

The Fruit of Pursuing God All Day Long

Psalm 55

Today as we wrap up a four-week series from the psalms on pursuing God all day long, I want to challenge us to remember the “point” of what we’re doing. In the Christian life we always have to guard against the tendency to forget why we’re doing what we’re doing. This is especially true when it comes to the spiritual disciplines associated with seeking God “all day long.”

If you want an example of people who completely missed the point, you don’t have to look any farther than the Pharisees. They were the best at the *externals* of seeking God: they said their prayers, they studied the Scriptures, they observed fasts, they gave to the poor, etc; but their disciplines didn’t bear good fruit in their lives. They weren’t full of love, joy, peace, and patience; they didn’t persuade people to turn back to God. They were mean, judgmental, hypocritical people who led the charge to have God’s one and only Son crucified. The Pharisees demonstrate that it’s possible to do all the “right things” when it comes to seeking God, but miss the point of it all.

Assuming that none of us want to end up like them, let’s consider several Scriptures that emphasize the benefit or the fruit of pursuing God all day long. Keeping in mind the tangible benefits of seeking God throughout the day can keep our hearts in the right place and can provide needed motivation to continue.

If you’ve been with us for the past three messages, you may remember that we began in Psalm 1 talking about “the life that all of us want” – a life characterized by strength, fruitfulness, and faithfulness even in the tough times. We saw that that type of life comes from delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating day and night. The following week we looked at Psalm 63 and seeking God at night. Last week we discussed anticipating God in the morning from Psalm 5; David decided ahead of time, “Lord, in the morning you will hear my voice.”

Today, let’s begin by looking at one more example from the psalms in which David describes how he pursues God “all day long.” We’ll notice the fruit of this commitment in his life. After considering Psalm 55 we’ll look at a couple of other Scriptures that emphasize the fruit of pursuing God all day long.

Perseverance and trusting God through trials. (Psalm 55) This is another psalm of lament. David is lamenting how his enemy was doing everything within his power to make his life miserable. We won’t look at the entire psalm, but we’ll consider enough of it to get the gist of what was happening.

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
2 Give heed to me and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,
3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the pressure of the wicked;
For they bring down trouble upon me
And in anger they bear a grudge against me.

Most of us can relate to the experience of another person “bringing down trouble upon” us and “in anger bearing a grudge” against us. It’s an oppressive thing to know that there is somebody out there who is actively against you. It’s not the type of thing that you can put out of your mind and go along your “merry way.” David certainly couldn’t:

4 My heart is in anguish within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.
6 I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
7 "Behold, I would wander far away,
I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.
8 "I would hasten to my place of refuge
From the stormy wind and tempest."

Again, most of us can relate to David’s daydreaming. . . “If I had wings, I’d fly far away from my enemies and my troubles. And I’d stay there for a long time.” Sometimes, like David, we just want to escape. In verses 9 through 11 David prays for God to confuse his enemies and “divide their tongues” – just like at the tower of Babel. Then in verses 12-14 David reveals something that clues us into the intensity behind his anguish. It turns out that David’s “enemy” was actually a friend/companion who had turned on him.

12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,
Then I could bear it;
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,
Then I could hide myself from him.
13 But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend;
14 We who had sweet fellowship together
Walked in the house of God in the throng.

David’s “enemy” was at one time a trusted companion, a familiar friend, a fellow worshipper in the house of God. There are few things that hurt as deeply as betrayal. David said that if it were an average, garden-variety enemy, he could handle it. But a friend who’d turned against him was almost more than he could bear.

In verse 15 David prays against his enemies (now plural) in a way that might seem “un-Christian” to us (given that Jesus said we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us). We find other “imprecatory” outbursts in the psalms (e.g., 139:19-22); other psalmists express a fierce desire for God to judge their enemies (who are presumably also God’s enemies). But there are no disclaimers or apologies or explanations; these prayers are simply recorded. I think we should read them in context and feel their honesty and passion. Here is verse 15:

15 Let death come deceitfully upon them;
Let them go down alive to Sheol,
For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.

