



**PROMISES FOR
THOSE WHO
SEEK THE LORD**

Penn Clark

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By Penn Clark

Seeking the Lord means taking time to hear from Him and gaining His perspective on the issues of our lives. Knowing His will has become even more necessary during these last days—which will be filled with social upheaval, dramatic change, and constant confusion. The prophet Hosea spoke to the children of Israel, telling them it was time to seek the Lord:

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12)

Hosea also gave clues as to what seeking the Lord meant. It meant breaking up the fallow ground and sowing righteousness. Fallow ground describes a field that had once been fruitful, but then had been let go, neglected, or given a rest. When it was time to restore the field to usefulness, it would need to be cut down, cleaned up, and plowed again. Fallow ground can often be overrun with weeds or become stony. The hard ground needed to be broken up, turned over, and rocks needed to be removed once again. This would take time and effort.

Once the soil of our hearts has been broken up, it is time to sow new seed. Sowing is doing a bunch of little things repeatedly. You don't have to start by doing something big (like a forty-day fast). You can sow toward a long fasting period by fasting a bunch of little things at first. Some people think they need to do something radical, dramatic, or extreme to bring about the change they desire. You can try, but I have found that doing little things consistently is more effective than doing something dramatic all at once. Do the things you know are right like prayer, worship, giving, fasting, and meditating on God's Word. Putting seed in the ground means we need to expose our hearts to the Word of God.

When the Lord spoke to Israel through Hosea, inviting them to begin seeking Him again, He gave them a promise that He would respond to their efforts (acts of righteousness) by raining righteousness upon them. He promised that, after all the breaking, tilling, and sowing, they would reap His mercy.

There are a number of other promises found in the book of Hosea that help inspire us to seek the Lord afresh, trusting that He will respond. One of my personal favorites comes from Hosea 6:3:

Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.

My paraphrase of this verse is: "Let's learn all we can about the Lord. Let's press in to know Him, and He will respond to us as sure as the morning comes, and as certain as the rains of the spring and autumn which water the earth."

Hosea goes on to prophesy,

So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually. (12:6)

My paraphrase of this verse is: "Here is what you do: Turn to the Lord again, embrace both His mercy and judgment and wait continually before your God with expectation."

Then Hosea assured Israel that God will help them:

O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me. (13:9)

My paraphrase of this verse is: "You have brought this trouble upon yourself, but in Me is your help."

Then God promised healing:

I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely, for My anger has been turned away from you. (14:4)

My paraphrase of this verse is: "For the Lord says, 'I will show them how to put an end to their spiritual regression and will demonstrate My love for them, proving to them that I am no longer angry for what they have done.'"

Finally, he gives them a powerful picture of spiritual growth:

"I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon." (14:5)

My paraphrase of this verse is: "I will be like dew upon Israel, and they shall look like a lily on the surface, but underneath will be roots like the cedars of Lebanon."

GOOD REASONS TO SEEK THE LORD

Hosea said it was time to seek God (see Hosea 10:12). How can you know it is time for you to seek the Lord?

When you are afraid: If you feel afraid, this can be an indicator that it is time to seek the Lord. We can take all of our fears to Him, and ask Him what next steps we need to take:

I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. (Psalm 34:4-5)

When you need understanding: Whenever we need to know what is happening, it should be our response to seek the Lord:

Those who seek the Lord understand all. (Proverbs 28:5)

When you need provision: Jesus told us to ask for our daily bread, as if it were a normal part of our relationship with our heavenly Father.

The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. (Psalm 34:10)

When it is difficult to discern what is happening: Another story that is especially interesting, because of the way it illustrates how things went wrong when the Children of Israel failed to seek the Lord, can be found in Joshua 9. The inhabitants of Gibeon heard that God had destroyed Jericho and that they were next on the list, so they went to see if the Israelites would make a covenant with them. They pretended to have come from a far country instead of being one of the local tribes that Israel was to displace and destroy. They put on old clothes and old sandals, carried old wine skins, and had old moldy bread on hand to give the impression that they had been on a long journey. It says in Joshua 9:14, that the leaders of Israel, “did not ask counsel of the Lord.” So, the Israelites were deceived into making a covenant with a people that they were supposed to eliminate. This reflected badly on their leadership (Joshua 9:18).

When things go wrong: Another example of a time to seek the Lord was when the Children of Israel were defeated at the battle for Ai. It was a city they should have easily won, so their *loss was deeply discouraging. The Israelites went back to the Lord and inquired of Him as to why they had been defeated.* Joshua tore his clothes and fell down on his face before the *ark of the Lord until evening.* God began a process of narrowing it down from two and a half million people to one man named Achan who had sinned. The Lord could have just given his name, but He took them through the process of hearing from Him (see Joshua 7:1–26).

