

SEEKING GOD'S FACE



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IT SEEMS THAT NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY, we can't find a way to talk about our lives these days without COVID-19 taking center stage. We are now more than halfway through 2021 and the picture is changing as the world slowly comes to life, rather like a bear awakening from a long winter's sleep. With successful vaccine administration in many parts of the globe, people can at long last eat in their favorite restaurant—if it is still there—and finally, after nearly a year and a half, hug each other once again. Parks and playgrounds are alive with families, planes are in the air and optimism is creeping back into our conversations.

Other parts of the world, however, are still in the throes of the pandemic. At this writing, India leads the nations in the number of daily new infections with over 28 million active cases, nearly half a million deaths and only 2% of the country vaccinated. Our friends down under have been told they shouldn't plan to travel outside their country until 2022. Canada's borders remain closed, and others around the world are facing lockdowns that make 2020 look like freedom. For some, the great anxiety that was the hallmark of 2020 is being replaced with hope. For others, however, it has simply morphed into the great anxiety of 2021.

Be a Seeker

As my part of the world crawls out from under the shadow of the pandemic, I have been asking the Lord for direction for the coming months. What lessons should I have learned from the past year and a half? His constant answer has simply been, "I want you to be a seeker." That, however, has led me to more questions. What exactly does that mean? After all, being a "seeker" doesn't always carry with it the best implications these days. In the past twenty years or so, the seeker friendly movement has created a man-centered theology wherein believers are often biblically illiterate and satisfied with a steady diet of milk. These churches are content with a Christianity that is "an inch deep and a mile wide," as I heard one pastor describe it.

It bears little resemblance to the apostle Paul's confession in Philippians 3:10–14: *"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or*

am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

In this passage, it is the Greek word *dioko* that is translated "press." Paul is saying that he is in hot pursuit of that prize, that he is running swiftly and without pause, that he is motivated by



PRESS ON
TOWARD
THE
GOAL

a deep yearning—even a craving—and he is not about to quit until he has attained what God has for him.

In other words, God wants me to be a searcher like Paul, someone who is not content with mere curiosity, but is obsessed with that which he or she is chasing after. That's what it means to be a seeker. With that, God has impressed on me a verse that is to be my focus for the rest of the year. It is Psalm 27:8b: "*Your face, LORD, I will seek.*"

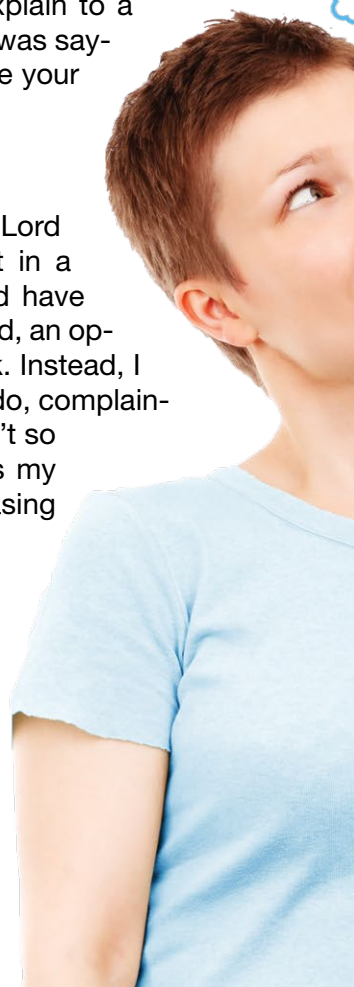
In Hebrew, there are two words that are translated as “seek.” One is *darash* and the other *baqash*. They come from the same root but have slightly different meanings. *Darash* means to search out, to strive after, even to demand, to deeply desire and to yearn for. *Baqash* means to look for with joyful anticipation, but also to tread, with the connotation of a path beaten down by frequent use. Both these words imply obsessive action. You just don’t stop until that goal is reached. As I attempted to explain to a millennial acquaintance what I thought the Lord was saying to me, he replied, “Oh, it’s like when you lose your phone!” Yes, that and much, much more.

WEALTH

A Wasted Lockdown

As I continued to pray and research what the Lord was indicating to me, I suddenly realized that in a large part, I had wasted the lockdown. It could have and should have been seen as a gift from the Lord, an opportunity to “redeem the pandemic” so to speak. Instead, I spent too much time looking for other things to do, complaining and being bored. Perhaps the problem wasn’t so much how I spent my time, however, as it was my focus. I often let my attention wander from chasing after God with delight. And for many believers, this paved the way for them to give in to fear, anger and anxiety.

Anxiety has always been a part of the human experience, but during the pandemic, it has hung over the world and the Church like the sword of Damocles. In searching for remedies for it, I found such helpful suggestions as stay active, drink water instead of alcohol, quit smoking and drinking coffee, eat healthily and breathe deeply. All good ideas, but not the solution to the problem. That is only truly found in an intimate relationship with the Lord, a deep,





God-centered relationship in which we are constantly seeking Him. I, like many others, feel that I wasted time and emotional energy in 2020. But it is never too late with our heavenly Father. He desires that all of us would be real seekers, promising Him and proclaiming over our lives, “Your face, LORD, I will seek” (Ps. 27:8b)

Your Face, LORD

In today’s world, there are so many voices crying to be heard, vying for our attention, things for us to seek after. For some of us, acceptance and even popularity become the goal.

For others it might be security or wealth, safety or success. We may spend our time trying only to build a life of ease, wasting that precious commodity on physical pleasure alone. Some of these are worthy goals and may be ours as a result of our seeking, but the psalmist makes it very clear that our sole priority should be seeking the face of the Lord.

The Hebrew word for face is *panim*. It comes from the verb *poneh*, which means to turn away or toward, or an indication of what is innermost. In other words, the face is the access to what is inside a person and by extension, represents the totality of that person’s presence. In Exodus 33:15, Moses said to God, “If Your Presence [*panim*] does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.” In countless other places in the *Tanakh* (Gen.–Mal.), *panim* is used to refer to God’s wonderful, redeeming presence, the totality of Him, His very essence.

By proclaiming “Your face, Lord,” we are acknowledging that He is in fact our Lord, our King, the One to whom we owe total allegiance. He is the great I AM and there is no other god than Him. He will be our priority, and we will not allow any of those other voices to become gods in our lives. His face is His very essence, the presence where we are wrapped in His love and the only place where we can find true satisfaction. In that presence we find safety and security, peace and calm, healing and



YOUR
FACE
WILL
I SEEK

deliverance, salvation and acceptance. And so we cry, “The totality of your presence, Great I Am, will we seek...”

Will We Seek?

Here we declare to the Lord that as an act of our will, we choose to make Him our ultimate goal. David spoke of that act of will many times in the Psalms. He was the inventor of self-talk. How often do we catch a glimpse of David’s struggles and his determination to overcome them through an act of his will? “Why

are you cast down, O my soul?" he asks in Psalm 42:5. **"I shall yet praise Him,"** is his decision (emphasis added). **"I will love you, O LORD my strength,"** he says in Psalm 18:1 (emphasis added). I choose, he is saying, I am determined, I will. Like David, we will have to make that decision over and over again. We can never be too busy, too tired or too distracted to seek God first. And the more determined we are, the more the enemy of our souls will bombard us with those many voices. But like Jesus (Yeshua), when faced with that very same tempter, our response must be from the Word of God, *"Your face, LORD, I will seek"* (Ps. 27:8b).

Depending on the translation of the Bible you are using, the word "seek" in its various forms appears up to 309 times. Most of the times are encouragements from the Lord to seek after Him, and many of them contain promises.

Joy is promised to seekers in 1 Chronicles 16:10: *"Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!"*

A promise of His strength is found 1 Chronicles 16:11: *"Seek [darash] the LORD and His strength; seek [baqash] His face evermore!"*

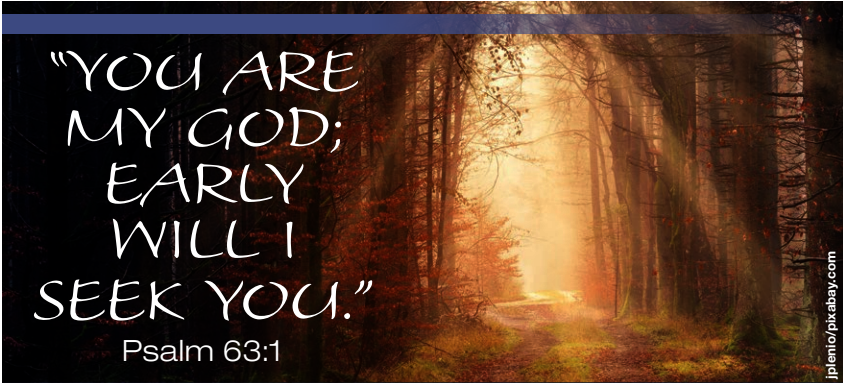
God promises deliverance from fear in Psalm 34:4: *"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."*

In Amos 5:4b, He promises life itself: *"Seek Me and live."*

In countless other verses, including Proverbs 8:17, Deuteronomy 4:29, Luke 11:9, Matthew 7:7 and Acts 17:27–28, God makes the greatest promise of all. *"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart"* (Jer. 29:13).

We may have wasted time in the past, but let's follow Paul's example and forget what is behind. Let's press forward, seeking God with an insatiable desire, yearning for Him, and as our time with Him becomes a well-worn path, let's seek Him with joyful expectation. And may we seek with the same ardor as David when he said: *"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life..."* (Ps. 63:1–3a).

He promises we will find Him. But as true seekers, like David, and to God's delight, may we always want more.



"YOU ARE
MY GOD;
EARLY
WILL I
SEEK YOU."

Psalms 63:1

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God's chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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