

Program Transcripts

July 2022



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

July 2022

Topics subject to change without notice

JULY 3 – THE WAY TO HEALING

Because our culture lacks faith and have turned to relativism, we are living with great confusion and chaos. What we need is to return to our roots in God and His word to bring healing to our land.

JULY 10 – WORSHIP IN SONG

God desires our worship in song to glorify Him be done in spirit and in truth. How we worship God in song matters to God, and it should matter to us, if we love Him and want to please Him.

JULY 17 – HELP ME PRAY

The disciples once asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray. We too need to improve our prayer lives and draw closer to the God of heaven. The Scriptures urge us to pray more often and more effectively.

JULY 24 – GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

The Pew Research Center says more than half of Americans say they pray every day. We pray to God but wonder whether God will answer our prayers and how He will answer. This lesson discusses how God answers prayer.

JULY 31 – KEEPING OUR ZEAL

Some live the Christian life to the fullest, while others drift aimlessly. Some passionately pursue their faith, while others remain lukewarm. In this lesson we'll discover how can we keep our passion and zeal for God alive.

The Way to Healing

Our culture lacks faith and fills itself with great confusion and chaos. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." What can we do to make a difference? Well stay tuned and we'll hear what God says.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We listen to God, because He speaks the truth to us, because He wants what is best for us, and because He truly loves us. Sadly, many in our culture have stopped searching God's word for moral and spiritual truth. They've relied on feelings and faulty opinions that reflect their own desires and have ignored God's time-tested wisdom. We appreciate your taking time to hear this message today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Praising God, Paul wrote in Romans 11:33 to 36, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." It shouldn't surprise us that God is truly wise beyond all we think or imagine. There is no better source of truth, no better source of history, or of life than the Bible.

You can search the world over, and there is nothing that surpasses Scripture in purity, in grandeur, or in honesty. From Scripture we learn the character of our holy God who doesn't compromise His morality but is full of love and compassion. From the beginning, God wanted to bless all people with a better way of life and eternal life. Sending His Son Jesus into this world to forgive our sins and giving us His word helps us to know His love and His ways. If we forget Him or forsake His ways, we choose a life of hardship and confusion. If we pay close attention to God and follow Him, we'll find peace and eternal life.

When Solomon finished building the temple, he prayed to God and asked Him to be kind to the people even whenever they went against Him, to be forgiving to them and heal the land. In 2 Chronicles 7, verses 12 to 14, we have God's answer. "Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.'" Oh, I wonder how much healing our land needs?

Let's pray. "Heavenly Father we humble ourselves and we seek Your face. Father, help us to turn from our wicked ways, to love You and to serve You always, and to obey Your will. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

In 2 Chronicles chapter 6, King Solomon led a lengthy prayer on his knees before the altar of God in the presence of all the assembly of Israel as he was dedicating the temple. Solomon knew there is no God like the God of Israel, "keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart." He knew the God of heaven would repay the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head and would vindicate the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness. He understood that Israel could be defeated by their enemies if they sinned against God and prayed they could repent and be forgiven. He knew a lack of rain, a famine, a pestilence, a plague, or a captivity could afflict the people. He asked God to hear their prayers when they repent and plead with Him to be restored.

God answered Solomon's prayer in the night and said in 2 Chronicles 7:13 to 14, "When I shut up the heavens so that there's no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Now we're not national Israel of the first covenant in the days of Solomon, but there's a message here for us. We shouldn't imagine that God is blind and deaf; He knows our lives, our morals, or our hearts. If we forsake Him, He sees and knows. Isaiah 65:11 to 12 says to the disobedient Israel, "But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you didn't answer; when I spoke, you didn't listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes and chose what I did not delight in."

Though we today do not serve idols as they did in ancient times, I fear we choose to follow foolish and destructive paths today. Jeremiah spoke of Judea in his day in Jeremiah 2 and verse 13, "for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." And I fear we today have rebelled against God and listened to godless counsel, which are our broken cisterns that can hold no water.

