



"Theirs is an endless road, a hopeless maze, who seek for goods before they seek for God."

—Bernard of Clairvaux

26-Nov-10

Wisdom for the Young (Part Five)

How does a young person seek [God](#)? Some people, having grown up in certain evangelical circles, have an overly sentimental opinion of how an individual should come to God. Many Protestant churches have fostered the idea that a person must come before the altar at the front of the church and "give his heart to the Lord." This kind of emotional, altar-call conversion, many believe, is the quintessence of how [seeking God](#) works. The sad thing is that, biblically, it is not the way it works.

Seeking God is a personal, private matter between God and the individual, but the result of the person's quest will be publicly manifested in the way he lives. That is, his conduct will change, and people will notice. He will, as John the Baptist preached, "bear fruits worthy of [repentance](#)" ([Matthew 3:8](#)).

At the outset, we must realize that seeking God actually does not begin with us. God must initiate a relationship through His calling, as [John 6:44](#) says. A person may sincerely think he is looking for God, but He will not be found by anyone unless He first extends an invitation to salvation and opens the mind to His truth. However, children of church members already have a relationship with God, as they have been sanctified—set apart or made

holy—by their parent(s) relationship(s) with Him (see [I Corinthians 7:14](#)). They have a kind of "automatic calling," a unique opportunity to seek God in their youth.

Once a person clears this initial stage, what should happen? In [Isaiah 51:1-2, 7](#), God says:

Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. . . . Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law. . . .

This passage provides a short outline of what seeking God is and how we should go about doing it. In the first verse, God speaks to "you who seek the LORD," which parallels the phrase immediately before it, "you who follow after righteousness." Parallel phrases like this often define one another. Thus, one who seeks God pursues righteousness. In other words, a person who wants a relationship with Him will do what He says. When an individual practices godly living, he is seeking the Lord.

God follows this with some advice: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn," which has a double meaning. In the Bible, the Rock is often a symbol of [Jesus Christ](#) (see [I Corinthians 10:4](#)), so a major way that we learn how to seek righteousness is by learning and following the example of Christ. The second meaning, emphasized here, comes out in His mention of Abraham and Sarah in verse 2. He counsels us to examine the lives of our righteous spiritual forebears to see how they followed God and lived out their [faith](#).

Later, in [Isaiah 51:7](#), He speaks to those who have put His law in their hearts. This occurs when a person studies God's Word and burns the truth that he finds there into his character by putting it to use in the circumstances of his life. This verse contains another parallelism in which He equates knowing righteousness (that is, understanding godly conduct) with having His law written in the heart. These things are possible only within a deepening relationship with God.

Isaiah 55 contains, as the New King James Version styles it, "An Invitation to Abundant Life":

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David. . . . Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ([Isaiah 55:1-3](#), 6-7)

Once we begin following God, these are the next steps to take. Seeking the Lord requires more than just listening and learning. He says that we must call upon Him in prayer, so that we can get to know Him. We need to confess our sins to Him, so that we can seek forgiveness. We are also required to repent, that is, turn from our sins and turn toward His good and right way.

Notice that He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." God targets the [sin](#) in us on two levels: our "way"—our exterior conduct and behavior—and our "thoughts"—our interior attitudes and motivations. Both must be examined and purified. God says that, if we do this, He will have abundant mercy, and the relationship will leap forward.

[Zephaniah 2:1-3](#) adds a sense of urgency to seeking a relationship with God:

Gather yourselves together, . . . O undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, . . . before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you [meek](#) of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.

God advises, "Seek Me now! Don't delay! You don't know how much time you have left!" We believe that Christ's return is fast approaching, but we cannot say exactly when, and we certainly do not know when we will draw our last breath. Thus, God tells us not to procrastinate when it comes to having a relationship with Him. Seek Him now, before the dark days come.

"For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: 'Seek Me and live'" ([Amos 5:4](#)). God is not really speaking about physical life, but about the abundant life and eternal life. In verses 14-15, He commands: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live. So the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. Hate evil, [love](#) good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."

The church is the remnant that God has called out of [this world](#) to follow Him and live, so that He can continue to be gracious to us all the way to the [Kingdom of God](#). And He wants, not just young people, but everyone in the church to seek Him and live. The youth, however, have a golden opportunity to say with the psalmist, "O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works" ([Psalm 71:17](#)).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

We must not have an apathetic relationship toward God (Revelation 3:15), but instead to ardently, earnestly, diligently, and fervently seek God in order to imitate His behavior in our lives. The fervency of a passionate courtship and marriage relationship provides the grounds for comparison of the kind of relationship God wants with us. Jesus, David, and Jacob exemplified the passionate fervor and heat (both to purify good and to destroy evil) God demands of us. If we search for God with all our hearts, looking for

something which is a vital necessity for us (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29: 12-13; Hebrews 11:6) God will reward us, giving us what we are seeking: a warm, ardent relationship, transforming us into what He is.

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by John O. Reid

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