

A Seeking Heart



By Dave Butts

What are you looking for in life? Be careful what you look for. The Bible tells us that those who seek will find. But you might be seeking wrong things. If you are looking to be rich, you may well end up rich, but also tremendously unhappy and burdened down by the things of this world. You may be looking for fame, for recognition of your accomplishments. In the process of finding that recognition on earth, you may well lose the praise of heaven.

Many have just quit seeking. Living lives of “quiet desperation,” they simply hope to avoid disaster or pain. Sometimes even Christians can find themselves in the rut of everyday life, with the only thing they are looking for being heaven some day. The pressures of life have stifled desire of any significance, and life is just something to be endured.

Did you know that God never intended for us to live this way? God is actually looking for the discontented. He is looking for seekers, those whose desires are always going beyond the confines of daily life. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 the Word says,

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” The same concept is expressed in Psalm 14:2, “The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.” I don’t know about you, but I want to be found by the God who is looking for seekers.

What does it mean to be a seeker after God? Does it have any real meaning for us? After all, if we are Christians, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Lord has promised to be with us always, even until the end of the age. So, is it necessary for a Christian to be a seeker after God?

I believe that King David gives us a wonderful understanding of what it means for a man of God, experiencing the presence of God, to still be a seeker after God. In Psalm 27:4 we read this passionate prayer of a man after God’s own heart: “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.” If we try to analyze this verse in spatial, literal terms, we find ourselves confused. If David were in God’s temple, gazing upon His face, why would he still be seeking Him?

That’s because seeking God is much more than having one experience and calling it “finding God.” It is much more than believing a certain set of doctrines. It is even much more than having a good prayer life. God is too big to be confined to any one person’s experience or belief system. Seeking God is an attitude, a way of life, a journey that is never complete in this life.

The vastness of God makes the task of seeking Him the journey of a lifetime. Let me give a totally inadequate illustration, but one that may be helpful nonetheless. I always enjoy visiting the Smithsonian Institute when I go to Washington D.C. As you might know, the Smithsonian is made up of dozens of buildings, each housing a particular aspect of man’s

knowledge or achievement. So you could go to the Air and Space Museum or the American History Museum or the Portrait Gallery and still say of each, "I went to the Smithsonian." What would be totally inaccurate would be to go to one of those museums and return home saying: "I have experienced the Smithsonian in its entirety."

God, of course, dwarfs the Smithsonian, but we sometimes feel like or say, "I know God. I have experienced God. Others need to seek Him, but I have found Him." That's like going to one building of the Smithsonian and thinking you have experienced all that the Smithsonian is.

David didn't fall into that trap. His desire was to spend all of his days in the presence of God, gazing upon His beauty. Yet he also realized with humility, that he would still need to have that seeking heart for the rest of his life.

I believe that to live this life, we must start with prayer. Ask God to give you a seeking heart. Repent of any spiritual lukewarmness or self-satisfaction. All that we have comes from God, even a heart that seeks God. But we must ask Him. We do not just become seekers because we are naturally good and spiritual. We are not! We must ask and receive that gift from God.

Seeking also requires effort. When we have asked and received of the Lord a seeking heart, there will be required of us an earnestness and effort that emerges from the longing for intimacy with God, that God Himself has placed within our hearts.

The path to God is always Jesus. He is the way! There is no other path to God. Seeking God successfully only happens along the pathway that is Jesus. It is in intimacy with the Lord and walking daily in His ways that we find ourselves with a seeking heart that pleases God and draws His eyes and favor upon us.

Here is the good news! Jesus said that all who seek will find. God is not hiding. He longs to be found and known. But His very character and vastness demand a life of seeking. No matter how long we have known Him and walked with Him on this planet, we will still find ourselves learning and experiencing new aspects of who He is. “Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage” (Psalms 84:5).

Dave Butts was the chairman of [America's National Prayer Committee](#) and the co-founder and president of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#) until his death in 2022.

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Jump Start Your Prayer Battery



By Kim Butts

From time to time, many of us need a fresh shot of enthusiasm in many areas of our lives. Sometimes, we just need to do something different—to get ourselves out of a rut. Other times, it is a need to change our attitude, or to overcome feelings of inadequacy, depression, frustration, or anger.

We all know that we have a Father in Heaven who is willing to listen, and to provide guidance in all of these circumstances. However, we often let ourselves be overcome or defeated by the circumstances—paralyzed. Many of us have been in situations when we know we ought to pray, but are unable to for a variety of different reasons.

So what practical steps can we take to put new life into our prayer lives, to renew an intimate relationship with our first love—Jesus Christ? Here are a few suggestions to help you “recharge” your spiritual prayer battery.