When you need direction: Another time, in Judges 20:18, the Children of Israel inquired of the Lord, asking for specific direction. He gave them a specific answer:

Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, “Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?” The Lord said, “Judah first!”

When you feel holy discontentment: One of the things that helps me know that it is time to seek the Lord is a thing I call *holy discontentment*. This is where I feel miserable, unsettled, restless, and longing for change. I used to think that being discontent was bad, but it depends on where

it leads. If you find yourself standing with the fridge door open all the time, perhaps your inner hunger needs to be fulfilled, and you are looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. If you feel like quitting your job, perhaps you should check to see if God isn't calling you into something that is tailor made for you. If you long to break free from where you are now, it's not time to take a cross-country motorcycle trip; perhaps it is the Lord stirring you up to go to another level. You will not know unless you ask Him. Discontentment can be a good thing, as long as it leads to seeking what God has for you.

HOW TO SEEK THE LORD?

Men of old, when surrounded by menacing armies, would often stop and inquire of the Lord, asking for His perspective during the "fog of war." They sought His help in order to know what to do. Hearing from Him during our own conflicts will sustain our hearts when our heads are not sure what to do. Seeking the Lord is the only way I know to endure my many problems with poise, purpose, and peace.

Seeking and searching for the Lord's will is a lifelong pursuit. It should become part of our great quest in life. When the Lord used Hosea to help move the people from a fallow time to a fruitful time, He told them to begin by seeking Him. Here are some practical things you can do now:

- **Be of good cheer:** Jesus said this about six times to people who needed His help. I cannot help but think He was saying this because He knows that having the right attitude can help our receptivity. It is like putting our antenna up to receive from God. We all know that being anxious or stressed or fearful are counterproductive when trying to hear from the Lord. Gratitude is the key that opens up everything.
- **Get quiet:** Being still, slowing our minds down, and shutting down distractions are basic tools that help us as we seek the Lord to receive the direction we need. He will not compete with the noise and distractions that often fill our lives.
- **Look to Jesus:** Seeking the Lord also means looking toward the Lord, which involves taking our eyes off of what others are doing. As we look to Jesus, we should ask, "What would He say to me, right now?" We also need to take our eyes off our circumstances, no matter what they are say, and no matter how awful things look to our natural eyes. Keep your eyes on Jesus.
- **Become childlike:** The goal is to keep our childlike trust. This is evident by the way we ask Him questions. As a new believer, I came to the conclusion that Jesus was not rude. If I asked Him a question, He would always answer me.

HE WILL RESPOND

When Jesus taught us in Matthew 7:7-8 to seek the Lord, He said we would find. Notice how emphatic He was.

Usually, when it is time to seek the Lord, we are coming from a place where we feel the need to start over, or are recovering from a fallen spiritual condition, rather than coming from a position of strength. This can make it difficult for us to believe that God will respond.

In Jeremiah 29:11-13, when the Lord invited the Children of Israel to come back to Him, they were reluctant because they did not feel like He would respond favorably. He assured them that He was *for them*, not *against them*. He wanted to give them a hope and a future.

“When you know how much I think about you and how good my intentions are toward you, you will pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.”

Notice how after He assures them of His heart for them, it leads to their being able to pray and seek the Lord.

He doesn't tell us to seek Him without giving us the incentive to do it. We need to resolve to do it with all our hearts, saying, “I not coming up for air until I have what I am looking for.”

KNOCKING

I am full of ideas, vision, and action. I like seeing things happen and am not afraid of trying new things or taking risks. This has led to a very fulfilling life with lots of accomplishments to show for it, but it took me a while to gain the confidence to trust what was going on inside of me and begin to learn how to be guided by desires and inner promptings. I was not always this brave.

As a young disciple, I was full of ideas but afraid to try anything that the Lord hadn't told me to do. This caused me to be hesitant, always living in a crouch, thinking I might miss the Lord. When I asked Him about this, He spoke to me, saying that He did not mind my trying things or exploring ideas, as long as I had the humility to admit that it was not His leading as soon as I realized it. I would have to have the humility to back out and go back to seeking Him. He wanted me to walk before Him in such a way that, if He asked me to let go of something, I would. He did not want me to be like the horse that needed a bit and bridle before I would do anything; instead, He wanted me to become sensitive to the slightest touch of His reins, directing me as He willed.

This freed me up to try things to test and see if He was in it or not. Again, it is all in abiding (see John 15:7). If we abide in Him, which means living in communion with Him, and letting His Word abide in us, so that our lives are ordered by biblical precedents and principles, and if we abide in His love, we can do what we will, and it is as if it was Him leading us.

