

A Heart to Seek God

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God with all of our hearts, preparing our hearts to seek Him diligently. It highlights the need to repent, cast out idols, and establish a dedicated time to seek God wholeheartedly. The message urges listeners to break up the fallow ground in their hearts, re-establish altar times, and seek God earnestly in times of trouble and in times of peace.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:29, Matthew 7:7, 1 Samuel 7:3, 2 Chronicles 17:3, 2 Chronicles 26:5, 2 Chronicles 19:3, 2 Chronicles 26:16, 2 Chronicles 12:14, 2 Chronicles 17:3, 2 Chronicles 26:5, 2 Chronicles 19:1, 2 Timothy 2:21, Ecclesiastes 12:1

Topics: "Wholehearted Seeking", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

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Transcript

I want you to turn in your Bibles with me to two verses. I want you to go to Deuteronomy 4 or the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 4 in the Old Testament and the Matthew chapter 7 in the New Testament and I want to carry on in our series concerning a heart for God or a heart after God, a heart that actually God has formed in you or a heart that you brought forth in seeking after the Lord. It's very special when you know the Spirit of God and the grace of God has touched your heart and that you're not merely religious or merely worldly but that you have a heart that has been touched by the very hand of God.

Do you know you wouldn't love him here this morning, you wouldn't seek after him, you wouldn't be humble this morning if God had not done a work within your heart. My message here this morning, it's part 10, we inserted on Wednesday night a appendix to part 9 that we preached last week but I want to go to part 10 here, a heart to seek God. We've looked at many kinds of hearts yet there's one singular unique united heart.

There is only one heart put within a genuine born-again believer that matures and gets sanctified or diminishes if you neglect the means of grace. Never think because you're saved that something that was so natural, being humble cannot diminish and you get proud or that you could begin by seeking God with all of your heart and at some stage you lose the reality of seeking after God. I have seen it too many times,

I've seen people start well and then go awol, go wayward and so my message, a heart to seek God, a heart, an inward inclination, the inward man is inclined to seek God.

Not everyone is like that. Reading from Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 29 and this Moses speaking, but F, what a big F. Do you know I've been criticized over the years for using the word F in my preaching. Certain very smooth people left this church because I used the word F. People have criticized me online because I preached F. Visitors have got annoyed because I said F. All through the Bible you get F's.

Moses said, but F, from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God. Thou shalt find him. If thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Then to the New Testament, Matthew chapter 7 and Jesus is speaking and he says, ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you.

For everyone that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth. And to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Let's pray together.

Father we pray. Lord God we humble ourself. We bow ourself at your throne of grace.

We come praying. We come panting. We come groaning.

Lord God we come earnest O God. We come seeking you with our heart. Lord God with our inward mind.

Lord God with our inward heart. With our strength O God. With our soul.

We come here to seek you. Lord God we are desperate O God. There are crises in this room and individual lives.

We must lay hold of you this morning. My God we are desperate for salvation. We are desperate for healing.

We are desperate for revival. Lord God we do know a God who reigns in heaven above. Who sits enthroned on the universe.

And my God you have given us a promise that if we seek you we shall find you. That if we ask that you will answer us. That if we knock the door that you will open it.

My God stir faith right now that you're a God to be sought and found. You can be found in the place of prayer. We can earnestly lay a hold of you and gain an answer from you.

A miracle from you. Salvation from you. You're not a God to play with emotions and religion.

But you're a God who speaks and what he says he means. You have instructed us throughout the Bible. Seek me with all of your heart.

If you seek me you will find me. And O God we want to rise up right now and believe you even as I preach. Make these hearts to pant.

To hunger. To thirst. Draw out every heart in this room and online O God.

Lord God stir the hearts to seek after you. Lord God stir us to pray again. Pour out your Holy Spirit that we might intercede and pray for this generation.

Lord God thank you for your grace and mercy. In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Amen. My message a heart to seek God. We see here that this word seek is used by Moses in the Old Testament and by Jesus in the New Testament.

The word seek is used all throughout the Bible. And we're going to look at it here that there is a heart that seeks after God. It is so clear what Moses said here.

It's a command seek God with all of your heart. If you seek him you're going to find him. You're not seeking merely a blessing or for religion.

You are seeking God himself. There's only one way to find God. You've got to seek him.

If you don't seek him you won't find him. If you're here and you're not born again and not saved there's only one way to find God in salvation and that's by seeking him. If you don't seek him you will never get saved.

All those who have got born again they sought God for salvation. If any of you have been healed in this room you did not receive healing unless you sought God. And so Moses gives the promise if you seek him with all of your heart and with your soul you are going to find God.

Over in the New Testament Jesus in Matthew 7 is teaching about this very thing and he uses the same word if you seek you will find. We are taught about finding God. You say oh but I know God I'm born again I'm saved I know the Bible.

I asked him into my heart. I know he's with me. The Holy Spirit's within me.

God's presence is here. Why should I ask for something that I already have? You know what if you have to ask that there's a real problem somewhere along the lines. The entire Bible from beginning to end in the Christian life says we are a people who seek after God.

The minute you stop seeking him is the minute there's something wrong with your heart. If I was a doctor a spiritual doctor or a doctor of the soul and if I asked you if I look at you and you're not a person that seeks God that groans that yearns that says I've got to get away from the crowd. I've got to shut myself in with the Lord.

I would say you have a spiritual ailment or illness. Maybe you didn't have it a year ago or three years ago. Maybe you're healthy in a previous time but I'm telling you you've got sick if you're not seeking God.

If your prayer life has diminished if you don't yearn after him. If you simply say God is sovereign and he'll give me whatever he desires. Well what's the point of seeking God? I know that God will just give it all to me.

You are spiritually ill, dangerously ill and I pray God will wake you up here in the midst of this gathering. You see Jesus said seek and you'll find. They both go together.