1. **Find someone to make yourself accountable to!** If you tell a friend, members of your small group, or your spouse that you need help to get back into a prayer life that is fresh and exciting, and ask one or more of them to provide encouragement, and to check on your progress on a regular basis, you have already taken an important step. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).
2. **Worship!** If you are not spending time with the Lord in

worship, we encourage you to do whatever it takes to bring yourself into God's presence on a daily basis. Use praise tapes to turn your focus to Him, and to draw yourself away from your problems and needs for a time. Sing along, or just close your eyes and be in agreement with the scriptures. Read the Psalms out loud to the Lord, and make each one a prayer of praise! "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

3. **Ask the Lord to reveal any sin in your life** which may be hindering your prayers, or which may even be the cause of a prayer life which is less than you would like it to be. Ask for His forgiveness and move on, knowing that the sin has been not only forgiven but forgotten. "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psalm 139:23-24).
4. **Along with a good concordance, dig into the Word of God** with expectation that He will fulfill His Word in you, and reveal His promises to you. Choose to study areas in which you need guidance, improvement, help. etc. For example if you need to be more joyful, look up scriptures about joy. If you need patience, study what God's word has to say on that topic. Pray that the Lord will help you to grow in that area, and relinquish control of your life to Him. The burden can be lifted if you allow Christ to carry it for you. "When I called, You answered me; You made me bold and stouthearted . . . The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me" (Psalm 138:3,8).
5. **Don't allow discouragement to sneak in.** Be on the alert! Don't allow the enemy of our souls to rob you of your peace and joy! Rejoicing and giving thanks are two vital spiritual practices to help combat discouragement: "Rejoice always, pray constantly. give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Take one step at a time and your prayer life can be renewed! Seek His Presence and ASK Him to walk with you on this journey so that spending time with Him becomes the longing of your heart!

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A Priest that Prays



By David Butts

When we think of a priest, we usually think of one who is in a special relationship to God, able to approach Him on behalf of others. It's not a wrong concept—especially if we stay away from the idea that the priesthood is only for a select few with special training. According to Scripture, every believer in Christ has been made a priest through Jesus: “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who

called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

If we are to walk in all the privileges and responsibilities of a priest in the kingdom of God, we must understand what it means to be a priest. It is especially important to understand this when we see that Jesus Himself is a part of that priesthood, and in fact, is our great High Priest. The book of Hebrews really focuses on the priesthood of Jesus and, consequently, helps us to see our place in God's house as priests.

As a priest, Jesus has a ministry of prayer that we would do well to emulate. "Because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25). "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). The current ministry of Jesus is prayer. It is what He is doing now. As a priest, His role is that of intercessor. The good news for us is that He is praying for us.

It is important to understand that as priests of God, all Christians are now called to priestly intercession. The Apostle Paul calls us to intercessory prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1. Also, in Ephesians 6:18, he tells us to "keep on praying for all the saints." We are to join Jesus in His current ministry of intercession as we assume our roles as priests of God.

The writer of Hebrews gives us great encouragement in our intercessions in the following passage: "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having

our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22). This passage shows us that a priest has the right place from which to pray. It is in the Most Holy Place. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, the Most Holy Place was the most sacred spot on our planet. It was where the High Priest of the Jews entered once a year to pray and offer atonement for the people. It was the place of the Presence of God.

Can you imagine living as a Jew in the Old Testament period and each year watching the High Priest enter the Temple, knowing he would go into the Most Holy Place to meet with God, and that you would never be allowed such a privilege? Only the High Priest . . . and even for him, it was a once a year privilege.

Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, we have become priests with the amazing privilege of entering into the Most Holy Place as often as we would like. As we pray, we come into the Presence of the Lord and make our requests. Most Christians are unaware of the awesome responsibility as well as amazing honor given to us through this free access into the Lord’s Presence.

We can also see in Hebrews 10 that a priest has the right attitude in prayer. We are to have confidence and assurance as we pray. This is not because we are something special, but because our Lord Jesus is someone special. It is through Him that we enter into God’s Presence. We are invited in to make our requests and intercessions known. Hebrews tells us to draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. James tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. How that truth ought to cause our faith and confidence to grow as we pray!

We can have the confidence that the Lord is listening and preparing to answer every prayer prayed according to His will. The Apostle John instructs us: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His

will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

A priest also has the right model to follow. Jesus, our High Priest and Intercessor is our model. We are commanded to follow in His steps. The disciples were so impressed by the power of His praying that they asked Him to teach them to pray. His response was not to preach a sermon on prayer, but to give them a model prayer. In a sense, Jesus said, “Here’s an outline. Make sure you include these items in your prayer. Make sure you pray about Kingdom issues.” We pray best as we follow the teaching of Jesus on prayer.

