

Seeking God's Face

2 Chron. 7:14

Series: "IF"

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This is a BIG week for our country. It is a blessing from God that we get to have a say in who it is that leads us from a governmental standpoint. And I hope that you will participate in the democratic process and let your voice be heard via your vote.

And it's your voice being heard that is the subject of our message today. This series, *IF: Our Responsibility/God's Response* is all about calling on God in prayer for revival and awakening believing that IF we do, he will hear and may even respond in a favorable way to our prayer.

We mentioned last week the specific context of 2 Chron. 7:14 – that this was a promise given to the people of God who were in a special covenant with him. I'm not going to go back over all that entails. If you missed, I encourage you to go back and listen.

We underscored that this verse is NOT a national promise to the United States, but it is a spiritual promise that can impact and influence our country for good. It may not be a promise that was intended FOR us, but it is a precept that IF (and that's the operative term) – it is a precept that IF taken to heart and followed by believers today...it COULD be that God responds and moves in our heart, our church, and this country we love.

2 Chron. 7:14 – “if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

This verse is a recipe for revival. It's a pathway to awakening. The ingredients that were given to Israel that would get God's attention and garner his blessing are the same ingredients that will get his attention today.

Humility. We talked about this in detail last week. And I gave you an acrostic for the word, "HUMBLE". It came with the 7:14 Challenge. Did you do this? I hope so. Set the alarm!

We talked about fostering humility and we said it like this:

H – Honest assessment of self

U – Understand the greatness of God

M – Make others a priority

B – Begin each day with the Lord

L – Listen more than speak (Lose on purpose)

E – Engage in secret acts of service

This week, we are looking at the second ingredient given and that is to “pray and seek my face”. If you are looking for a title to the message today, this is it: **Seeking God's Face**

I told you last week, there is a lot we can't control when it comes to what is taking place in our country and when it comes to the election this week!

- We can't control WHO gets elected...we can participate, but we can't control it!
- We can't control the noise surrounding the election...you can control how much you contribute to it, but you can't control all the voices speaking in and around it!
- We can't control who our neighbors vote for or advocate and push...
- We can't control how the media covers it...
- We can't control our chosen candidate's worldview or their behavior and character...

So much we CAN'T control! What I'm calling us to in this series is to think on, fixate, and concentrate on what we CAN control.

And 2 Chron. 7:14 is FULL of postures we can take and behaviors that we can implement that God by his grace COULD take notice of AND choose to respond to in a favorable way. And one of those behaviors is to pray and seek God's face. Now, prayer for the believer should be as natural as breathing. Prayer, at its most basic level is NOT just conversation with God, but communion with God.

One of my professors in seminary defined prayer as relationship. That's what it is. God desires us to have a relationship with him and to regularly share in fellowship with him - and this happens via prayer.

We are to regularly "call upon the name of the Lord" as it was referred to in the Old Testament – this is prayer!

It's calling upon God...talking with God...hearing from God (we do that mainly through his Word and by way his servants preaching and teaching)...it's a relationship like you would have with anyone else.

And God who is speaking to Solomon in 2 Chron. 7:14 tells him that he and Israel are to pray and "seek my face". This is the thrust of the message today.

The word, "seek" implies a frequency...a yearning...a strong desire. And what it says, notice...is that we are to "seek God's face."

What on earth does this mean?

The word "face" in Hebrew has a wide semantic range. It's used to describe the essence of a person...their character. It can mean "favor" or "countenance". Of the 2100x it's used, it's translated MOST as the word:

- “before” – like standing before someone – 868x
- “face” – 259x
- “presence” – 131x

So, put it together...to seek God’s face is to seek to stand before him...to face him!
More importantly as we will see in a moment what we really need is for him to face us! We don’t want him tuning his face from us – more on that in just a moment!

To seek God’s face is to seek being in his presence.

Now, I am grateful for the work of Daniel Henderson. If you are not familiar with him, Daniel leads a ministry called *Strategic Renewal* and his ministry is designed to help churches and church leaders lead their congregations to renewal via prayer.