You will not find God, not find answers to prayer, not find reality. If you do not seek. Again in the Old Testament we hear of King David who is a man after God's own heart speaking to Solomon his son before he died and this is what he said in 1 Chronicles 28 and 9 and thou Solomon my son know thou the God of thy father and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind for the Lord searches all hearts.

Notice this. Do you know right now God searches the heart? When you're least aware of it God is searching your heart. We know that if you search you're looking for something.

If you search for God you're looking for God. But why is God searching the heart? Why is it all through the Bible? We are told God specifically God who knows all things who dwells in heaven. He inspects the heart.

He searches the heart. He is looking through the heart of every individual. He's not just saying I know all hearts.

He says I literally go to every single heart all seven billion plus hearts in the world and he is searching. You know searching is a diligent thing. It's not a casual thing.

It's not a browsing look. You know what searching is? It's a diligent thorough looking in every segment of that heart. And so we have God he literally gets in every single heart inside your heart when you're not aware of it and he is searching every part of your heart.

Every thought, every emotion, every decision, every desire, every contemplation. He is literally searching it out. But it means God is looking for something.

If God is so diligent in looking into your heart what is he looking for? You know if it's easy to find a certain thing you don't need a search. You go if it's everywhere you don't need a search for it. I don't need a search for air.

It is everywhere. But I do need a search for God. Hard to find God in the church in this world or anywhere in this world.

Hard to find a preacher who brings God to the church. But we have here David instructing his son Solomon, the Lord make sure you've got a perfect heart. You know why? God searches all hearts.

Can I ask you do you have a perfect heart? We'll deal with that next week. And he understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. Notice this, David to Solomon, if thou seek him he will be found of thee.

But if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever. David is saying to Solomon you've got a choice. You're either going to seek God or forsake God.

These two are opposites. Either you in this meeting are a seeker after God or you've forsaken God. You may think forsaken God is an atheistic term.

It's a term of denial and saying I hate you, I don't believe in you. But actually it's not. The word forsake means to relinquish, to let go of, to drift along without care.

So to forsake God is actually to be so casual that you're drifting down the river not realizing how far away you're moving from God. In your prayer life, in your heart, in your holiness, in your desires, in your ambitions, in your decisions that churches filled with people not seeking God. They have forsaken God.

They sing the songs, they pray the prayers, they turn up every week, they get nicely dressed for service, they give their money and yet they've forsaken God. You know why? They're not earnest in their religion. If you're not earnest you're not a Christian.

If you're not passionate, because we're dealing with heaven and hell, God and the devil. If you're not passionate, what is wrong with you? You say I'm not emotional, neither am I. You say I'm very quiet, so am I. You say I'm a very fearful character, me more than anyone. But I want to tell you, this is what it is.

David contrasts seeking God with forsaken God. What does it mean to forsake God? You lose sight of God himself. You lose reality.

You're just so casual at dress. You see, Christianity is not a casual thing. It doesn't stay intact if you simply stop.

This has to be an active seeking after God or it's a very dangerous thing. When you forsake God, you lose the reality of God in your life, the power of God. You actually doubt things now that you would never have doubted before.

Why do you think that is? Has God changed? Is his promises? Or is it the condition of your heart? You've lost the presence of God, the assurance of God. All these things you can forsake God and yet it's been so casual. You go, but I didn't commit a gross sin.

I didn't turn my back on him. I didn't walk off into the world. Yes, you just didn't seek him.

You didn't give diligence. How dangerous. Do you know that not everyone seeks God? There are many preachers.

It's notorious that do not seek God. They actually do not seek him and yet they could say all the right things. There are many Christians, parents, no wonder something happens with the children.

They're not seeking God. You cannot neglect or forsake God in prayer and think everyone's going to be okay. It won't be.

It really won't be. The Bible warns of those who do not seek God. Second Chronicles 16 and 12, it talks about King Asa.

He was in his thirty and ninth year of his reign and he was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great. What would you do if you had a disease in your feet that was threatening your entire life? What would you do? Listen to what King Asa had done because he met with God at an earlier stage. He knew God.

He walked with God. God used him. God took note of him but not at the end of his journey.

Do you know something happened to the condition of his heart? So what happens? Here he's got a deadly disease in his feet and the Bible says yet in his disease he sought not the Lord but to the physicians. This is not a verse condemning doctors. In fact you won't find any verse that condemns going to a doctor when you're ill.

Not one. But you know what the problem was? He thought the physicians were the answer and he did not seek God. He was not trying to find God for the answer to this disease in his feet.

And so you've got this man who once knew God but he gets to a place at the end of his journey and here is a crisis and he doesn't seek God. You know if you're in a crisis and you're not getting on your face and fasting and praying and seeking him and rending your heart, you are in real trouble. There is no cure for that.

I don't have an answer for that. If you actually forsake God and refuse to seek him, you realize God will not answer. God will not heal you.

God will not speak to you. God will not intervene if you do not seek him. Whereas when you seek him he can do anything.

It says in Psalm 10 and 4, the wicked through the pride of his countenance or his look, his face, will not seek after God. God is not in all of his thoughts. So we say it's wicked not to seek God.

The world out there will not seek God. Do you know why? They are wicked. They are evil.

Show me a sinner that will not seek after God that says, let God do it all. If he wants me, he knows where I am. He can come and save me.

That is utter wickedness. It's evil and I'll send someone to hell. It says in Jeremiah 10 and 21, for the pastors are become brutish like animals.

What made them that way? It says they become. They weren't always like that. They didn't start like that.

They were very zealous. They prayed. Oh you could hear them at a time.

Oh they were at the forefront of us. But they became brutish. Not one, many.

How? It says, and this is the reason, they have not sought the Lord. Therefore they shall not prosper and all their flocks shall be scattered. Do you know why there's so many brutish pastors in this hour who are not blessed of God and their flocks are being scattered? It's because they have not sought the Lord.