Priests of God! The Lord Himself is calling you to make a difference in this world by standing before Him as an intercessor for others, releasing His power into their lives. One of the best examples of priestly intercession in Scripture is found in the book of Numbers. The people of Israel were grumbling against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. God sent a plague that began to kill the people. Remembering that incense represents the prayers of the saints, allow this passage to stir your heart: “Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the Lord; the plague has started.’ So Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped” (Numbers 16:46-48).

As priests of God, we are to stand between the living and the dead. We make the difference by bringing the needs of people into the Presence of a holy God through intercession. It is time for the Church to take seriously the call of God to be priests that pray.

Dave Butts was the chairman of [America's National Prayer Committee](#) and the co-founder and president of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#) until his death in 2022. His popular prayer guide, [Asleep in the Land of Nod](#) has been used by hundreds of churches to help their congregations pray for revival.

Partnering with God in Prayer



By David Butts

It's very obvious in Scripture that the Lord wants us to pray. There are many commands given to us concerning prayer: "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1); "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18); "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

These are just a few of many such injunctions in God's Word concerning prayer in our lives. Why is it then, that so many Christians feel so inadequate in their prayer lives? Christians everywhere confess their prayerlessness and long to become people of prayer. Yet, the life of prayer evades so many. How can this be turned around in our lives?

I believe that one important key is to understand the reason behind God's commands to us to pray. It can be difficult to discern the mind of God on a matter, but He has given us much in Scripture to help us understand. My friend Alvin VanderGriend has suggested that there are three reasons given for prayer in God's Word: intimacy, enrichment and partnership. Another way of stating these is: knowing God, obeying God and partnering with God.

There is a passage of Scripture that combines all of these in one place: "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5: 3-5).

The first reason for prayer is the simple need we all have to know God. There is no way to draw near to the Lord apart from prayer. It is in prayer that we express to the Lord our love for Him, our faith in Him, our worship of Him, and our surrender to Him. If for no other reason, the desire for intimacy with Christ ought to bring us daily to our knees.

The second reason for praying is simple obedience. God says to pray...so we pray. This is especially important during those times in our lives when we don't feel like praying. These spiritual "dry times" can happen to us all. Often, the only thing that will lead us out of such dryness is sticking with the routine of daily prayer and time in God's Word. Developing a spiritual discipline out of obedience to the Lord is a

bulwark against spiritual dryness, laziness, and busyness.

One of the areas that I believe is least understood by Christians is the partnership that God has called us to with Himself in the area of prayer. God, in His wisdom and sovereign power, has chosen to accomplish His will on this planet through the prayers of His people. God has decided not to arbitrarily move in and out of situations on earth, even though He is able to do just that. Instead, He waits on His people to pray and then pours out His power in response to those prayers.

Ezekiel 22:30 is a passage of Scripture that illustrates this principle of how the Lord works. "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none." God uses the illustration of a walled city to demonstrate His commitment to prayer. The walls protect a city from enemy attack. But through neglect (sin), the walls can begin to crumble and a gap or opening in the wall can create a dangerous situation where the enemy can come in. God said of Israel in Ezekiel's day, that they had allowed such a situation to develop. It was going to result in the destruction of the land, unless someone stood before the Lord in the gap on behalf of the land. This is a clear picture of God's desire for us to engage in intercessory prayer.

What is absolutely heartbreaking is that God Himself was looking for an intercessor. He was looking for someone who would stand before Him in prayer on behalf of Israel so that He would not have to destroy her because of sin and rebellion. God's desire is made clear here. He did not want to destroy Israel. He was waiting for an intercessor so He wouldn't have to. God had chosen to reserve His power to save the nation of Israel for those who prayed. But no intercessor was to be found. Israel was defeated by the Babylonians and her people were in exile for 70 years.

Isaiah 59 reflects a similar situation. The chapter speaks of a nation that was in trouble. There was no justice, violence was in the streets and the righteous were being preyed upon by the wicked. Verses 15 and 16 show us the Lord's response to the evil that was going on. "The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intercede."

Once again, the Lord made His will very clear. He was displeased by what was happening in Israel and desired for matters to be made right. He was waiting for His people to pray, so that salvation and righteousness might be poured out upon the people. But again, there was no one to intercede. In this case, however, the Lord allowed Israel to suffer in sin for hundreds of years until His people were redeemed by the coming of the Messiah. God always looks first for an intercessor. It is His plan to accomplish His will on this planet through the prayers of the saints.

It is for this reason that Jesus taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God has given us the awesome privilege of partnering with Him in bringing about the advance of His Kingdom on earth.