His writings have been very influential on a personal basis and in his book, *Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God’s Face*, Henderson writes that are three aspects that we need to learn as it relates to the presence of God.

1. God’s general presence

The fact that God is omnipresent is one of the great attributes of God. That God is present everywhere, all the time. He is not bound by spatial dimensions or time. Psalm 139 speaks of his general presence. David wrote:

Psalm 139:7-10 – “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.”

2. God’s indwelling presence

We would see in the Old Testament at certain times, the Holy Spirit would come upon people for a special task. God didn’t live in them, but was with them in a special and unique way.

This changed when Jesus died and was resurrected. He sent his Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and from that time on, God himself indwells every person who follows Jesus. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence in:

John 14:16-17 – “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

There is a third aspect to the presence of God, and this is what we are after in this message and that is:

3. God's intimate presence

This is an awareness of and a nurturing of the manifest presence of God in our life that we KNOW experientially because of a close and personal relationship with Jesus.

We can be aware of God's general presence...and we can appreciate his indwelling presence without ever truly knowing and experiencing his intimate presence.

I heard **Charles Stanley** put it like this one time. He said, "**God doesn't have favorites, but he does have intimates.**"

He knows those who love him and desire to spend time with him. He knows the voice of those who constantly cry out to him and depend on him.

Illus. Staff Chapel – TEAMWORK – optimist. I tell them, "we all know people who light up a room when they leave it!" Don't be that person! We want to be so close the Lord...so intimate with Christ that when we enter into our prayer closet or go to spend time alone with the Lord, it lights up the throne room of heaven!

Do you know the intimate presence of God?

Again, this is what his face refers to. To seek God's face is to seek his intimate presence. It's to desire to know him, walk with him, submit to him, and enjoy his presence and affirmation MORE than anything else in life.

Daniel Henderson put it like this in his book: "**In my understanding, to seek His face today means to set our hearts to seek Him in worship with biblical understanding, submitting completely to the control of His Spirit with a longing to know and enjoy him more.**"

Now, in the context of the whole of scripture – especially the Old Testament, the reason seeking God's face was important is because since Genesis 3 – the fall of Adam and Eve, man has run from God's presence!

In the Garden, Adam and Eve had the intimate presence of God. He walked in the Garden with them! Open fellowship. Sweet communion. Intimacy.

In comes the Tempter. He convinces Eve and then Adam to take of the fruit of the tree that God had commanded them not to eat from and in a moment their eyes were opened and there is instant regret – this is sin isn't it?!

Sin ALWAYS over-promises and under-delivers! And look at:

Gen. 3:7-8 – "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

See, sin is like a double-edged sword. On one side of the sword that cuts, sin will make you want to avoid being in the presence of God. Sin brings shame and makes you feel dirty, and because God is holy our sin makes us want to hide from God!

The other side of that sword is sin makes God hide his face from us!

Now, remember, we're after the intimate presence of God. If you're a Christian, sin will not stop the general presence of God in your life. He is here and he is present.

If you are a believer, sin will not remove God's indwelling presence in your life. When you sin, God doesn't take the Holy Spirit away from you! Sin can and will shortcut God's power in your life. It can prevent God from using you and working through you as strongly as he would want to otherwise.

Eph. 4:30 – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

See, you can grieve God's Spirit...he's very sensitive...it's why he is described as a dove in the scripture. He is gentle. But as grievous as sin is it doesn't cause the dove to be removed from your life, but it can swoo him away for a while.

This is why confession of sin is so important. We want to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

So, get what we're saying. Sin does two things. It causes us to not want to be in God's presence...to NOT seek his face. AND it causes God to NOT want to face us. We don't lose his general presence when we sin or even his indwelling presence, but what we do lose is his intimate presence!

Isaiah 59:1-2 – “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; ²but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

One of the greatest fears of the Psalmist was that God would hide his face from him! Listen to:

Psalm 13:1 – “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?”

Psalm 69:16-17 – “Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. ¹⁷Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.”