And so we see there's people who do not seek the Lord. Not seeking the Lord is a terrible spiritual ailment. If you're a sinner and you don't want to seek God, you're on very dangerous ground.

If you're a Christian and you don't want to seek God, you're on a dangerous ground. I'm going to give you three points here this morning. A question and then I'll give you the biblical answer.

Three questions concerning a heart to seek God. Number one, what does it mean to seek God? Number two, what should, sorry, when should we seek God? And number three, how do we prepare hearts to seek God? I want to help you this morning. I want to talk about this.

You see, God never speaks to you about something, about a broken and a contrite heart, unless you can rend your heart and be broken. He never speaks to you about a humble heart if you cannot humble yourself. He doesn't speak to you about a loving heart unless he wants to work that within you.

This is what our God does. And so I want to deal with these three things. First of all, what does it mean to seek God? What does it really, what does this term that carries such blessing, and yet if it's absent it's so dangerous for you, what does it mean to seek God? The word seek or sought, that's all through the Bible, Old Testament, and don't just leave it there and say that's an Old Testament word.

No, Jesus used it in the New Testament. It's all through the New. This word to seek or to sought, or sought, actually means to search or to strive.

This is a term explaining prayer. It's a certain kind of prayer. When we read seek the Lord, it's saying pray unto God, search after God, seek after God.

The word means to literally strive with all your energy. You can't be lacking emotion. You can't be lacking activity when you seek God.

It's not a casual, blase thing. When you seek after God, it involves an effort. If you say, oh I don't believe in putting effort into prayer, then you've never prayed, you've never touched God, and you've never got an answer from him.

Because I want to tell you, like Jacob in the Old Testament, when you really pray and encounter God, you will wrestle with God. You may feel like it's going to kill you. He may actually have to touch you in a way that leaves you with a limp.

And so when we see Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord all night, that is prayer. Don't believe this religion that says, oh it's all grace, you just float in, there's no effort. That's a lie and a denial of the entire Bible.

Here's a word for prayer that's speaking about being earnest. You need to stir yourself. You need to shake yourself.

You need to kick yourself. You need to take yourself by the hand. You need to speak to yourself and say, Malcolmson, you need to seek the Lord.

Malcolmson, you need to get away from the opinions of man, and you need to begin to seek after the Lord. You know what seeking God is? It is the drawing out of your heart. I mean, just like what you would feel if you felt your heart beating, pumping, pushing out of your breasts.

That's what it is to seek after God. It is God drawing out your heart. It's the Holy Spirit bringing forth your heart.

You know all through the years, especially as a young man, I prayed constantly, Lord, draw out my heart to seek after you. I prayed it incessantly. Guess what I'd done? I sought him incessantly, but I had a longing.

Oh God, draw out my heart after you. Draw out my heart to seek you. Oh God, help me in seeking after you.

And he answered those prayers abundantly. The search to find God. You may be born again here.

You may be well saved. You may say there's no doubt I'm going to heaven, but I'm not asking you. I'm talking about right now.

You are earnestly seeking the Lord, not looking or praying to the Christ within. I'm not a fan of the contemplative prayer. All these Jesuit techniques and Madame Gaillon and all of the rest, and these mystics of the Dark Ages, and you get all these preachers that will just pray to the Christ within.

Where do you get that in the Bible? You don't. You see, we are searching for God. I know he lives in me.

I know his spirit is in me, but I'm searching for the God who literally dwells on the throne of heaven. You know where God is? He's in heaven. Yes, Christ dwells in my heart by faith, but not physically.

He's a real God that dwells in heaven. So what does it mean to seek God? It is this seeking him in prayer. It says in Psalm 14 and 2, the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there was any that did understand and seek God.

The God in heaven is looking down, searching all over if he can just find one man that seeks for him. Is there any that seeks for him? You know right now in this meeting and through this video, God is searching because he uses his word. He is searching, looking, saying, is anyone going to seek me? Are you going to leave this meeting and go, ha ha, ha ha, ha ha, amen, amen? You've forgotten it by tea time.

God looks down from heaven, and he's actively searching, looking, saying, is there any that seeks for me? It says in Psalm 27 and 8, when thou sayest, this is David speaking to God, when thou sayest, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek. You see, God's speaking to you right now, saying, seek me. Will you seek me? I want you to have a heart, an entire heart that says, I want to seek you with all of my heart.

Not just a part, not casually, not weekly, not in the church prayer meeting. Do you have a heart to actually seek me? David can say, see when you speak to me through the preacher, through reading the word of God, you know my heart rises up and says, oh God, I'll seek you. I want to seek you.

It says in Psalm 119 and 2, blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart. You know, if you keep God's word, you'll seek him with all heart. Here is the key.

Here is the key. God's word will show you how to seek him with the entire heart, with all of your heart, with all of your mind. This book here, you are blessed if you love the word of God.

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies. If you keep the word of God, you're going to seek him. Show me someone that doesn't seek God.

You're not keeping the word of God. Oh, yes I do. No, you don't.

Because from cover to cover we're commanded pray, call upon him, seek, knock, search for me, call out to me and I'll answer you and you'll find me. You will. It is also in Psalm 119 and 10, with my whole heart have I sought thee.

Oh, let me not wonder from thy commandments. You want the key for not wondering from the Bible? You want to know what the answer is? Seek him with all of your heart. Cry out, oh God, do not let me depart.

Oh God, help me, deliver me, save me, help me to be holy and obedient and right before you. Guess what? God answers that. You see, what does it mean to seek God in prayer? I'm telling you.

What does it mean to seek God? It is this search and this longing. See, I know I have him, but I'm seeking for him. I'm seeking for fellowship.

I'm seeking for his presence. I'm seeking for his hand upon me. I'm seeking for that, those times when he comes near.