As we ask ourselves, "why pray?" we can move from a lethargic attitude about prayer to a place of tremendous excitement as we join with God in what He is doing on this planet. Understanding the place of prayer in God's plan can give us greater motivation and commitment to be the people of prayer that God is calling us to become.

Dave Butts was the president of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#) until his death in 2022. He was the author of many books on prayer including [The Devil Goes to Church](#), [Desperate for Change](#) and [Prayer and the End of Days](#).

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The Key to Overcoming Busyness

By Dave Butts

There is an epidemic that is rampant throughout our society and culture today. No part of the country is immune from this plague. Little children suffer from it, as well as the elderly and those in-between. There is no quick cure and many people never recover from it. It breaks up homes, incapacitates people, and contributes to many other diseases. It is busyness!

We live in a busy society. Never have there been so many choices concerning what to do or so many pressures that stem from our schedules. Even the youngest are not immune. One of the concerns of the media in America over the past few years has been the grueling schedules of children whose parents have enrolled them in so many special activities and events that they seem to have lost their childhood.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss shared about a women's weekend conference she taught in which she asked the attendees, "Where does God find you as we start this weekend?" Here are some of the responses:

"I feel I'm out of control sometimes with so many pressures."

"I face too much stress and responsibility."

"I often get overly busy and find my day gone without having

done the things I most wanted to do.”

“I’ve left a whirlwind at home, and need a renewed spirit to face all that these coming weeks will hold.”

“I want to slow down. I feel as if I’m on a speeding treadmill, and if I try to jump off I will stumble and fall.”

“My busyness has robbed me of my joy.”

Though our generation seems to have perfected busyness, it is not a problem unique to our day. American church reformer, Alexander Campbell wrote 150 years ago, “This present age is not an age given to devotion. Men have not the time to meditate, to pray, to examine themselves. They have too many newspapers to read, too many political questions to discuss, too much business to transact.”

Christian author Philip Patterson wrote, “Historian Will Durant once observed that ‘no man who is in a hurry is quite civilized.’ You need only to observe human behavior on a crowded freeway or a rush hour subway station to agree to that. But I’m more concerned with the possibility that no one who is constantly in a hurry can be fully Christian, either. How do I balance the demands of a Christian life with the command to ‘Be still’?”

That’s my concern. In an age known for busyness, how can the Christians live counter-culturally? In the midst of a hectic lifestyle, can we learn to wait on the Lord? Is it possible that even while serving God, we can miss the joy of intimacy with Christ?

Have we all become Martha, busy in the kitchen fixing a meal for Jesus, while missing out on the joy of sitting at Jesus’ feet?

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She

had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!'

“‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:38-42).

Most of us identify more with Martha than with Mary. We'd rather be up doing something for Jesus than simply sitting at His feet. That mindset directs us into a busy lifestyle that often leads to exhaustion and burnout.

Please understand that serving Jesus is good . . . desirable . . . a worthy thing to devote one's life to. But serving must be balanced with sitting at Jesus' feet . . . spending time with our Lord in loving intimacy . . . waiting upon Him.

Do you remember the words of Jesus to Martha as she complained about her sister's lack of help? He told her (and us) that only one thing is needed. Can you imagine that? In our busy world today, someone comes along and tells us there is only one essential thing that must be done. That's almost hard to take. Yet, how freeing it is when we realize it is our Lord and Master who is speaking with His perfect wisdom as He says to us today, "Only one thing is needed." And that one thing is to sit at His feet . . . to enjoy His presence...to hear His voice.

The solution to busyness is not laziness. It is not a shirking of responsibilities or a giving of oneself to recreation. It is to put first what Jesus said is first. It is a realignment of priorities in which we put the one thing that is needed in the very center of our lives, allowing everything else to flow from it. As we learn to sit at Jesus' feet, we find the rest

of our day more orderly and less hectic. Rather than trying to accomplish everything we think we need to do during a day, we listen to His still small voice directing us to do that which comes from Him.

Jesus has modeled this lifestyle for us. He said in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." He set about doing the will of His Father with dogged determination, but never in a hectic, busy, out-of-control way. You never see Jesus in a hurry. And at the end of a remarkable life, with just over three years of public ministry, He was able to say, "It is finished."

Jesus gave us the key to accomplishing all the Father had given Him to do in John 14:10: "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." As Jesus walked in close intimacy with His Father, He was able to focus only on that which was needed and not be distracted by the tremendous needs around him.

We forget that, and in our attempt to help and serve, throw ourselves into every problem and situation without first checking to see if this is something that God has for us. So Jesus teaches us that we must put first things first. Sit at His feet first of all...and then you will be ready to serve. There is a cure for busyness...it is found as we develop a life of intimacy with Christ.

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