We could accuse David of being incredibly unspiritual and vindictive and all sorts of things. But sometimes this is where our praying has to begin – with expressions that reflect what is really going on in our hearts. I can think of a few times when I’ve prayed imprecatory prayers. It actually feels pretty good . . . at first. But God never lets me stay there. He always reminds me that Jesus died for me when I was His enemy; ultimately that softens my heart and my prayers.

Keeping in mind David’s circumstances, let’s notice David’s commitment in verse 16 and 17. Here we see that David decided ahead of time to pray repeatedly about his situation:

16 As for me, I shall call upon God,
And the LORD will save me.
17 Evening and morning and at noon,
I will complain and murmur,
And He will hear my voice.

David didn’t take for granted that God was his Protector. He understood what James wrote centuries later in James 4:2 – that sometimes we “do not have” because we “do not ask.” He understood that God has ordained prayer as a primary means of accomplishing His will. He invites us to want what He wants and then ask Him to do that very thing.

David’s commitment was that he would pray in the evening, in the morning, and at noon – three times a day. Actually, David said he would “call upon the Lord” and that he would “complain and murmur.” When you complain and murmur to other people, it’s called whining; if you complain and murmur to others too much, you’ll end up bitter and hardened. But when you complain and murmur to God, it’s called prayer. And when you complain and murmur to God, you end up humbled and sensitive to His leading. God may confirm that your complaints are legitimate; or He may let you know that you lack love or patience. But bringing your complaints to God is the critical thing.

The thing that strikes me about David’s commitment to pray evening, morning, and noon is that at the end of the day, he knew that he had trusted God that day; he knew that he hadn’t relied on himself or his own resources. That’s perseverance – not merely “making it” but trusting God in the midst of tough circumstances. Knowing that you’re actively trusting God brings a type of confidence and peace that nothing else does.

There may be times when you want to adopt the same commitment that David had. You may conclude, “I’m in the midst of a situation that is so troubling (or so urgent or filled with so much opportunity) that I am going to bring it before God three times a day. I am going to pray before going to bed, when I get up in the morning, and when I eat lunch.” If you do that, you will know that you’re trusting God and not yourself. And you will give God the opportunity to do in your heart what needs to be done – especially if you are saturating your heart/mind with Scripture (meditating “day and night”).

There are other examples in Scripture of this commitment to pray repeatedly through the day. In Psalm 119:164 we read:

164 Seven times a day I praise You,

Because of Your righteous ordinances.

In Acts 10, Peter went up on a housetop to pray “about the sixth hour.” While he was praying, God gave him the vision of a sheet full of unclean animals, signifying that no thing and no person is unclean. Even though he was a follower of Christ, he still followed the Jewish pattern of praying at set times through the day. The pattern of praying at “fixed hours” (and even praying from a book of prayers) has a long, rich history; many have found such a structure to be a great benefit. [For a history of fixed-hour prayer:

http://www.explorefaith.org/prayer_meditation/prayer/fixed/a_brief_history.php]

It’s interesting that the New Testament says surprisingly little about how often and how long we should pray in the new covenant. Jesus didn’t command, “You have to pray 3x a day. . .” He did say, “**When** you pray. . .” And Paul wrote, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In Paul’s mind we should never say “amen” in the sense of “I’m through praying for the morning/afternoon/day.” We should remain in conversation with God throughout the day. Again, we don’t “pray without ceasing” just because we’re supposed to; the fruit of praying and meditating throughout the day is *perseverance* and *trusting God* in the midst of tough circumstances. That’s a key component of the type of life we all want.

I want to look at a couple of other Scriptures that highlight other types of fruit that God produces in our lives when we pursue Him all day long through prayer and through Scripture.

Influence in the lives of others (Deuteronomy 6) In Deuteronomy 6 Moses is challenging the people to love God with everything they’ve got.

