

It Is Time To Seek The Lord



PROMISES FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THE LORD

By Penn Clark

Seeking the Lord means taking time to know His will, to hear from Him, and gaining His perspective on the issues we face. Knowing His will has never been more necessary in these last days—which are filled with all kinds of social pressures, upheaval, dramatic change, and constant confusion. The prophet Hosea spoke to the children of Israel during a similar time in their days, telling them that 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 gave clues as to what seeking the Lord involved. For starters, it was a time to turn around, refocusing on Him, a kind of do-over. We all need to do that from time to time. He described this as breaking up the fallow ground, which describes a field that had once been fruitful, but had become neglected. This could have happened inadvertently or intentionally by letting it rest. When it was time to restore the field to usefulness. Fallow ground is often overrun with various crops and weeds. It would need to be cut down, cleaned up, and plowed under again. The hard

ground would need to be broken up, turned over, and any rocks removed once again. All of this would take time and effort.

In terms of our spiritual lives, we need to return to the Lord, giving time and attention to the neglected areas of our lives. It is time to sow new seed, doing the things we know to be right before the Lord. Sowing is a repeated action of doing a bunch of little things. 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. You don't start with something big (like a forty-day fast). You can sow toward a longer fast by fasting a bunch of little things at first. Do the things you know are right like getting back to church, worshipping giving, praying, and fasting. It is important to put yourself in a place where God can speak to you, like going to church, and meditating upon His Word. Open the Bible often, expecting Him to guide you in it and to make it come alive to you. This is like putting seed in the ground. We need to do this so we can reap the kind of life we are longing for. It is the truth that sets us free and His word that changes us.

When the Lord spoke to Israel through the prophet Hosea, He invited 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 will help inspire us to seek the Lord afresh, trusting Him to 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 press in to know Him by experience again, and He will respond to us as sure as the coming dawn, and as the rains of early spring and autumn, which are sent to 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, embracing both His mercy and judgment, and wait continually before upon your God with eager 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 you how to put an end to your inconsistencies which always lead to spiritual regression. I will demonstrate My love for you, by proving to you that I am no longer angry for what you have done.'"

Finally, Hosea gave 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 the dew upon you, and you shall grow like a lily on the surface, but underneath you shall have roots like a cedar of Lebanon."

GOOD REASONS TO SEEK THE LORD

Hosea said it was time to seek God (10:12). How can you tell 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 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 you need understanding: Whenever we need to figure out what is happening, we need to seek the Lord:

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

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 a nearby nation heard that God had destroyed Jericho and that they were next on His list, so they went to the Israelites and pretended they had come from a far country. They put on old clothes and worn-out sandals, carried old wine skins, and had 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 to protect the very people they were supposed to eliminate. This reflected badly on their leadership (Joshua 9:18).

When things go wrong: Another example of when it is time to seek the Lord was when the Children of Israel were defeated at the battle for Ai. It was a small city they should have easily conquered, but instead, their losses were 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 on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening. God revealed that out of some two and a half million people the blame rested upon one man. Achan 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) which showed them He saw everything.

When you need direction: Another time they needed to seek the Lord was in Judges 20:18, when 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 what I call *holy discontentment*. This is where I feel miserable, unsettled, restless, and longing for change, but it is a good thing. I used to think any discontentment 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 with something spiritual. Perhaps 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 to do something else. If you long to break free from where you are now, the solution might not be taking a cross-country motorcycle trip; perhaps it is the Lord stirring you up so He can take you to another level. You will not know unless you ask Him. Discontentment can be a good thing, as long as it leads to seeking God for what has for you.

HOW TO SEEK THE LORD?

When Israel was surrounded by menacing armies, they would 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 or how to do it. We also need to hear from Him during our own conflicts. This 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 is 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 open our spiritual receptivity. It is like putting our antenna up to receive more clearly 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 everything up.
- **Get quiet:** Being still, slowing down our busy minds, and shutting out the distractions are basic tools that help us as we seek the Lord. He will not compete with all 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 the problems. As we look to Jesus, we should ask, "What would You say to me, right now?" We also need to take our eyes off our circumstances, no matter what they are saying, and no matter how awful things look to our natural eyes. Keep your eyes on Jesus. You can do this in prayer and in reading how He responded to the problems He faced in the Four Gospels.
- **Become childlike:** The goal is to go back to our childlike trust. This is often evident by the way we stay close to Him and 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. I would tell Him my problems as if He did not know, and during this conversation, I often found the answers or direction I needed.