When's the last time you were alone? Not in church, not in a convention, not in a Bible school, but you're alone, absolutely alone with him and you're seeking him. And all of a sudden his presence draws near. Do you know those times you can never forget? Going right back to a child, I can remember just as a child and it was dark and I was in the bedroom and I got up in the middle of the night, one, two in the morning, I'd been sleeping and my heart was breaking and yearning and longing for him.

And I opened the curtain and I sat on the edge of my bed and I looked out at the beautiful moon in the sky and I go, Oh God, I want you. Oh God, I need you. Oh God, I'm yearning for you.

You see, that's a child, a teenager that is yearning after the living God. Not everyone has a heart like that. And so God is searching for that heart because he says, I want to answer your prayers.

I want to meet with you. I want to reveal myself. I'm looking for communion.

And so he's scanning the world, looking for this. You know, I learned some things about God as a child. I got saved four and a half years old and you know, up through six, seven, eight, it was habitually like this for me.

So I didn't know what, I thought all grownups experienced this. Took me to 12 years old to find this bunch don't even know what I've been experiencing. I thought they all had this and kept it to themselves and weren't telling me.

You know, at night time, I never saw the Lord physically. I never heard his voice audibly. And yet it was so natural.

The Lord would come to my bedroom to commune with me and my heart yearned. And I said, I love you, Lord. And I want to know you and I want to glorify you.

Where do you think I got those heart cries from? God birthed it within me. It was so natural. The Lord was there.

You know what that tells me about God? God is looking for that. And we get caught up in all of the activity and we've missed that. You know, God so desires that he would come to a little boy and he would put himself in that bedroom.

Do you know, I think he had to pass the rooms and the houses of many preachers and mature Christians and very knowledgeable experienced people in the Bible. And he says, here's a little boy who just wants me. And I think I'll spend a bit of time at his bedside in the middle of the night.

It says in Zephaniah 2 and 3, seek ye the Lord, all ye make of the earth. Who else would seek him than the meek? Which hath wrought his judgment. If you've wrought his judgment, you want to seek him.

Seek righteousness, seek meekness. It may be you shall be hidden the day of the Lord's anger. Do you know we're smack in the middle of the day of the Lord's anger.

We're right at the brink of a terrible day of the Lord's anger. Don't you want to seek him? Do you know now what we used to just whisper and speak about ourselves? And I warned you two years ago, this was coming of the financial crisis. No one was talking about it two years ago in the media or politics.

None of them are talking about it. They're just saying, you need to stay at home. Don't go visit your granny or your mommy.

That's all they're talking about. And I was saying two years ago, there is coming an unparalleled financial crisis. Do you know there's a time to seek the Lord? Now it's all over the media.

It's no hidden thing. Everyone's saying, oh, by the way, it's going to get really bad before the end of the year. When are you going to seek God? If you don't do it now, when will you do it? Can I ask you? Number two, so number one, what it means to seek God, but number two, when should we seek God? It says in Isaiah 55 and six, seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

When do you seek the Lord? While he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. See in a moment like this, if you feel him speaking to you and you feel his presence and you feel your heart touched, seek him now.

That's what that means. Because there's some times when you don't have any of that and you don't even desire to seek him. See when your heart is probed and stirred.

See when you know the Lord is speaking to you. Seek him then. See if you have to get out of your bed at 12 o'clock on a Saturday night because you feel a drawing.

Have you ever done it where you feel the Lord drawing you to pray and you go to bed? I have. I have. Turned my head over and just slept.

I feel a yearning. I feel the tug of the spirit of God saying, seek me. And I go, I'm tired.

I'll do it tomorrow. Lord, I'll do it tomorrow morning. I'll meet you tomorrow morning.

And there's not that same urge in the morning. Do you know you've got to go and repent for that. Go back to the Lord and say, Lord, are some of you, was there a time when you look back in your Christian life and you sought him incessantly, yet you don't know? Don't you know you need to stop and correct that and say, Lord, will you help me? And so we see the first thing of when we should seek him is while he may be found.

You know, some people, they should have sought God a long time ago because they can't find them now. I know people searching for God. They can't find them.

They're searching, crying. They've got serious problems. You miss God.

When God come knocking, you know, the Bible says, when I call on to you and you don't answer, see in the day of your trouble, when you call on to me, I won't answer you. You play games with this for years. There's guys out in those streets.

They're going to come banging on this door one of these days and say, help us. Our world's falling apart. Yeah, sure.

We told you that, told you that years ago. You rejected God. You rejected the word of God.

Now you're in a crisis. I hope you get through to God. I really do.

They played with it. Psalm 77 verse 2, it says, in the day of my trouble, that's another day you seek him. In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord.

You know, when you find yourself in a day of trouble, I'm in trouble physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, friendship wise, or in my family, or my marriage, or my workplace, or my culture. My kids are in trouble. In the day of trouble, I sought the Lord.

That's the time. See, when trouble visits you and you're scared and you go, what am I going to do? It's time to seek the Lord. Even before going to a doctor, seek the Lord at that time.

And David is right in this. Listen to what he says. What was his trouble? My sore ran in the night.

He had an open wound that was oozing out. This was his trouble. And he says, it ceased not.

My wound is oozing and it will not stop. What did he do in the day of his trouble? In the middle of the night, he sought the Lord. Where else are you going to go in such a time? My soul refused to be comforted.

Look at the condition, and you find this all through the Psalms. The day of trouble. I'm confused.

My heart is broken. I don't know what to do. I am despairing.

Oh my soul. Your soul is depressed. You know, depression is a great thing.

People didn't talk about depression. I don't think so the same when I was young as they do now. Now if you go down to a local school, 15 year olds, they're all on almost a medication, or 50%.

Do you know we had a school of six, seven hundred? Do you know how many had issues in that school? Three or four. And yet we've got a whole young generation that haven't got out of school yet. And they're saying, just take this tablet, and take this tablet, and let's send you to a counsellor.