We're truly in a moral and spiritual mess, and our rejection of God has created for us hardship and chaos. We have troubles on every side. Ancient Judah thought the answers were in false, man-made religions, which afforded them their pleasures but made them slaves.

If we wonder what can we do, the answer is in the Bible where it's always been. God's answer to Solomon provides the answer for healing in our land, our homes, and our lives.

First, we must humble ourselves. James 4:7 to 10 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." God will not accept us if we're prideful and full of ourselves. We must humble our hearts and submit to God. And that means we voluntarily subject ourselves to His will and His commands. We need to purify our hearts rather than be double-minded. We can't be friends with the wickedness that's in this world and remain friends with God. Until we consciously humble our hearts, we can't please God. And those who boast in themselves will never stand before God. We can't boast about doing things our own way (now I know that's popular)! But that's not bowing our knee before the Father.

Our God is holy! Psalm 5 and verse 4 says, "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you." If it were not for the grace of our loving God, none of us could stand before God. Because our robes are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, we have hope of salvation. When you consider God, and what He has done for us, it should humble our hearts. We should indeed be grateful for His love, His compassion, and His daily care.

Psalm 103:10 to 12 says, "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us." Now realizing this, shouldn't we humble ourselves in love and appreciation? The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself. Philippians 2:5 to 8 says, "Have this attitude (this mindset) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, didn't regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Second, we must pray and seek God's face. David charged Solomon at the close of his life with these words in 1 Chronicles 28:9, "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever." Sadly, we seek out everyone's opinion but fail to seek God's wisdom. We fail to come to Him for answers to our concerns.

God has spoken on so many issues, but our society closes its heart and ears. God Himself once asked the nation Judah, "What injustice your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became empty?" (Jeremiah 2 and verse 5). Today, if God doesn't agree with what we want or believe, we shut Him out and seek out emptiness. Some would rather believe a lie than listen to the Lord. We foolishly think we can reject the will of God by redefining the most basic things of life. Our definitions won't change God's definitions. And just because one can do something legally doesn't mean that God accepts it morally and spiritually.

If there were ever a time to pray and seek God's face, it's now! If there were ever a time to bow the knee and humble the heart, it's now! I want to challenge you to pray humbly and fervently. Get on your knees! Pray every day that our nation will open our eyes to the truth and turn from foolishness and wickedness. Pray every day that people will revive their faith and their love for God. Pray every day that people will open their Bibles to seek the truth. Devote yourselves to praying to God, and that God will open a door for the word of truth, rather than for popular babbling of false religions.

Let's pray that God will meet our needs. We can pray for peace, for our daily bread, for healthy lives, for comfort for those who mourn, and for the forgiveness of our sins. God is listening to our prayers, when we humble ourselves, when we listen to His word, and we seek His will. And we must listen to God, if we wish God to listen to us. Seeking His face means paying close attention to what He says. Hebrews 2:1 to 3 says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,"

Third, we must turn from our wicked ways. The idea of turning from sin in repentance has often been forgotten. Many pulpits these days will speak loud and long on grace but hardly whisper about repentance. If your preacher rarely or never speaks about repentance, he needs to repent himself. If your church leaders teach repentance is unnecessary, they don't know God. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Paul told the philosophers at Mars Hill in Acts 17:30, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he's fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given us assurance, He's given it to all by raising Jesus from the dead."

Peter on the day of Pentecost told the guilty Jews who crucified Jesus in Acts 2 and verse 38, "He said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" He emphasized later that God was patient but expects people to repent. He wrote in 2 Peter 3 and verse 9, that "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should (come or) reach repentance."

