”

Paul had known Jesus as Savior for 15 to 20 years at this point in his life. He was saying, he wanted to be continually growing in his intimate knowledge and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The following passages provide us with an understanding of this growing knowledge of God that follows seeking Him with all our heart.

Colossians 1:9-10

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to **fill you with the knowledge of his will** through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, **growing in the knowledge of God**,*

Ephesians 1:15-19

*For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, **so that you may know him better**. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that **you may know the hope** to which he has called you, **the riches of his glorious inheritance** in his holy people, **and his incomparably great power** for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ...*

2 Peter 1:2-3

*Grace and peace be yours in abundance **through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life **through our knowledge of him** who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

1 John 4:7-8

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God **and knows God**. **Whoever does not love does not know God**, because God is love.*

As we come to know more about God's character and who He is and how He loves us, this leads us to then move to a place of experiencing a love for God, a deep relational love.

1 John 4:16 speaks to this truth.

God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God in him.

In this deepening relationship, there is a oneness that begins to take place. Love is the central theme throughout the Old and New Testament.

In Deuteronomy 6:5 we are called to love God with all our heart.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Jesus repeated this command as He affirms the First and Second Greatest Commandments in Matthew 22:37-40

When asked where we might find the “love” chapter in the Bible, we all turn to

1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 12. Love is defined in these passages as not just a feeling but an act of the will. The Greek word used for “love” is agape, which is the deep love of God, the self-sacrificing, unconditional, self-giving love that God demonstrated to us through Jesus on the cross.

When we place our faith in Christ for salvation, we are told in Romans 5 that God pours His love into our heart through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This kind of love flows first from seeking and then coming to know more about God. As we know about God based on His Word, we come to understand through the Spirit of God the height, depth, breadth, and the length of the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. In response to this deepening love, we are filled with the motivation to worship God through a life of obedience.

Obedience is one evidence of saving faith in the Lord Jesus. In 1 John 5:3 we are told, ***"This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome."***

When Jesus taught us the importance of an abiding relationship with Him as the True Vine and us as the branches, He said in John 15:10, ***"If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. "***

Abiding or remaining in Christ, is realized moment by moment through our obedience. This abiding life of intimate fellowship is characterized by faith, obedience, and praise.

We can see this process also in our human relationships. My wife and I have been married for more than 40 years. We know and love each other in deeper ways now than after 1 year, 5 years, even 20 years of marriage. Seeking, Knowing, and Loving each other has helped us grow to live in close fellowship with each other. We sacrifice, submit and are willing to serve each other.

The Scriptures are also very clear that God desires His people to know and love Him. He is ready and responsive to restore his people if we seek his face.

2 Chronicles 7 14

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

The invitation to seek his face is offered to you right now. The divine initiative of Psalm 27:8 says, when you said, seek my face, the Lord was inviting David to seek His face. David's response was, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

The Lord God is saying to us, "Seek my face." We must hear the call and answer. As we seek God, we will grow to know God and love God, which will lead to a life of abiding and obeying in response to His love for us.

David said in Psalm 27:4, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, seek him in his holy temple."

What is the one thing that drives you? Is your one thing to seek the Lord, to gaze upon his beauty? This is just a picture of walking in close fellowship with God.

Do we bring everything before Him. Are we honest in our confessions? Are we trusting him for all things? Do we praise Him for who He is and thank Him for all He has done.?

This is the heart of prayer. This is where prayer begins.

God invites us to seek him through prayer.

I encourage you to take some time to respond to the questions on page 9.

1. How does having a desire to seek God's face daily lead to knowing and loving God in your own life resulting in the desire to live a life of obedience and submission to the Lord?
2. What does "seeking God's face" look like in your life?

Here are a few practical examples of what seeking the Lord's face looks like in my life.

- Having a consistent, daily quiet time. For me, this is in the morning as my wife and I read the Bible together. We read from the Old Testament and the New Testament. We read 5 psalms and spend time praying.
- The Psalms provide us with a picture of God's character, His attributes, His names. The Psalms also turn our focus upward on God leading us into times of surrender, confession, and repentance before we begin to ask for things.
- When we do begin to make requests of God, there is a greater chance that the things we ask for are going to be aligned with His kingdom coming and His will being done.
- I look for opportunities to worship the Lord throughout the day. Worship does not just that takes place on a Sunday morning. Worship is not just what happens when we sing songs in church. Worship is singing. Worship is praying. Worship is thanksgiving. Worship is hearing the Word of God. Worship is responding in obedience. Worship is confession. Worship is silence before God. Worship is giving. Worship is serving. We desire to develop a lifestyle of worship and an awareness of God's presence as we go throughout the day.
- I can pray privately but also praying with others fosters a sense of unity with other believers and the Lord. So private prayer and corporate prayer are essential aspects of seeking God's face in my life.
- Having times of thanksgiving, the discipline of remembering. How often in the Scriptures are we told to remember, remember all the good things that God has done, remember His awesome works. We are so quick to forget. Even in Philippians 4 when we are told not to be anxious about anything, but to pray about everything with thanksgiving. This thanksgiving may be thanking God in advance, knowing that God is faithful. He will respond in a perfect way. Or it could be thanking God as we remember His faithfulness in the past and that His peace will begin to guard our hearts and minds in the present.
- I focus on seeking God's face as I listen to God. Prayer can be asking for nothing while we are still and silent before the Lord. It is healthy to let the noise of the world, all the distractions settle down, so we can hear from God. I enjoy quiet times of walking or doing yard work by myself. And often I will hear from God.
- Confession is another way of seeking God's face as I read the Bible or spend time in worship.
- Responding in obedience sparks a greater desire to draw near to God. It gives me more opportunity to thank Him and praise Him.

- There are three “musts” for those who desire to follow Jesus in close fellowship.
 1. We must deny ourselves! Say no to ourselves. Say yes to God. It is not about our agenda. We must be focused on His will and His kingdom.
 2. We must take up our cross daily. This is understanding the call to share in the sufferings of Christ. There will be difficult things in life and God will use these difficult things in our lives to shape us, transform us, and conform us into the likeness of Christ.
 3. We must follow him. This is a life of obedience. He is the Lord, our King, our Master.

Deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him. (Luke 9:23)

These are just a few of the ways I focus on seeking God's face.

I would encourage you to consider what this looks like in your life as well.

What are the things that have been effective in your life?

What are the things that you want to let go of?

What do you want to begin doing this year?

As we bring this lesson to a close, we want to understand that there is no magic formula to prayer. Prayer is less about what we do and more about our attitude and love for the One who we are seeking to know, love and obey.

Pray is a royal invitation from God to seek His face continually, to grow in a deeper relationship with Him.

Ask God to give you the desire to draw near to Him. To be a branch that is connected to the True Vine. And in the process, God will produce fruit, much fruit, more fruit, fruit that will last, fruit that will be for the Father's glory.

In Lesson 3 we will discuss some of the problems with how churches approach prayer and why there is such a great need for Jesus to teach us to pray.