You're a bit dysfunctional. You come from a dysfunctional family. Who hasn't? And don't discipline them.

They're ruining the class. They're causing the teacher's heart to be broken. But we need to sit little Jimmy down.

He was never told that his father loved him. And you just need to understand him. He didn't get a big rod.

That's what his problem was. That's the biblical way. But look at this, in the day of trouble.

Also in 2nd Chronicles chapter 15, reading about a prophet of God coming to Asa. And listen to what it says here. The Lord is with you while you be with him.

And if you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season, Israel has been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

And when they, in their trouble, did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. Asa listened to the prophet of God. Are you in trouble? You see, we've a tendency, we haven't been in the right place, we haven't been living the right way, we haven't been praying, we haven't been seeking, and trouble comes, and we go, how can I pray now? Not right, and the devil tells you, you're damned.

You're finished. You didn't live alright when you had your health. Now you're in trouble.

Do you know that's wrong? God says, when you're in trouble, and things haven't been right, when that trouble comes, then seek me. Then seek me. Allow that tragedy, and that trouble, and those problems to drive you to your knees.

If you've neglected until yesterday, don't let the devil say, you can't pray now. The Bible promises, when trouble comes, then seek him, and turn back. Remember 2nd Chronicles 7 verse 14, and as I said, we grew up with this verse.

If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, listen, and seek my face. Seeking my face is a deeper place than just prayer. It is a kind of prayer.

When you begin to pray, move on to this deep searching, and seeking of God. But listen to the next part, and turn from their wicked ways. You see, in our mind, we think we need to turn from all of our wicked ways, before we pray.

That sounds most spiritual, but actually it's not biblical. You know here, God is dealing with his people, and he says, begin to seek my face. Begin to pray.

Begin to yearn after me. Then in the midst of seeking me, turn from your wicked ways. Is there some wickedness that's got a hold of your heart, or your mind, or your body, or your activities? Is there some wickedness that isn't right? You know what? The first thing isn't to turn from that.

The first thing is to seek God with all of your heart. It's not for you to say, I've got to break this in my life, then I can come and seek God. That isn't biblical.

You come to God and say, oh God, help me. I'm seeking you. I need you.

And this thing, or this person, is hindering me from seeking you. When should we seek God? It says in Psalm 34 and 4, I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my fears. Ever had sudden fear come to you? It also says in the Psalms, it says, in the time that I fear, I will trust in the Lord.

You ever had fear come? News come? Do you know what it says here? Seek the Lord when fears come. What are you going to do with those fears? Handle them? Work them out? Protect your mind from them? You've got to seek God. Those fears will drown you if you don't go and seek the Lord.

Hosea chapter 10 and 12. Break up the fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord. Saints of God, are you hindered from seeking God? Then break up the fallow ground of your heart.

The hard ground. The ground that hasn't been turned over in a long time. You say, oh, I've lost it.

I used to seek God. Now I've lost the ability to seek God. Why not break up that ground again? Say, that's an awful lot of work.

You ever dug a garden over? I have. I've dug up those willows. The near killed me.

Now, I told Paul and Suf the other night. I said, I found the answer to the willows that are springing up all over my back garden. They're everywhere.

They're demons. And their roots go everywhere. That mountain soil and their roots go everywhere.

I said, I've solved it. Candace has talked me into thinking that they're beautiful and they're nice and I'm just going to live with them now. No more effort.

No more digging. No more fighting. No more burning.

Aren't my willows beautiful? You know, some Christians are like that. What we once hated and it stole our joy and our peace and our righteousness. We go, do you know what? With a bit of time here, I've come to realize we can be friends and we can settle down together.

You've got a hard heart. You need to break up that fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord. Is your heart hard here this morning? It is time to seek the Lord.

Till he come and reign righteousness upon you. God will come and revive you if you do that. Proverbs 8 and 17.

I love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me. It doesn't mean seeking them at five o'clock in the morning, though. That's very good.

And if you get up, throw your clothes on, stick a Mars bar in your mouth as you go out to work. I want to tell you that's not okay. You will have bad days because you haven't put God first.

That's not good. So this, yeah, seek him early. Early in the morning, but it doesn't just mean that.

I love those that seek me early. They shall find me. It's talking about age.

Talking about Andy, talking about James and Thomas and all of these, Ria and all of these kids. And Joshua and all of them. Listen, it says in Ecclesiastes 12 and 1. Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.

Remember him. Seek him with all of your heart. I'm so glad I sought God as a child.

He met with me. He spoke to me. He taught me.

You want to know why I preach the way I do? It's because I was locked in with God years, decades before I ever thought of preaching. I was locked in with God. I just loved you.

Couldn't evangelize, couldn't read my Bible. All I had was my God. I sought him early.

That's what it means. That's the time to seek God. Don't grow older and sow your wild oats.

You don't want to do that. You do not want to do that. We want virgins to rise up.

Men and women in this church who do not lose their virginity until the day they get married. That is God's order. That is beautiful.

This world will destroy you. And so he says, seek me early in the days of your youth. While the evil days come not.

Do you know what the evil day is? Age. He goes into Ecclesiastes 12. He's talking about, seek God now while you're young, your creator.

Because you know what? An evil day is coming and he gives a whole teaching on this. Nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. You know, your eyes start failing.

See all of you in this room that have good eyesight. You better use those eyes. See yous that have good hearing.

You better use those ears. You see, we think, I'll seek him when I'm older. I'll spend time reading and studying and all the time praying when I get older and can't do anything else.

You won't be able to do it then. You know, some of yous have all your strength and energy now. What are you going to do with it? Give it 10 years.

You're going to, your strength's going to diminish. You won't have the same strength as you're sitting with here. I'm so glad that Candice and I have sacrificed beyond measure over the years because then as that begins to diminish and health issues arise, I go, I don't look back with regret.

I'm not here saying, if only we would have served them, if only we'd traveled. You know, when we got married, poor girl, she didn't know what she was coming into. Was it five out of the first six months that we are married, we were away from home.