Psalm 143:7b – “...Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.”

For God to hide his face was the greatest judgment that God could bring against someone. But this is what sin does! It makes us not want to be in the presence of God AND turns God's face against us!

Sin cuts off the ability to seek his face! Oh, we may seek, but living in sin will ensure we won't find it precisely because sin is what causes God to turn his face from us...it creates distance...and listen: it prevents blessing! Mainly the blessing of his presence and face shining upon us!

THIS is why God tells Israel – you want forgiveness...healing of your land...you want me to hear your prayer? THEN humble yourself, pray and seek my face, and turn from your wicked ways.

The prophet Jeremiah in **Jer. 32:33** – **“They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction.”**

We're going to cover repentance next week, but this is what God is calling for here! To stop turning our backs toward God and start turning our faces toward him!

See the picture here: This is what repentance is. We were once seeking something different than God – our backs are toward him and God says, you want healing, forgiveness and for me to hear your prayers?

Humble yourself. Pray and seek my face! Stop walking away from me...stop turning your back on me...and turn your face towards me.

Seeking God's face begins with turning our face toward him! Hey, question for you this morning?

What is it that you are seeking other than God? Again, this word seek is a strong desire...it's a yearning. Are you yearning for something more than the very presence of God? What is it?

EVERYTHING you and I are looking for in life is found in the presence of God.

You want joy? Sure you do. This is one of the biggest pursuits of our life...AND it's one of the reasons there is so much pain and heartache...because we've tried to find joy in someone else or something else other than God. What does his word say?

Psalm 16:11 – **“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

You want wisdom? Of course you do. We look up and there are decisions before us and choices we have to make every day and we wonder, “what should I do? What direction should I take?”

Where do I find wisdom that helps us? You find it in the presence of God! Listen to his word.

Prov. 8:22-31 – “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.”

You want life and life to its fullest? You want peace? You want blessing?

All these things come from the same place! They are found only in the presence of God...Blessing...listen to this: is NOT material, physical or even in our context this week our candidate winning.

Blessing is when God turns his face toward you – that’s the blessing! His intimate presence in our lives unhindered. It’s his face shining on us!

Num. 6:24-26 – “The Lord bless you and keep you;²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Joy and wisdom and life and peace and the blessing of God is found in the intimate presence of God. And it’s in turning our face toward him...seeking his face...his presence...that God will take note (he will SEE as we talked about last week) and by his grace he will turn his face toward us.

Illus. Riley at Baylor – it’s only two hours and fifteen minutes. (Story of dropping her off!)

Can I tell you a highlight for me. I love it when she calls, but I REALLY love it when she facetimes. I get to see her face! That’s my baby girl. I don’t turn that facetime request down – NO WAY!

There is NOTHING sweeter than seeing the face of someone you love and THIS is how God feels about his children. The question is, “Do we feel this way about him?”

Listen: Let’s not just be people that seek the hand of God, but instead let’s be known as people who seek the face of God!

Listen once again to Daniel Henderson. He writes:

“God’s face is the essence of who He is. God’s hand is that blessing of what He does. God’s face represents His person and presence. God’s hand expresses His provision for needs in

our lives. I have learned that if all we ever do is seek God's hand, we may miss his face; but if we seek His face, He will be glad to open His hand and satisfy the deepest desires of our heart."

Last week I gave you the 7:14 challenge. I gave you the acrostic humble and talked about how we can foster humility in our life. Well, Same challenge this week. Set the alarm for 7:14, and as we close this message, let's talk about how we can proactively seek the face of God!

S - Set your mind and heart on "relationship"

As you think about the Lord, just remember it's about relationship. That's our definition of prayer. When you are seeking his face, don't forget you are seeking a person! God is a Spirit, but he has personhood – meaning the godhead can think, feel, communicate, and act volitionally.

Sometimes we have a hard time seeking the Lord because we equate our walk with the Lord with a "to do" list instead of making it about a relationship! Set your mind and heart on relationship when seeking the Lord – and it is a matter of the heart and mind – this is the "control center" of the Christian life.

