

Praying For His Presence

“*Passion of His Presence*”

**If your Presence does not go with us,
do not send us up from here . – Exodus 33:15**

Are you thirsty for God?

(ie) Thirst – hunger from Max Lucado’s “Come Thirsty”

Three Men of the Bible Stand Out as Thirsty for God God-hungry, and God-chasers:

Moses, David, and the Apostle Paul demonstrated this great longing after God. Listen to them.

1. Moses

14. The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15. Then Moses said to him, "**If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.**" 16. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" 17. And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18. Then Moses said, "**Now show me your glory.**" 19. And the LORD said, "**I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence.** I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21. Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." – **Exodus 33:14-23**

2. David

Ps. 27:4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Psalms 42:2 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 42:7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Psalms 63:1 O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Psalms 143:6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.

Psalm 84:1 How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. 4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

As the deer pants –Beneath the soil in Israel is a labyrinth of limestone caves and rivulets. Streams run beneath the earth. A thirsty deer can hear the waterspouts, the gurgling of water just below the surface. As he runs to find it he will extend his nostrils into the air catching a whiff of the fresh streams. With ear and nose he pants after the water brooks, so too should we pant after the presence of God.

3. Paul

Philippians 3:8-14

8. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9. and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11. and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.

To Know Him:

The Bible uses the word “to know” differently than we do. Saber=intellectual knowledge, Conhecer = is experiential knowledge, personally know up close and personal.

(ie) A.W. Tozer – Pursuit of God

In his wonderful book The Pursuit of God, Tozer decries the state of the church today that is satisfied to have little of God.

“How tragic that we in this dark day have had our seeking done for us by our teachers (preachers). Everything is made to center upon the initial act of “accepting” Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls.” p.16 Pursuit of God

“I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate... Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted.”

Great Men Longed for God - quote

“Great men of prayer were great spenders of the precious pearls we call time. They dared to assault the clock, bending, stretching, even amputating the hands where necessary, so that they might find His presence. They squandered the rare stuff. They dared to throw their pearls where few men have – they wasted them on God! They used them up like water and cried for more. They were thirsty for His presence. They dared to be loners in the desert of silence to find the pearl of great price. They hunted God. They tracked him down. They laid in wait for his passing. They lost sleep to see him but for a moment. They were in love with God. They rendezvoused with him whenever they could steal away. They gave God the greatest and most expensive gift. They gave God the gift of time in liberal flows of the sands of the hourglass.”

Seeking His Presence personally precedes seeking his presence corporately.

“Before you can be a praying church you need first to be a praying individual.”

“Before we can be a church of God’s presence we must be people of his presence. We must first be passionate about knowing him personally and intimately.”

I. What Is Real Prayer?

Prayer is hunger for God – Harry Emerson Fosdick

Westminster Shorter Catechism defines man's purpose. Question: *What is the chief end of man?* Answer: *The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*

(ie) Jonathan Edwards as a boy of 12 years of age knew prayer was about loving God and being alone with him. He built prayer hut in the woods.

Misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of prayer.

Prayer is not asking stuff from God.

Prayer is not telling God what to do.

Prayer is not manipulating or influencing God to do what we want him to.

Prayer is not begging God for crumbs, answers, healing, miracles, etc.

Real prayer is different.

It is not as the heathen do – mantras, litanies, ditties.

It is not about me. – It is about knowing God, experiencing God.

It is not about my wants, my needs, my desires.

It is connecting with God, finding God, experiencing his real presence.

It is about God!

We do not need more people in love with prayer, with worship, or the church in general. **We need more people in love with God. Prayer is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. That end being entering the glorious presence of God.**

Prayer is loving God and “knowing” God, not in an intellectual ascent but in a personal encounter.

Do you know God? Have you been in his presence?

(ie) Charles Finney. – The story is told of Charles Finney being converted to Christ and setting his heart ablaze with a pursuit of God's presence and anointing. One day while riding his horse into a town people sensed the glory and presence of God, like the glow that was on Moses face, and fell to their knees in cries of conviction and repentant hearts as he passed.

God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but in the temple of your body.

PRAYER IS EXPRESSING YOUR HUNGER FOR GOD.

II. What Is His Real Presence?

Missing Presence: Is His Presence Needed?

God-shaped vacuum.

As French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) wrote:

“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator made known through Jesus Christ.”

Restless until we rest in thee.

(ie) **Confessions of St. Augustine** claimed, *“You have made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless, until they rest in thee.”*

C.S. Lewis claimed that our longing after something that we cannot seem to find in this world is evidence that the thing desired is supernatural.

Jeremiah said,

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. - Jeremiah 2:13

God is not reluctant to show up. He is often not invited.

You will seek me and find me when you have searched for me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

III. What Is Real Pursuit

“My soul follows hard after God.” - Psalms 63:8 My soul follows hard after you:

1. Develop and nurture a deep spiritual hunger for God.

How do we get God's presence, in our private lives, in our homes, and in our church?

- a) Ask God to create that insatiable desire for his presence.
- b) Read through the Psalms morning and evening for six months.
Let his Word bathe you over and over again.
- c) Expose yourself to God-hungry people. Prayer partners.
Take time alone with God

2. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Whet your appetite with words of great men of God. Sit at the feet of the masters.
One of my spiritual goals for this year is to read biographies of great men of God.

(ie) **Books to fan the flame.**

- ?? The Pursuit of God, AW Tozer
- ?? Hunger for God, John Piper
- ?? Into the Depths of God, Calvin Miller
- ?? The God Chasers, Tommy Tenny
- ?? Come Thirsty, Max Lucado
- ?? Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala

3. Determine to seek his face (not just his hand, or ear)

Fan the flame of passion for God's presence.

- a) Prayer Books & Tapes and CDs
- b) Prayer Guide – Alone With God
- c) Prayer Retreat – Focus on God Alone

Conclusion:

Are you thirsty for God?

Are you hungry enough to go without food, without sleep, without some pleasure to pursue his presence in your life?

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN Francis Thompson

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me'.

Augustine's Confessions

Secondary School

When I was sixteen I went to secondary school, far away from home. There I fell in with bad companions. I became an animal; I burned for all the pleasures of hell. All my thoughts were of lust and impurity. And though I was rotten inside, I was clean outside. I wore fine clothes and used perfume, and thought myself a very fine person.

My one delight was to love and to be loved. But what I called love was mainly lust. I could not distinguish the calm light of love from the fog of lust. I was drowned in a river of sexual desire and unchaste actions. Like a pot of boiling water, so was I tossed about and boiling over in various rank and furtive love affairs.

I was one of a gang that wandered the streets at night, looking for evil. I used to be ashamed before the others if I did not do things as bad as they did. They used to boast of their evil deeds, and the worse the deed the louder they boasted. And I myself did the same things, not only for the pleasure of the act, but for the pleasure of boasting after. I even boasted of sins I had not committed, so that my companions might praise me and say, "Well done!" I was ashamed to appear innocent and pure. We even did evil for the sake of evil.

After secondary school I came home and spent a year doing nothing. My father was gathering the money to send me to Carthage for tertiary studies, to study literature and what was then called rhetoric. It included law and the various arts of speaking publically and persuasively. During that idle year I went from bad to worse. My mother trembled with fear to see me on the edge of hell. She warned me. She begged me not to sin with women, above all with another man's wife. But I laughed at her. I looked on her warnings as foolish woman's talk, not fit for a man.

My University Days

Carthage, a great seaport, was full of people from all over the world, and full of all wickedness. There I had complete freedom. Lust and impurity were all around me. I plunged into it. I was not in love, but I was in love with loving, and my love was only lust. I was never satisfied until I had enjoyed the bodies of the women who said they loved me. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart. I wanted no profit from my wickedness, but only to be wicked.

I wandered into more sins and sorrows. For I was not happy. My sins made me bitter and proud and sad. I tried to find rest for my heart in more and more sins.

An Atheist

Until now I had always believed in you, my God, and in Jesus my Savior, even though my life was bad. But now I joined the atheist party in the university. They were called Manicheans. They posed as the "intellectuals", clever people who knew everything. They said, "You Christians are fools. You believe all that your priests tell you as children. We intellectuals believe only what we can prove by our own reason. Your Jesus was a deceiver. Your Bible is only a collection of stories. There is no such person as God."

They said, "You Christians worry about your sins. You feel guilty when you commit adultery. You should not feel guilty. For it is not you who sin. Inside yourself there is darkness and light. They are at war with one another. When you sin, it is darkness that does it, not you. You are not to blame. So do what you like, have a good time, and do not feel guilty."

How I loved that doctrine! It was just what I wanted. It suited the pride of my mind and the lust of my body. Never to feel guilty for my sins! Never to have to confess them! No authority over me! Wonderful!

I Open a School

Since my father was dead, my mother could pay my university fees no longer. So I left Carthage and came home and opened my own school. The best young men and boys of the town became my pupils. Some of these were Christians, others were preparing for baptism. And I confess to you with tears, O my God, that I mocked their faith and destroyed it. I drew them from you, O God of light, into my own darkness. I was doing the devil's work for him.

My Last Struggle The Storm Breaks

That story (of Saint Anthony of Egypt) pierced my heart like a sword. **I saw myself as I was, wicked and shameful. How could others give up everything for you, O God of love, in one single moment? And here I was. For years I had been begging you, "Give me purity - but not yet!"**

My good friend Alypius was with me. I turned to him. There was a storm in my heart. "Oh, what is wrong with us?" I cried. "See how simple uneducated people run to God. But here we are, with all our learning, stuck fast in sin. Why can't we follow them? Why don't we? O God what is wrong with us?"

I ran out into a garden behind our house. I fell on the ground. I beat my forehead. I tore my hair. I wept aloud. I cried out, "O God, why not now? Why not now? Why not turn to you now with all my heart? O God, O God, let it be now! I have only to will it. Let it be now."

A Voice

Suddenly I heard a child's voice from some nearby garden. It was singing over and over, "Take up and read. Take up and read." I tried to remember if there was any game in which children used these words. But no, I could think of none. Then I thought that perhaps it was a command from you, my loving God, to open the Bible and read the first words I should see. I opened it, and the first words that met my eyes were these, from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 13, verse 12: Don't spend your time in wild parties and getting drunk, or in adultery and lust, or fighting or jealousy. But ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you live as you should, and don't make plans to enjoy evil.

We ran and told my mother. And, O my God, how she laughed and wept for joy! You had answered all her prayers, and given her more than she had ever asked for or imagined. For I no longer thought of marriage, money, or power. I wanted you and you alone, O God of my soul, God of my love, God of my life. - On the night of the Easter vigil of the year 387, Ambrose baptized us.