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

Instead of an external, superficial experience of Scripture, the words of Moses were to be on their hearts. They were supposed to internalize what he had said to the point that his words occupied a place in the deepest part of their being. This is what we’ve been talking about throughout this series: meditating on Scripture, mulling it over and over until it “owns” us.

Notice the application and the fruit of having truths about God on their hearts:

7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Moses tells parents to be “diligent” in teaching their children; it’s not supposed to be an afterthought. It requires effort and intentionality. And it is supposed to be an ongoing conversation throughout the day. “You shall talk of them” in all sorts of life situations. If the Scriptures are on the hearts of the parents and if they are meditating day and night, they can talk at the dinner table about how they’re experiencing God. You don’t necessarily have to plan this out; you just have to share your life. The same is true when you take walks and when you tuck your children in bed. Moses is talking about having a rather comprehensive influence in the lives of your children. That’s the fruit of intentional teaching and of thousands of informal conversations which relate Scripture to life.

When you think about it, this type of ongoing conversation isn't really possible unless the truth is "on our hearts." You have to be "conversant" with the Scriptures if you're going to have "conversations" about it. That's the only way you're able to weave the truths of God into everyday experience all day long. The Scriptures have to have a prominent place in the parents' lives before it can have a prominent place in their parenting.

Of course, you and I can have this type of influence in all sorts of relationships. Paul suggests this in Colossians 3:16 when he says:

16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Paul says that we can "teach and admonish" one another – even in the context of singing/worship – when the word of Christ richly dwells within us. The prospect of our words (whether spoken or sung) teaching and/or admonishing others should be a powerful motivation for us to "delight in the law of the Lord" and "meditate day and night."

If you are the type of person who's not really sure that you have anything to offer others, consider this point carefully. You may need to confess to God a lack of faith in His ability to take His Word and write it on your heart (Jeremiah 31), transforming your thinking and speaking and acting. You'll be amazed at what God can do through you if you saturate your heart/mind with His truth "all day long." Don't think I'm only talking about grown-ups and "leaders"; I'm talking about men and women, college students, high school, elementary-aged children. God wants you to be an influence in the lives of others whatever your age or stage of life. I believe that we all want the same thing; we want to have a significant influence in the lives of the people around us. That's a key component of the life we all want.

Obedience (Joshua 1) This is an obvious fruit of pursuing God all day long, but sometimes we lose sight of it. After the death of Moses, Joshua had the responsibility to lead the people into the Promised Land. This is God's challenge to Joshua in Joshua 1:8:

8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Here the fruit of pursuing God all day long is obedience. Joshua was to "meditate on [the law/instruction of God] day and night. He was supposed to ponder it and mull it over in his mind and on his lips all day long *so that* he might actually "do" what it said. A primary goal of internalizing Scripture is obedience.

James emphasized the same thing in James 1. He says that unless you actually "do" what you find in Scripture, it's a rather useless activity. He says it's like looking at yourself in the mirror, seeing something that needs attention, and doing nothing about it. By contrast, James advocates receiving the word in humility in such a way that it has an impact in our lives. Eventually, it's not enough simply to be able to say, "I had a quiet time today . . ." Eventually we need to be able to say, "I met with God today. And He continued writing His Word on my heart. And I

couldn't stop thinking about it all day long. And it had an impact in what I thought and said and did."

The prospect of actually experiencing the power of the Word should motivate us to internalize the Scriptures all day long. Again, such obedience is a key component of the life we all want.

Today we've given a brief overview (a sample really) of the fruit of seeking God all day long: perseverance and trusting God, influence in the lives of others, and obedience. The Scriptures we've considered give us a vision for our lives. When we seek God all day long – through the Scriptures and through prayer and through simply walking with God – He transforms our lives and gives us the type of life we all want: a life of strength and fruitfulness and faithfulness.

That's what we saw three weeks ago in Psalm 1:1-3:

1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.