When David was charging Solomon and the leaders of Israel to build the temple, he said in:

1 Chron. 22:19a – "Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God..."

We are seeking a living being! If you want to practically seek the face of the Lord...to grow in intimate presence with the Lord, then it starts with a focus and a fixation on your relationship with God NOT checking off a "to do" list of spiritual disciplines – those are means to an end not an end in and of themselves (Pharisees)

Paul wrote in **Col. 3:1-2 – "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."**

You say how can I know I'm doing this? I'll give it to you in three words: time, energy and resources. Answer these questions and you'll be able to determine if your mind and heart is on God.

1. What do you spend most of your time on and most of your time thinking about? This will show the ultimate priorities of your life.
2. Where is your energy these days? Is it on the things that are above or is it on other things? This will show what you're passionate about the most!
3. How about your resources? Jesus said, how we spend our money and invest our resources is a reflection of where are heart is and the priorities of our heart.

You can look at those three words (time, energy and resources) and determine whether or not your mind and heart is set on God and your relationship with him or is it set on the things of this world...and listen: I don't think I'm being too harsh!

This is THE problem! Our minds and hearts aren't set on God! And we wonder why we are in this predicament we are in:

- A country in a nose-dive toward secularization and is increasingly antichrist...
- Our churches are impotent and not making a difference...
- Our personal lives are NO DIFFERENT than the world around us.

God help us to stop turning our backs toward you and begin seeking you – Face to face!

Set your mind and heart on your relationship with the Lord – it must be the MOST important thing in your life. To do this is a work of grace, but it's also a discipline. Pray and ask God to give you a desire for him and then ask him for strength to walk in that desire.

E – Empty yourself of sin

We talked about this in the message...how our sin grieves the Holy Spirit. If we are serious about seeking God's face this innately means we are serious about cutting sin out of our life. We'll talk more about repentance next week.

E – Establish spiritual routines and rhythms

Listen, it doesn't matter what kind of personality you have (whether you are carefree OR miss sleep when the colors of your clothes are not lined up in the closet perfectly) – either way, we all need routine.

Some of us are seeking the Lord because we are not planning or preparing for it. This is a “blessed are the balanced” right?

On one hand it's NOT about a “to do” list. On the other hand, if we don't prepare and plan to seek the Lord, we won't!

So, what I am calling you to is to establish spiritual routines and rhythms in your life that will help you foster intimacy in your time alone with the Lord.

Have a place you meet with him? If you have to change it up from time to time, fine! Have a time you meet with him. You schedule an appointment with your doctor, dentist, your kid's teachers. You calendar your travel schedule, your kid's practices and games – calendar, schedule and set your time with God.

Doing this will help you know what to pray and think on the rest of the day!

Psalm 5:3 – “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.”

Psalm 143:8 – “Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.”

It’s said of Jesus often that he would repeatedly go to a desolate mountain and pray.

Mark 1:35 – “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”

I know of NOTHING that has been stronger for growing my personal intimacy with the Lord than healthy spiritual routines and rhythms and listen...I am the MOST off the cuff guy ever!

K – Keep on seeking the Lord

Psalm 105:4 – “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!”

This is a nonstop thing we do! Paul said in **1 Thess. 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”**

You say, “How on earth to do I do this?” It’s easy as you set your face toward the Lord every day. Think relationship. Routine and rhythm. Make it what you do...make it who you are.

You are always looking to him. You never stop. To keep on seeking the Lord means:

- You give yourself to his Word and you keep giving yourself to his Word.
- You give yourself to biblical community and you keep giving yourself to biblical community.
- You worship the Lord, and you keep worshipping the Lord.
- You keep calling on him in prayer and you never stop.

THIS is our responsibility...and when we do this...IF we do this, God by his grace may just turn toward us and work a revival and awakening that we haven’t seen in a long time.

So, let’s humble ourselves, pray, and seek his face. Would you stand with me across the room right now?

Prayer moment and invitation (linking arms)

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.