Five of the first six months. And on the morning I'm getting married, I'm on the phone call arranging a conference in Belfast. Someone walked in and said, aren't you getting, in fact, it was the person I phoned, said, Keith, aren't you getting married this morning? Yes.

What are you doing? Well, I'm just arranging this before I go get married, but I'll get there. Third and lastly, how do we prepare our hearts to seek God? This is the most important. What does it mean to seek God? When should we seek God? But thirdly and lastly, how do we prepare our hearts to seek God? See, we think, seek God.

I don't even desire to seek him. My heart is hard. I'm so busy.

I don't, I just can't make the effort. Do you realize there's something prior to seeking God? Sometimes you don't seek God because you've never prepared your heart. If you don't prepare your heart, you won't seek him.

In fact, there's many commands, much teaching, much instruction about preparing yourself before you seek him. And so you think, well, I find pride in my heart. I'm out.

I'm excluded. No, you can deal with a proud heart to make it a humble heart to come unto God. If you don't seek God, fine.

See today, say, Lord, show me. Right now, as I'm preaching this second, begin to pray in your heart. Begin to open your heart up to God.

Say, Lord, will you tell, in these few moments, will you show me how to prepare my heart? Show me, because I find a lacking of desire. I'm distracted. I'm encumbered.

I'm weighed down. I'm discouraged. What is it that's hindering you? You need to prepare your heart.

But how do you prepare your heart? Again, it says in Deuteronomy 4.29. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, if you will seek God, you will find him. If you seek him with all of your heart and with all of thy soul. Now notice this.

We're not just being told seeking is not a casual thing. It's a wholehearted thing. How do you bring your entire heart behind seeking God? How do you reign in your heart? You know, our hearts are duplicit.

We can go in a hundred different directions all at the same time. I want to do this and I want to do that and I want to do this. I was cleaning my office the other day and I told Candice to come down.

I went, I just realized there's a hundred things I want to do all at the same time. I just had shoved it all under the carpet a bit. And when you bring it out, you go, yes, I want to do that.

Yes, I want to do that. Yeah, I'm a man who wants to live a thousand lives all at the same time. There's dangers with that.

But what I do know is this one thing is necessary to seek God with all my heart. It can't be casual or partial. Somehow I need my entire heart caught up in seeking him.

Isn't a mobile phone a distraction and Facebook and YouTube and a thousand? We would rather do those things than seek God. You could do with shutting down everything in your life apart from the absolute necessities. Make sure you keep looking after your husband or you keep looking after your kids or you don't neglect your boss.

But to seek God with all of your heart. Do you know that in this preparation of the heart, it's the heart, your innermost being. Who you are inwardly.

He doesn't want you to seek him with a divided heart. Listen to what it says in 1 Samuel chapter 7 and 3. And Samuel speak unto the house of Israel saying, if ye do. So I'm in good company with these F's.

If you do return unto the Lord with all your hearts. Then put away strange gods and asterisks from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him and he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines. This word prepare in connection with the heart is vital.

It's absolutely essential. To prepare the heart means to set it up, to establish it, to fix it. You know what that means? If you're preparing your heart to seek God, what are you doing? You're fixing it to the spot unmovable.

You're setting it in a straight line focus. You're preparing it for the task of seeking God. You see some of you's are maybe online and maybe listening to this afterwards.

Your heart isn't even in a condition to seek God. So you try to seek God and you go, it doesn't work for me. I'm not a man of prayer.

I'm not a woman of prayer. I'm just not inclined. Do you know you've got to prepare your heart to have your heart in the right place that it goes.

I'm seeking you wholeheartedly. Do you know there's many things will unprepare your heart? You've actually before you seek God, you've got to stop and say, I need to prepare my heart. There's so many things, idolatry in the Bible, idolatry.

You can't seek God until you deal with idolatry. We don't set up statues now. You know what we do? We have idols of the heart.

Let me ask you a question to identify your idol. Do you want to find out what your idol is? When you should seek God, what are you doing? What do you replace that with? So when your conscience and your mind, and maybe during this message and you go, there is the time and that is the thing. I can help you identify your idols.

Because at the very time you know, I should be seeking God here and now and in this place. And yet it's a phone. It's a person, it's family, it's discouragement, it's sin.

What's your idol? What is your personal idol that's stopping you from seeking God? You actually replace seeking God with this thing. Because you know what? Our hearts are made to seek something. You say, oh, but I can't seek God.

But you do seek. Do you know all of you are innately seekers after something. I guarantee if you do not seek God in prayer, you have replaced that with something else.

Because you know what? You do seek after certain things. Your heart goes out searching. Listen, searching, yearning, using effort, using time, using your mind and your energy and your thought and your plans.

Have you found your idol yet? 1 Chronicles 22 and verse 1. It says, and it's the same word for prepare. Now set your heart and your soul to seek God. 2 Chronicles 11, 16.

And it says about Israel and the tribes. Set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel. To do sacrifice unto him.

So we say it's a setting of your heart. It's a nailing your heart. That's what it literally means.

It means to set it up, to establish it, to strengthen it, to make it to stand on its feet. You're preparing your heart, making it ready to seek God. You need to work on that heart.

You need to break up the fallow ground. You need to repent. You need to close some doors.

You need to turn off your phone. You need to say no to some nice fellowship appointments and times. I've told you before about going to preach once in America.

And all these lovely brothers from a few different churches were going to be in the meeting the next morning. They'd come over and the only time I'm going to get fellowship. And that night I knew I should be in my room alone.

I always done that when we went and preached elsewhere. I'd be, let Candice go out and fellowship with them. I'm in that room alone and I wrestle with God for the next morning.

And my mind's going, I'd love to be. I wonder what they're doing. I've got to be here.

