

Chapter Two:

Learning To Seek God

Day One Text:

Solomon was the son of David who followed him as king. Solomon had seen the blessing upon David's kingdom, and he had seen God withhold his blessing when David did wrong. He was familiar with the law that prescribed an ever-tightening noose of judgment upon the people if they turned away from God and persisted in their rebellion. Knowing this, when Solomon was dedicating the temple he had built he prayed, "When they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy... and if they have a change of heart... and repent and plead with you... and say, 'we have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly'; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul... then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you."

Later, when Solomon had finished the dedication of the temple and gone home, the Lord spoke to him in the night. God said, "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people; 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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:13-14). It is interesting that God did not send out a blanket policy saying, "All right, I'll just declare an amnesty and forgive everybody. Starting today all of the curses are lifted and there is no obligation on your part." Here he sure knocks the idea in the head that says, "God understands me and I know he'll come through." God never abandons his own law simply because someone thinks he should. And, it should be said also that his law always makes provision for repentance. That is what this passage is about.

Whether our sins have come from a weakness and a temptation caught us unaware, or we have just willfully chosen to sin, it is all the same. Sin separates us from God and He has made a provision by which we can deal with the sin in our life.

In this passage God sets the standard by which he will grant repentance and restore blessing. First, the beneficiaries must be His people; people of his name. Then they must humble themselves and that must be followed with prayer. Not just a “now I lay me down to sleep prayer,” but a seeking the face of God prayer. Finally, there must be a turning from the wicked ways. Then God says he will forgive their sin and heal their land. Let’s take a closer look at the qualifications God gives for restoration.

Day Two Text:

“If my people who are called by my name”

Solomon was asking about the Jewish people specifically and at that time they were the only nation that could claim to be God’s people. They were people of His name. Today God has broadened that definition to all who have believed upon Jesus Christ and have taken his name. There are many promises in God’s word to people of his name; and people who are not of his name are not qualified to be recipients of the promised blessing.

Who are the ones to whom this promise is given? They are people of God, “When my people.” God has not given promise that he will heal and bring prosperity to just anyone; *only those who are HIS people*. These are people who not only know his name but are recognized by his name and are called by his name.

In the Christian era we know that “God’s people” refers to anyone who calls on his name from a sincere heart. The New Testament declares, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

Day Three Text:

“If my people... humble themselves”

We must come in humility. How do we do that? Coming humbly to God is more than being sorry that you got caught. It is more than just trying to change the circumstances. It is coming to God knowing that you have messed up and there is absolutely nothing you can do on your own to make it right. You must surrender your ego and go to God, who alone can answer your need. This is stripping ourselves of any ego or self. It is about becoming empty of ourselves. A good example of this is the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15.

Matthew records the story of a woman who came to Jesus with a great need that was beyond her ability to answer. She had a daughter that was very sick. She was desperate for a solution. She was so desperate that she literally put herself into the position that if the Lord did not answer her request she would be totally humiliated. Here are the elements of the story:

- First when she came to Jesus he ignored her. He acted as if she wasn't even there (v23). But she persisted.
- Then he told her he had not come to help her kind (v24). And she persisted.
- Then he insulted her, calling her a dog (v26). Still she persisted.
- Finally, on her face before him she cried, “Lord, but even the dogs get the crumbs from their masters’ table” (v27).
- What was The Result of humbling herself? Jesus granted her request (v28).

Day Four Text:

“If my people... pray and seek my face”

Most of us know how to pray; we learned as toddlers. We learned to pray beside our bed before we went to sleep. We learned to pray before we ate. Some of us even learned to pray the Lord's Prayer. But the praying mentioned here goes beyond those prayers. This praying is elevated to the idea of seeking His face. What does it mean to seek God's face?

The idea of seeking the face of God speaks to the concept of surrendering ourselves to the care of God and totally depending upon him for the outcome. In that process we are humbled before him, knowing that only he has the answer, and with that understanding we seek him. Jesus gives us an example of seeking the face of God in Luke 18.

This story tells the plight of a widow woman seeking justice from an unjust judge. Not all of the aspects of this story parallel the relationship we have with God, but the key elements do. First, there was a person offended and she was demanding an answer. Then when the answer did not come in a timely manner she continued to pester the judge. Finally, her daily coming to him convinced him that if she didn't get her answer she would continue coming until the whole community would know of his hardness to her, and he granted her request.

Jesus concludes this story by saying, "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? I tell you he will see that they get justice."

This passage demonstrates the concept of seeking the face of God. There was the element of desperation: The judge was her only recourse, if he didn't answer there would be no answer. She was persistent: She continued to come before the judge until her answer came. She had a legal right: She knew the law and she knew the law said that she would be vindicated. She was seeking the face of the judge every day until her answer came.

When we seek the face of God we go before him, humbly seeking favor. We know that there is no other way, we have exhausted our resources and we know that we cannot do it on our own. We thrust ourselves at his feet and are committed to finding his favor regardless of what we must do. And we keep coming before him until our answer comes.

Day Five Text:

"If my people... turn from their wicked ways."

A primary test of sincerity is whether our need drives us to change our behavior. Seeking the face of God includes confession and asking forgiveness, but it also includes repentance which is turning away from our unacceptable behaviors. People are often confused on this issue. They

will come to God confessing and asking forgiveness but they lack the resolve to turn from their sinful ways. All of the people I have known who have overcome behaviors that were controlling them have had to come to the point where they realized that if they did not change they were going to be destroyed by those behaviors. They knew they had to change their lifestyle.

In common terms today we call this *behavior modification*. God is saying here that we can go through the entire process up to this point, but if we don't surrender our behaviors to him we will not receive the blessing we seek.

We must go through behavior modification; "And turn from their wicked ways." None of the above is of any value unless we are willing to complete the repentance process by turning away from our wicked ways.

The process of growing in faith and overcoming unwanted behaviors requires us to determine where we want to be, discover where we are, and finally to plot a course to get there.

We are talking about the God Walk – A Journey of Faith. The purpose of this book is to give believers guidance on their journey of faith. It is my hope that reading this book will give you insight into a lifestyle of overcoming undesirable behaviors and building new patterns of behavior.

One of the ideas I try to instill in people is that this journey of faith is not just about a magic moment when we "get it." It is about becoming committed to a lifetime process of reconciliation, renewal and restoration.

Notes On Your God Walk – A Journey of Faith

Chapter Two Workbook:

Learning To Seek God

Main Idea: God's plan to restore us is affected by the way we respond to his guidance

Practice This: Daily prayer of confession, asking repentance and committing to follow Him.

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Day One Workbook:

1. When Solomon was dedicating the temple, what did he seem to be most concerned about?

2. When God answered Solomon (2Chronicles 7:14), what conditions did he put on forgiveness?

3. Does God automatically restore anyone who asks him, or does he require a commitment from them? Explain your answer.

Day Two Workbook:

4. Explain who and/or what God is talking about in the following words and phrases from 2 Chronicles 7:14:

My People:

Called by my name:

Humble themselves:

Pray:

Seek my face:

Turn from their wicked ways:

Day Three Workbook:

5. How does the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15 Demonstrate Humility?

6. Describe the five elements of this story.

7. What is a common word that reflects the process given in 2 Chronicles 7:14?

8. How does God promise to respond to this process?

Day Four Workbook:

9. What would be an application to us by these phrases:

Hear from heaven:

Forgive their sin:

Heal their land:

Day Five Workbook:

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10. Explain *behavior modification* in your words

11. What behavior modification do you need to go through?

12. How are we going to change those behaviors?

Notes On Your Journey:
