

# Seek His Presence Continually (1 Chr 16.7-13)

## Redeemer Values | 2023

### I. INTRODUCTION: SEEKING TO EMBODY OUR VALUES

- A. At the heart of all our pursuits must be an understanding of what values *motivate* us to action. Intentionally defining our motivational values helps us better organize our labors in a consistent and specific way over time.
- B. We all possess a value system internally that gives shape to how we seek to orient our resources (time, energy, money, etc.) and what we hope to achieve in our lives. However, many times our motivational values are not understood (we do not spend time thinking on them or intentionally defining them), or there is a discrepancy between our *ideal* values and our *real* values.
- C. Spiritual families must work to embody a ***shared value system***. If this does not happen, everyone will be left seeking to apply their best judgment of how to respond in specific situations (i.e., everyone does what is right in their own eyes). Over time, this leads to the experience of drag and dilution of potency and effectiveness.

<sup>18</sup>Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint (Prov 29.18)

<sup>26</sup>So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air (1 Cor 9.26)

- D. As a church, our motivational values should set the trajectory for our labors, our desires, and our pursuits both individually and corporately. Motivational values give birth to processes, activity, and focus. Said differently, our motivational values must determine our ***commitments*** (what we say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to).
- E. It is my desire that our church be more than a group of people who believe the same things. I long for our church to be a place where we ***love the same things*** and therefore pursue a common vision with focus, determination, patience, and faithfulness.

### II. GOVERNING VISION FOR REDEEMER FELLOWSHIP

- A. The easiest way to describe (envision) the type of church that I believe God is calling us to be is with the statement: ***a praying church***.
- B. In 2010 I personally sensed the Lord commission me to lead in a context that sought to bring together two powerful and important movements that are present in the body of Christ:
  - 1. ***Prayer movement***: a movement of communities committed to worship and prayer and the establishing of God’s purposes *through* the intentional and faithful pursuit of these means.
  - 2. ***Church planting movement***: a movement of churches committed to gospel proclamation, discipleship, and multiplication of churches.
- C. I believe that God desires to give his people a “new wineskin” of *how* we live together as his people. Part of the expression of this is to seek to build a church that is intentionally focused and ordered around seeing these two “streams” brought together.
- D. Although most churches would agree with the importance of prayer in the life of the followers of Jesus (and the corporate body), many churches do not *embody* this reality through their commitments (how they structure their time, resources, staffing, training, etc.).
- E. I desire for our church to be intentionally built on the foundation of worship and prayer as the *first pursuit* of our life together — and the *primary way* we seek to establish and empower the ministry of this church.

### III. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

- A. The first of our motivations together as a church is the desire to be a people of God's presence. This encompasses the motivation that lies at the heart of every pursuit, allotment of resource, and ministry in the life of our church.

"Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually (I Chr 16.11)

- B. Because of this, we desire to be *intentional* and *consistent* in pursuing the presence of God as the ***foundational reality*** of our church's life together.
- C. This is not simply speaking of a theological truth, but rather this speaks of a reality that gives shape to *how we organize* our time, resources, programming, staffing, etc.
- D. Our ministry is motivated ***from*** the presence of God (its source) and ***toward*** the presence of God (its goal).
- E. In Psalm 27, David outlines a focused life that is oriented around one desire (motivation) that expresses itself in one pursuit (activity). This desire is to see and experience God's presence.

<sup>4</sup>One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I will seek after; 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 inquire in his temple (Ps 27.4)

- F. What we see in this verse is that the ***desire*** of David to experience God's presence manifested itself in concrete ***activities*** (behaviors, choices, etc.). In other words, this motivation affected David's life in its reality — it affected his schedule, his resources, his commitments (what he said 'yes' and 'no' to).
- G. God has promised to give to those who ask, seek, and knock. This is not a promise related to receiving "things" but related to growing in *knowing him* and *seeing his kingdom expressed in this earth*.

<sup>9</sup>And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Luke 11.10)

<sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14.13-14)

### IV. UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

- A. ***God's omnipresence***: This speaks of the reality that God is in all places at all times. This does not speak of *experiencing* God's presence, but rather of the objective reality that there is no place in all of creation where God's presence is not a reality.

<sup>7</sup>Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup>even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. <sup>11</sup>If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," <sup>12</sup>even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. (Ps 139.7-12)

- B. ***God's covenantal presence***: This speaks of the reality that at the new birth each Christian is given the full measure of God's presence by the gift of the Spirit. This is an objective truth whether or not it is experienced in the life of a believer.

<sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1.13-14)

- C. **God's ecclesial presence:** This speaks of the truth that God is uniquely present in the midst of the gathering of the saints. This may or may not be experienced by individuals within the gathering — but is an objective reality.

<sup>19</sup>Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

<sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. (Matt 18.19-20)

- D. **God's manifest presence:** This speaks of the specific ways (some 'natural' and some 'dramatic') that God's presence is *experienced* by individuals. This can be experienced by both believers and unbelievers alike. Believers are given specific means to *more regularly* experience tokens of God's manifest presence.
1. When we speak of "Presence" as a motivational value of our church, we are speaking of the reality of seeking the manifest presence of God as the people of God.
  2. This is why the Scriptures consistently exhort God's people to *seek the Lord*. Although the theological reality of God's presence is *secured* for God's people, we are to orient our lives around a *living experience* of God's presence.

## V. A THEOLOGY OF PURSUIT

- A. At the heart of Biblical Christianity is a movement towards *pursuing* God empowered by the Spirit.
- B. Our greatest destiny is to grow in our knowledge of God (intimacy with him) that comes through the power of the indwelling Spirit. God has (through redemption planned, purchased, and applied — see Eph 1.3-14) brought us to the place where we can grow in the experience of his Triune life. Although this is the eternal destiny of each believer (to be experienced in fullness), there are elements of this that can be experienced in this life.

<sup>1</sup>Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent... <sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me... (John 17.1-3, 24)

<sup>5</sup>hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom 5.5)

- C. Often times Christians have difficulty understanding the place of pursuit in the life of a Christian. We often struggle to understand the relationship of our pursuit of God to the free gift of God's grace given to us in Christ Jesus. While we *cannot* earn anything in salvation, the grace of God propels us into deeper measures of relationship with him. This is what we were ultimately created for.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this [resurrection] or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus... <sup>17</sup>Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Phil 3.12-14, 17)

<sup>8</sup>You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, Lord, do I seek." (Ps 27.8)

<sup>20</sup>But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup>keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 20-21)

- D. It is clear from the Scripture that the pursuit of Christ is always and only rooted in the free gift of salvation (our justification) before him. We must experience the presence and power of the Spirit in pursuing relationship with Christ not as the means to attain right standing with him but rooted in the right standing we have in him.

## VI. PURSUING GOD'S PRESENCE: WORSHIP AND PRAYER

- A. One of the primary means that God has given to his people to *seek his face* (presence) is through the avenues of worship and prayer.
- B. The acts of worship and prayer (both individually and corporately) necessitate that we are a people of God's word.
  - 1. **Worship**: agreeing with the truth of *who God is* as he has revealed himself in his word.
  - 2. **Prayer**: agreeing with what God has *promised to do* as revealed in his holy word.
- C. The prophet Isaiah declared there would be a day when God would take those who were far off and disqualified for inclusion in his house and bring them into his presence. In that day he promised that the identity of his people would be a house of prayer.

<sup>6</sup>“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—<sup>7</sup>these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isa 56.6-7)

- 1. God declares that any and all who would join themselves to his covenant by faith will be given a promise: that they would be brought to the holy mountain of the Lord and be made **joyful in his house of prayer**.
  - 2. He then moves to demonstrate that **one of the primary identities of his people** (not the only one) is to be a house of prayer. Jesus emphasizes this in his ministry when he quotes this promise in Matthew 21.13.
  - 3. To be part of our identity (both individually and corporately) means that this demonstrates where we are to find life, dignity, and meaning as we partner with Jesus in the place of worship and prayer.
- D. In the New Covenant, all believers are brought into God's house and built up together as his holy temple (the place where he dwells). Now, in Christ, each believer is called into priestly **ministry to the Lord**.

<sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2.19-21)

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession (1 Pet 2.9)

<sup>9</sup>Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup>and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth (Rev 5.9-10)

- E. Maintaining a culture built around worship and prayer will take intentional time, energy, and resources.

<sup>1</sup>Remember, O LORD, in David's favor, all the hardships he endured, <sup>2</sup>how he swore to the LORD and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, <sup>3</sup>“I will not enter my house or get into my bed, <sup>4</sup>I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, <sup>5</sup>until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” (Ps 132)

- 1. It will require an intentional giving of our “firstfruits” (time, energy, resources) to building and cultivating contexts for regular worship and prayer. Our pursuit of this together must become a *foundational reality* (‘sacred’) as represented in our schedules, pursuits, etc.
  - 2. It will require consistent repurposing, re-envisioning, instruction, patience, and faithfulness over seasons that appear to be “unsuccessful” or difficult.