David told Nathan the prophet that he wanted to build God a house. Nathan's response was, “*Do what is in your heart for God is with you*” (2 Samuel 7:3). He knew David was a man after

God's own heart, but the prophet hadn't even gotten down the hallway when the Lord spoke to Him, telling him to go back and tell David that he was not to build Him a house, but that his son would do it.

There is a place for doing what is in your heart, trusting that, if it is not right, the Lord will talk with you about it. Because of our relationship with Him, we can rest in the fact that, if it were not so, the Lord would tell us. Jesus said something along this line in John 14:2:

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Notice that He said, *"If it were not so, I would have told you."* This is an amazing fact that applies to many things, including guidance. If you are doing something wrong, believing something wrong, or going in the wrong direction, He will tell you. This comes out of our "abiding in Him and He in us" kind of relationship, which means we must cultivate a sensitivity to His voice through obedience and responsiveness. If you are not abiding in Him, you may not recognize His doing this at the time.

Some people refuse to go forward until they have all the guidance they need up front. For me, it rarely happens this way. Most of my direction unfolds as I go, walking with an open heart, trying to be sensitive and deferential to Him. He does not want me to be like a horse that has to be prodded or made to move:

Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. (Psalm 32:9)

What Jesus said about our knocking has been especially helpful to me through the years. It not only gave me permission to test to see if what I am feeling as direction was the Lord's will by prayerfully "knocking," but it contained a powerful promise that something would happen as a result of my seeking the Lord.

PROMISES THAT BUILD ASSURANCE

- **A promise for those who seek Him with their whole desire:**

And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about. (2 Chronicle 15:15)

- **A promise of success to those who seek God in all they do:**

And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered. (2 Chronicles 31:21)

- **A promise of effectiveness for young people who are trying to seek the Lord:**

For in the eighth year of his reign, [Josiah] while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. (2 Chronicles 34:3)

- **Asa sought the Lord and prospered:**

Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him. And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest. Therefore he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and make walls around them, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. (2 Chronicles 14:2-7)

- **As long as he sought the Lord he prospered:**

"Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jeholiah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper." (2 Chronicles 26:3-5)

- **A promise that God will motivate you to speak and teach:**

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. (Ezra 7:10)

- **There are pastors who refuse to seek the Lord:**

"For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered." (Jeremiah 10:21)

- **A promise for those who call upon God in difficult circumstances:**

Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the prison, saying, "Thus says the Lord who made it, the

Lord who formed it to establish it (the Lord is His name): Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”
(Jeremiah 33:1-3)

PROMISES AND PRINCIPLES OF GUIDANCE

The following verses contain the word *guide* which can be mined for promises and principles in guidance:

- **God may not guide you via the easiest route or the most logical way:**

After Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not guide them to the highway that goes through the land of the P'lishtim, because it was close by — God thought that the people, upon seeing war, might change their minds and return to Egypt.
(Exodus 13:17, CJB)

- **We should never want to “go it alone”:**

And Moses said to the Lord, See, you say to me, “Be this people’s guide on their journey,” but you have not made clear to me whom you will send with me. But you have said, “I have knowledge of you by name, and you have grace in my eyes.”
(Exodus 33:12, BBE)

- **When He guides us, there may be risks and hardships:**

“Who was your guide through that great and cruel waste, where there were poison-snakes and scorpions and a dry land without water; who made water come out of the hard rock for you.” (Deuteronomy 8:15, BBE)

- **Looking back, we will always see His faithfulness:**

“And he has been our guide to this place, and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Deuteronomy 26:9, BBE)

- **He will guide us in such a way that we will not need much:**

“For forty years I have been your guide through the waste land: your clothing has not become old on your backs, or your shoes on your feet.” (Deuteronomy 29:5, BBE)

- **He will show us that He is all we really need:**

So the Lord only was his guide, no other god was with him. (Deuteronomy 32:12, BBE)

- **He will guide us from our youth:**

Then David the king went in and took his seat before the Lord, and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have been my guide till now?" (2 Samuel 7:18, BBE)

- **To always needy of the Lord is a sign of strength, not of weakness:**

So Jotham became strong, because in all his ways he made the Lord his guide. (2 Chronicles 27:6)

- **He will never forsake us:**

"You, in Your great compassion, did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, to guide them on their way, nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go." (Nehemiah 9:19, NAS)

- **He is a Father who provides whatever we need:**

"For I was cared for by God as by a father from my earliest days; he was my guide from my mother's womb!" (Job 31:18)

- **Being honest through and through pays off:**

The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. (Proverbs 11:3, NKJV)

- **The best guidance begins on the inside:**

If your spiritual nature is your guide, you are not subject to Moses' laws. (Galatians 5:18, GW)

- **Another nature on the inside will also try to lead you:**

When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. (Philippians 2:3, NCV)

- **Your flesh cannot manufacture the same kind of peace that Christ gives:**

The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15, GNT)



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