

Earnestly We Seek You! (Deepening Your Family's Passion for Prayer)

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By Kim Butts

"O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands" (Psa. 63:1-4).

When King David wrote these words, he demonstrated why the Lord considered him to be a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). He wanted to know the Father better and more intimately. He desired God more than anything else...and, as king, he could certainly have had anything he wanted. David's everyday lifestyle was devoted to the passionate pursuit of God. How would the lifestyles of our families today be different if we were as focused on seeking the Lord as earnestly as David?

Worldly Passion or Godly Passion?

There are many experiences that cause people to change their behavior in significant ways. Normally quiet people can become loud and excited, those who are usually talkative can be hushed to an awed silence, and those who would never think of doing anything out of the ordinary may suddenly find themselves behaving in unusual ways. Think about the fervent enthusiasm displayed for sports or other events. Consider how some individuals will travel great distances and stand in lines for long periods of time for a special event or to get a glimpse of a famous person. Perhaps you can remember a time when you, or someone in your family displayed the same kind of excitement.

However, when was the last time your family was at least that passionate for an experience with God? When did you last marvel at something the Father created? Did you experience great rejoicing when He answered your fervent prayer? Have you ever sat in silence, in awe of the Lord's glorious majesty or might? When was the last time your family was so excited to join with others in worship that you could hardly wait to get to church? Have you ever experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit so strongly that you couldn't leave His presence until He clearly released you?

It seems that in this earthly realm we have been captivated by things around us that have nothing to do with experiencing the glory and presence of God, but everything to do with the glorification of man and man's experiences. Believers are settling for less than God's best. We are no longer captivated by the things of God, but by the wonders of technology and the ways of the world! When our priorities get turned around, we can certainly find ourselves focusing more and more upon things that have earthly importance rather than eternal significance. Can it be said of you, or anyone in your family, that you are truly a person after God's own heart? Is He, as David Bryant so succinctly expressed it, "your Monarch, or

your mascot?" Is He just there to cheer you on and answer your prayers and protect you from disaster...or is He at the heart of your life?

Christian families, it is time to rend our hearts in repentance and turn our lives back over to the living God. It is time to give Him the honor due His name, and to be thrilled and excited to dwell in His presence and in the company of His people. It is time to *"exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; He is holy"* (Psa. 99:5). In other words, we must regain our passion for Jesus Christ and His kingdom!

How do we get back that which has been lost, and reignite the flame of our first love? We must first allow the Father to break our hearts in confession and repentance. Then, with renewed resolve, we must spend time seeking His face in prayer, and listening to His loving voice. We must delve into the Word in reverence, honor and obedience! The prophet Isaiah spoke about God's willingness to respond to our desperate need to turn from our earthly distractions and passionately go after the face of the living Lord: *"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him...How gracious He will be when you cry for help! As soon as He hears, He will answer you...Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'"* (Isa. 30:18,19,21). Have you ever longed to hear from God? Perhaps you have never considered spending time listening for His voice.

Passion will follow obedience, as we earnestly seek after His holy presence to fill our lives, to restore our families, and to lead us toward finishing our time on earth well! Here are some prayers from Scripture and some action steps to help you and your family to turn ordinary lives focused on worldly pleasures and experiences into extraordinary lives lived with passion and faith because our hearts are fixed on Jesus! Read each Scripture and pray together as a family that God will

develop in all of you, a passionate desire for Jesus Christ.

The Israelites Re-ignite Their Passion

“They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God” (Neh. 9:3). When was the last time you spent time reading the Word of God together as a family for six hours? And then spent another six hours in confession and worship?

Action: Take a family retreat together (even at home with the phone off the hook). Talk about who God is as you read the passages below. Spend time in confession and worship as you pray. As you talk about who God is, continue to ask Him to reveal more of Himself to you. As you get to know His heart better, and as He has an opportunity to search your hearts and speak into your lives, see if your passion for Him begins to grow in significant and real ways.

Prayer: Lord, help us to have passion for and delight in Your Word!

Action: Read these passages together and talk about why God’s Word is so important:

- *“I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your Word”*(Psa. 119:16).
- *“Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight”* (Psa. 119:35).
- *“...for I delight in Your commands because I love them”* (Psa. 119:47).
- *“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night”* (Psa. 1:2).

Prayer: Lord, help us to worship You!

- *“You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth*

and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship You”(Neh. 9:6).

- *“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness...” (Psa. 29:2).*

- *“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker...” (Psa. 95:6).* You might want to try bowing down together, and/or kneeling before Him.

- *“Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs” (Psa. 100:2).* Sing joyous songs of worship to the Father together!

- *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:23).* Talk about what it means to worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Prayer: Father, forgive us!

- *“For the sake of Your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great”(Psa. 25:11).*
- *“Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name’s sake” (Psa. 79:9).*
- *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).*

Prayer: Lord, help us to thirst for You. We need You desperately! Give us time and places to meet with You face to face. Forgive us for placing our dependence upon the things of this earth that will fade away.