I didn't do it that time and I got burnt. Do you know where I was? I was in their home, all Christian fellowship, all good brothers. And we're sitting, we're talking and fellowshiping.

All the time I'm looking at my watch. I know where I should be. I know I shouldn't be here.

There's nothing sinful. All believers, edify on one another, precious time. And I go, I shouldn't be here.

And you know what? I lost precious time with the Lord. And I wasn't prepared for preaching the next morning. And I got up and preached.

And you know what? They all come say, God bless you, Brother Keith. Good message. We love that.

The Lord spoke to me. I'm going, thanks. All the time I knew I wasn't in the right place.

I didn't. I was not a prepared vessel for that time. It says in 2 Timothy 2.21, If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

To be meet for the master's use, it means to be useful, profitable, or easily used. Do you know you have to purge yourself from such things? You know what purging is? You purge it out. You get rid of it.

Oh, for the old days of Christianity. You know what people used to do? They burnt all their records. Some of you don't know what those are.

They burn all their videos. They threw the television out. I can remember hearing David Wilkinson saying, him and all the staff in his office, they all took their televisions out and got shotguns and shot them.

These are the sorts of things people used to do because you know why? I want to seek God. And you know what Wilkinson said he was doing? He would come in late after preaching and he sat down and he would just watch television. And his wife would come in and say, when are you going to bed after this movie's over? God dealt with him.

You see, are you usable? Are you prepared unto every good work? Have you made yourself ready? It says in 2 Chronicles chapter 19 and one about Jehoshaphat. Do you know there's a man in the Bible, remember we said about Stephen was a faithful man. Remember that.

Down through scriptures, you find that these truths are embodied in certain men. Who would you think embodies the truth of seeking God with all the heart, with a prepared heart? If you scanned the Bible, who would you choose? Would you choose David? Would you choose Ezekiel or maybe Job or maybe Moses or Abraham or Paul? Who would you choose? Well, the Bible chooses Jehoshaphat of all the men in the Bible. In fact, he's renowned.

Listen to what it says, Jehoshaphat who sought the Lord with all of his heart. This man was marked. He had a heart that sought God with all of his strength and energy.

You know, at the beginning of his reign, 2 Chronicles 17, it says about him when he become king, Jehoshaphat, he walked in the first ways of his father David and sought not unto Balaam. The first ways of David. David was a man after God's own heart.

He went right back to the beginning of David's life and said, what made David a man of God? A man after God's own heart. And he followed that. He walked in those ways, just like King David did.

He began to seek with all of his heart. And it says there, it says there concerning Jehoshaphat, he was a man who sought God with all of his heart. But listen what happens in 2 Chronicles 19.

Something happened to him. Do you know Jehoshaphat had two great failures in his life? The first one was, and he was a good man and he sought God with all his heart. But do you know what? He entered into an agreement and a covenant with Ahab and Jezebel, the most wicked couple who ever sat in the throne of Israel.

And he joined himself. Remember he got into that apostate conference with 400 false preachers and only one prophet of God. And demon spirits came down into the mouth of the 400.

And here's Jehoshaphat joined together with Ahab in this mass Israeli conference. Shouldn't be there. But do you know what? He's a nice man and a loving man and a kind man.

He says, I'm trying to help Ahab. And I love Ahab. And I'm kind to Ahab.

And I'm generous. You shouldn't have been around Ahab. And you know what? They joined their armies and went off to fight together and their armies were destroyed, defeated.

And Ahab was killed. And you know what it says on the battlefield, the enemy drew near and we're gonna catch Jehoshaphat and kill him. They thought he was the king.

Ahab disguised himself. You know, some of you need to be very careful who you mix with. And in the years ahead, I've seen people in the church and they said, now I'm just gonna put on garments like I'm not the king.

But you keep your kingly garments on and I don't have any agenda. I just want you to get a bit of the glory. You're gonna get me killed.

And it says as the enemy drew near and he suddenly realized what was gonna happen, he cried unto the Lord and they drew back. Do you know what? He didn't look to his sword or his soldiers. He said, Lord, help me.

And the Lord saved him. He messed up in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong people. But he said, oh God, help me.

Sought the Lord. You know, after this, we're told that the enemies march against Israel and Jehoshaphat calls them all to prayer and to fasting and to seeking after God in a remarkable way. This man sought God.

And then remember he got caught up with Ahab's son and built all the big ships to go to Tarshish. Remember that? And God destroyed all the ships. You know what he done? He went back and sought God again.

This was a man marked with seeking the Lord. He did make mistakes. He did get it wrong.

But you know one thing? He says, when I've blown it, I know I can go back and seek God with all of my heart and with all of my strength. It says in 2 Chronicles 17 and 3, and the Lord was with Jehoshaphat to seek God. God will be with you.

Friends, I'm telling you, this is what it means to seek God. There's a time to seek God. And you need to prepare your heart.

There's a preparing of that heart to make it right, to seek God. In 2 Chronicles 12, 14, and it says concerning Rehoboam, he did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. Do you know, and you may not have known this before, but if you do not prepare your heart to seek God, it's evil.

What I've just preached to you this morning, if you now do not prepare your heart, it's evil. Lack of preparing your heart is evil. It's wicked.

You can't excuse it. It's dangerous. It's deadly.

It'll hinder all the blessing. If seeking God will prosper you and bless you and open everything up, what will happen otherwise? In 2 Chronicles 26, we read about Uzziah, a great king, a great leader, and God was with him. Listen to what it says in verse five.

And he, Uzziah, sought God in the days of Zechariah. Do you know why? Because Zechariah was a prophet preaching. And under that preaching, he sought God.

While Zechariah was there, while he was a young man, he sought God. You can lose that. If you realize you can lose that, you're not under the same preaching or you let yourself drift.

