

40 Days of Prayer
Three Lakes Evangelical Free church
Day 11

Praying For the Healing of America, Pt. 4
2 Chronicles 7:11-14

There is a much-loved verse in Psalm 42 that has inspired much devotional fervor over the generations.

¹As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
(Ps. 42:1-2 NIV)

The psalmist desired God, thirsted after him, and sought him, like a deer panting for the refreshment of water after days without a drink, parched and weak from raging thirst, longing for the cool streams running from snow-covered mountains. This is the heart of one who seeks the face of God. When God spoke to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14, his promise was that his people would hear from heaven. God would heal their land when they humbled themselves and prayed and when they would “seek my face.” Here is an expression that deserves special attention. Today and tomorrow I want to discuss just what it means to seek the face of God.

I think it is important to note the object of this search. Sometimes we think that, when we seek the Lord, we are seeking his favor or his blessings or his guidance. But this expression is much more than that. This expression points us to a heartfelt search for God himself! Certainly God does not have a face. This is a description that describes his presence. It is like the child of a soldier stationed in a faraway land who wants more than a letter from daddy, more than a conversation over the phone when he only hears his voice. The next time you see a family reunion when a child runs to the arms of her soldier dad, notice she takes her hands and strokes daddy’s beard and put her cheeks next to his. They want to feel his presence by “experiencing” his face. God’s “face” is the great good sought after, the divine presence requested, and the intimate conversation encountered. Listen to a string of verses that paints this vivid picture:

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. (Ps. 63:1 NIV)
Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. (Ps. 73:25 NIV)
I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land. (Ps. 143:6 NIV)

Seeking God in this way implies that God has been away. Even though he is always present, he has withdrawn the manifestation of his “face”, he has hidden himself, spiritually withdrawn from us and, as it were, shut up the heavens. Isn’t that what we are experiencing in our land? For the people of God, it seems spiritually lonely in America. Our response must be more than a casual prayer before we sit down to a four-course meal. Seeking the face of God is something we do in addition to prayer. Seeking the

face of God is a concerted effort to prevail on God to return and to grant us a fresh manifestation of himself to our land.

In the immediate context of this promise to Solomon, repentance plays a huge role in seeking God's face, a concept I will discuss later this week. In the coming days during our *40 Days of Prayer* campaign, I will be referring to many facets of prayer that might unpack this concept further, describing how prayer is incorporated in the other spiritual disciplines, such as meditation, the reading and study of Scripture, and fasting. These are all elements of seeking the "face" of God that are in addition to prayer, while at the same time, are enveloped by prayer. I hope you stay tuned for the entire series.

1. Read Psalm 27:4. How does this verse describe seeking the face of God?
2. Read Philippians 3:8 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. What is the face of God?
3. Ask in your heart, "Would you be happy in heaven if Christ were not there? (See *The Gospel Is God* by John Piper.) Pray for that all-encompassing thirst for God, to experience Jesus and his presence in your life, and to know the power of the Holy Spirit as you walk by faith every moment of your day.