- *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”(Psa. 42:2).*

Action: Take some time to confess sins privately and/or to one another. Lift up your hands to the Lord and ask Him to fill your thirsty heart and spirit. *“I spread out*

my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land” (Psa. 143:6).

Jesus responds to the thirsty, blessing and filling them: *“...for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things” (Psa. 107:9). “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6).*

Prayer: Father, we seek Your face. We look to You and Your strength. Help us to devote our hearts and souls to seeking You always!

- *“Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always”(1 Chron. 16:11).*
 - *“Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God...” (1 Chron. 22:19).*
 - *“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple” (Psa. 27:4).*

Action: Think about what the house of the Lord must look like...share this with one another, or draw it! Imagine that you could gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. What does His house look like? Again, share and/or draw together. Read, reflect and pray after reading these passages:

- *“My heart says of You, ‘Seek His face!’ Your face, LORD, I will seek”(Psa. 27:8).*
 - *“I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands” (Psa. 119:10).*
 - *“Look to the LORD and His strength; seek His face always” (Psa. 105:4).*

As you seek God individually and as a family, you will soon see that there are certain things He will do to draw you closer into a more passionate love relationship with Him:

If you seek Him, You will find Him!

- *“But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul”(Deut. 4:29).*
 - *“I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me” (Prov. 8:17).*
 - *“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).*
 - *“Come near to God and He will come near to you...” (Jas. 4:8).*

If you seek Him, you will rejoice!

- *“But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation always say, ‘The LORD be exalted’”(Psa. 40:16).*
 - *“Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice” (1 Chron. 16:10).*

If you seek Him He will never forsake you!

- *“Those who know Your name will trust in You, for You, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek You”(Psa. 9:10).*

If you seek Him you will lack no good thing!

- *“The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing”(Psa. 34:10).*

If you seek Him you will be blessed!

- *“Blessed are they who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart”(Psa. 119:2).*

He rewards those who seek Him!

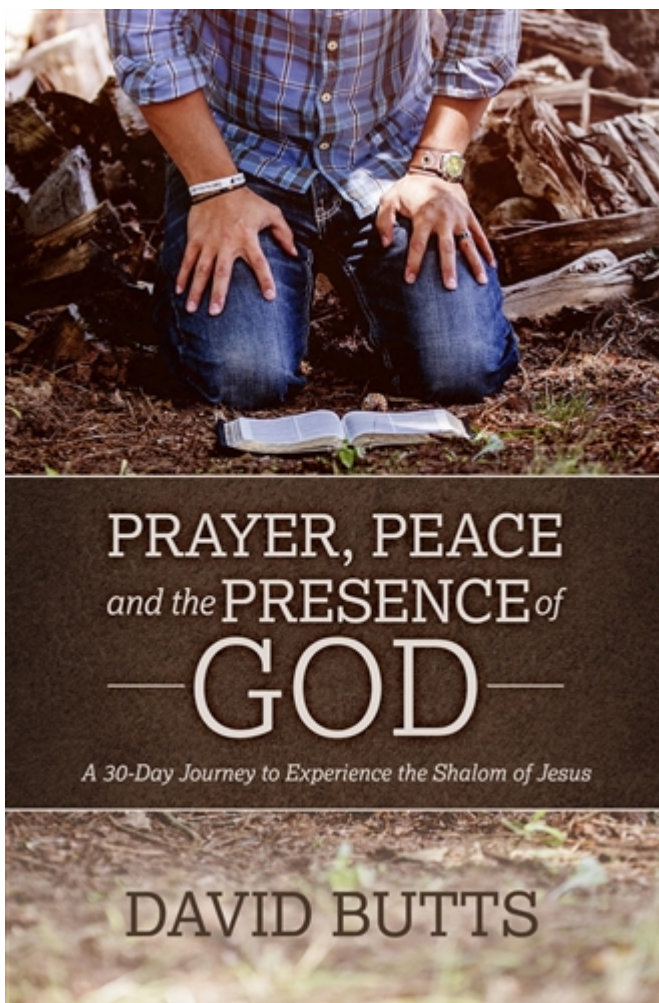
- *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek*

Him”(Heb. 11:6).

- *“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him...”* (Lam. 3:25).

- *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matt. 6:33).

Seek His kingdom and righteousness first – then everything else in your lives will fall into place. Your passion will be a red-hot fire, your joy will be contagious and your worship will be pleasing to the Father. *“Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart”* (Psa. 37:4). As your family delights in the Lord first, you will quickly see that what you desire will be in harmony with what He desires! May *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done”* be your family’s most earnest prayer!



PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

The author, David Butts (1953-2022), started writing this book and 10 days into it he got word that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God allowed him to live in a greater way for five additional years of full-strength ministry. Dave has challenged readers in *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* to seek after His best life, no matter what it holds.

His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you that you, too, can experience and walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what circumstances you are walking through.

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