But while Zechariah was there, he sought God during that whole period, who had understanding of the visions of God. Zechariah did. And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

And after that verse, as you read down through 2 Chronicles 26, it says God strengthened him and give him victories and he built cities and he was very blessed. Then verse 16, But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction. And you know what he tried to do? He tried to go into the house of God to take up the position of the priest, to do the ministry of the priests.

And as he walked in there, he took the censer and said, I can minister like them. And we're told that Azariah met him there with the 80 priests and said, no way, you're not coming in here. And they stopped him and he got angry with them.

And as wrath exploded, leprosy broke out in his body and he was cast out. Do you know what? He had lost seeking God. When you don't seek God anymore, you're going to do something really, really stupid.

Unlike Jehoshaphat, you may get up and say, forgive me, Lord, help me. I'm going to get back to seeking God. Or you could be like Isaiah, you'll die.

Or like Esau, you didn't seek God. Or like some of these others, you don't seek God. And now your marriage is over.

What are you going to do now? I've been having a brother email me saying, my marriage, my wife doesn't want God or me or anything else. Will you pray for me? I could have helped so much 15 years ago, 10 years ago. He said, we got into social drinking and I started to say, sure, a glass of wine, there's no problem with that.

Should have listened to me. I could have talked to you all those times. So many things I could have said.

What do you say now? There was a time when you could have sought God and great blessing was here, but you missed it. Can I ask you, will you humble yourself? We are on the verge. Now all the news media is saying by the end of the year, our fuels doubled in price, oil price doubled.

All of these things, bread, food, basics. There'll be lots of things you can't get. It's only beginning.

It hasn't got bad. It's only beginning. When are you going to seek God? And when are you going to prepare your heart and set it and establish it to say, I'm going to seek God at this time.

Will you stand with me? Lord Jesus. I want to ask you right now. Let's prepare our hearts right here in this room.

Let's prepare our hearts. You've heard the word of God. This altar is open.

You and God. Now is the time. Now is near.

Now is here. You could kneel at your seat. Can we just seek him? Let's close our eyes, pray.

Sing to pray. Right now, pray where you are. You can't miss this opportunity.

You can't miss this time. I'm not asking you to seek God. I'm asking, prepare your heart.

Ask him now. Humble yourself. Rend your heart.

Cast out idols. Is there something you need to do as soon as you leave this meeting? Is there someone you need to speak to? Is there something you need to go and do at home? At work? In your family? With an individual? Is there an apology? Do you need to bring yourself low? Do you need to go and put something right? Do you need to repent right now before God? Do you need to prepare that heart? Anton, you can prepare your heart now and re-establish. Have you lost your altar time with God? Have you neglected early morning prayer? Was there a day that you used to morning by morning, regularly have a time in the word of God and prayer? You had a place, you had a time.

I'm not laying burdens of an hour or two hours on you. I'm not doing that. Whether it's 10 minutes or three hours, I'm not laying that out.

That's for God to do. But did you have that time and you don't even get there anymore? You know what you need to do? You need to re-establish it this week. You need to do something right now in this meeting before we close.

You need to prepare your heart. You need to cry out and say, give me grace. You need to repent right now.

You need to ask him to forgive you and wash you and to purge you and to prepare your heart. And that you're going to seek him this week. Why not make this a week of seeking God? When's the last time you fasted? When's the last time you denied yourself the necessities of life? When's the last time you denied yourself sleep? Do you like your sleep? Maybe you need to deny that.

It's good to get sleep. Good to get long sleep, to be rested. Or has your sleep been lost for the wrong reason? Wasted, never to be regained.

Saints, I'm calling you to seek the Lord this week. I'm calling you to re-establish an altar time, a quiet time, a place to meet God. Now's the time.

Ask him for grace. Don't make promises of what you're going to do. Don't do that.

But here, humble yourself. Say, oh God, will you help me? I'm coming here to pray that I might deal with things in my heart. I'm coming here to seek you, that you might help me overcome the flesh and time and busyness and burdens and discouragement.

Just for these moments, meet with God. Let him prepare your heart. Let the spirit of God search.

Cast out the idols. Ask him to cleanse your hands. Ask him to speak clearly.

Ask him for strength. Prepare that heart. Establish it like nailing it to the ground, unmovable.

Say, Lord, I am going to meet with you. I am going to meet with you. Nothing's going to move me from that place.

It's time, saints, to break up the fallow ground. It's time to seek the Lord while he may be found. Don't wait until he's gone.

Don't wait until it's too late. Until you've missed him. Seek the Lord at home as you watch him soon.

Just seek him now. Seek him. Seek him to have mercy on you.

To have God's presence with you. Re-establish. You wonder why you don't have the wisdom of God.

You're not even spending time in the word of God. You'll be foolish. You'll become like a brute.

You won't have wisdom. You won't know the right decision. You'll say the wrong thing.

You won't even have eyes to see. You've got to break up the fallow ground. You wonder why your spiritual senses are dull.

This is why. And there's a way back to have a heart that seeks after God. To seek God with all of your heart.

Wholeheartedly. Break up the fallow ground. Repent.

Turn your heart towards God. Get desperate. Get earnest.

Search diligently. God I've got to have your presence. I've got to have your voice.

I've got to have your faith. I've got to have your hand upon me. I want your goodness.

I want you to bless me. I want you to prosper me. Oh God we need you, we need you our God.

We need you our God. Savior, Savior, Savior. Oh praise you our God praise you our God.

Praise you our God. Oh praise you our God, we need you right now, we need you right now. Let us be vessels made for the Master's use, prepared in this day of crisis, prepared in a day when we can see disaster coming, when everything is being shook and it can be shook, when the nations are in turmoil.

Oh God, let your church seek you once again, with all of its heart, let us rend our hearts. Oh God, help us in the week to come, have divine visitation with us, meet with us in life-changing ways, speak to us from on high, oh God. Oh God, let there be a purging of this church, let there be a turning of this church, oh God.

Lord God, in Jesus' name, my God, my Saviour, we need you our God, we need you.

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