HE WILL RESPOND

In Jeremiah 29:11-13, when the Lord invited the Children of Israel to come back to Him, they were reluctant to do this 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.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Notice how He assured them of His heart toward them, that it would lead to their being able to pray and seek the Lord. It helps to know He is for us, not against us.

The Lord never tells us to seek Him without giving us the incentive to do it. This will give us the resolve to do it with all our hearts, saying, “I not coming up for air until I have what I am looking for.”

When Jesus taught us in Matthew 7:7-8 to ask, seek, and know and that we would receive, find, and have a new door opened for us.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Usually, when it is time to seek the Lord, we are coming from a feeling 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. Notice how emphatic Jesus was, saying if we take the first step He would respond. He promised that it would result in finding what we were 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 because of my seeking the Lord.

PROMISES THAT BUILD ASSURANCE

- **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)

- **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)

- **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 Jecholiah 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 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)

- **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 when we are looking to the Lord for 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)

- **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:**

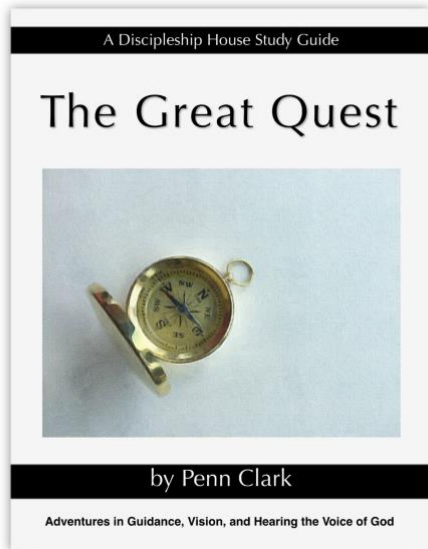
The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15, GNT)

I hope these promises give you something to stand on as you set out to seek the Lord. You can also stand upon James 1:5, where God promised Christians that if they asked in faith, they would receive an abundance of wisdom, without God saying, "You made your bed, now sleep in it!" Amen!

THE GREAT QUEST

Adventures in Guidance, Vision, and Hearing the Voice of God

Like everyone else, I need a good quest to motivate me. We all need something to shoot for and the more challenging, the better. We all want to leave our mark, carve our niche, and stand out from the herd. Quests come in all shapes and sizes.



Not all of them require physical skill. Some are more inward inclined, such as finding true love, being loved, being accepted, or just fitting in. Others are of the literary variety or those who want to solve medical mysteries. Some are financial, educational, and social in nature, but there are some quests that are completely spiritual in nature. Evangelist Dwight L. Moody has been often quoted as having said: “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God’s help, I aim to be that man.” Now that is a quest!

In this study guide, I will introduce to you some truly great quests that are worth giving yourselves too. These are goals that will always hold your interest, will change your life, and perhaps even the lives of others – while providing all the adventure you could ever ask for.

- What if our aim was to become the most loving person possible? What if you were to make knowing and experiencing and sharing God’s love our great quest in life?
- What if our aim was to learn to hear from Jesus more regularly? Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice*” (John 10:27). This not only shows that it’s possible, but it should be a normal part of our relationship with Him, our Pastor.
- In this study I will show how I come to believe that God wrote out His will for our lives, before we were— in fact, before anything was. Our life-long quest is to find out what He wrote about us. I believe He has a distinct purpose for our lives, which He wants to reveal to us, as we seek Him for it.

I have discovered that choosing to please the Lord in all of my decisions, both big and small, has resulted in my growing in my knowledge of Him, which always causes me to have to learn to how to walk in love more deeply, and hearing His voice more often, and discover more of His purpose for my life. All these came out of my effort to please Him in everything. It is my hope that this study guide will inspire you to do this same, making it your great quest in life so you can discover the most important things in life.

This 8.5 X 11 book is beautifully printed and is about 100-pages in length and is also available as an eBook.

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Edited by Edie Mourey and Heather Clark.

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