Repentance is how we correct our wrongs and how we straighten up our hearts and our lives. We must change our thinking and change our ways, that's repentance. And we can no longer live wicked lives; our task is to serve the Lord in love and in purity. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of behavior. Repentance restores our hearts and lives to the way that God intended. It brings about spiritual healing of heart and life. If someone tells you that God expects you to repent, He's not being mean. He's helping you to find healing and life in Christ Jesus. God's grace always works with repentance, not in its absence.

Titus 2:11 to 14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." God forgives our sins in order to transform our lives. We come to Him sometimes thinking "Just As I Am," means that we have to stay that way. No, God accepts us just as we are, but he accepts us to transform us to become something bigger and better and more righteous.

God desires that we crucify the old man of sin, so that we can live free from sin and pursue righteousness and good works. We do this, according to Romans 6:3 to 7, when we're baptized into Christ and into His death. Baptism into Christ means we're buried with Him and raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Jesus from the dead (Colossians 2 and verse 12). And the result of this act of faith means that God makes us alive together with Christ and forgives all our transgressions (Colossians 2 and verse 13). Yes, God saves us and makes us alive when we're baptized into the death of Christ. Obedience to Christ, the grace of God, listening to the Lord, all of these things bring healing to our lives, not only to us individually, but to our homes, our churches, and our ultimately to our land. I pray that you will no longer live for the world but will seek the Lord's face and will serve Him.

Let's pray. "Father we're thankful that You give us healing when we come to you humbly, lovingly, and obediently. Father we ask that You will bless us, that You will bless our land, and Father help each of us to live lives that please You and our according to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Since we're thinking of 1776, let's recall history. The Continental Congress on May 16, 1776, appointed a day of fasting and prayer. They said, "The Congress.... Desirous... to have people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God's superintending providence, and of their duty, devoutly to rely... on his aid and direction... Do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and, by sincere repentance and amendment of life, appease God's righteous displeasure, and, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain this pardon and forgiveness." The Continental Congress knew that their blessing came from God and their forgiveness came through the blood of Jesus Christ.

You can't find forgiveness by doing things your own way, by denying your sins, by committing the same old sins and not repenting, or by blaming other people for your actions. God didn't make us sinners; we choose to do right and we choose to do wrong. Romans 14 verse 12 says, "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." You will one day stand before God; are you confident or are you afraid?

To become a Christian you must put your trust in the Lord Jesus and believe the gospel of Christ. You must turn from your wickedness and turn to the Lord in repentance. You must confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and make Him your Lord. This is not the time to play games; it's the time to get serious. And upon your confession, to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That's when God saves us and washes away our sins (Acts 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:21).

We ask that you focus your heart on God, and get back to church if you haven't been there in a while. Let God be first in your life. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

Worship in Song

God desires our worship in song to glorify Him, and be done in spirit and in truth. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way. How we worship God in song matters to God, and it should matter to us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way; we're here to search God's Word for the truth. Because the Bible is inspired of God, we know it will lead us to what is right. God's Word is a light to our paths and a lamp to our feet (Psalm 119:105). And that's why we go to it again and again. Thanks for spending time with us. We love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

I love to sing hymns. I have my favorites, and I'm sure that you do too. I can't remember a time when songs like "Amazing Grace" or "The Old Rugged Cross" weren't a part of my life. Jackie and I had the song "Be With Me, Lord" sung at our wedding, only we changed the words "Be with Us, Lord." Jackie and I sang spiritual songs with our four children, because we wanted to instill in our daughters the love that we had for God.

Hymns and spiritual songs praise God, teach valuable lessons, and stir the heart. Singing involves the heart, the mind, and the lips to praise God and to build up one another. The Lord blessed us greatly when He instructed us to sing from our hearts. Some of the most memorable moments of my life were spent worshipping God in song.

The music of the church provides a blessing, but it also has challenges. Many focus on what they like in songs and lose sight of what the Lord desires. Others go beyond what the Lord asks. Since the Lord seeks for those who will worship Him, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, it's necessary to ask what the will of God is. What is the Lord's way, for us to worship Him in song?

Our reading today comes from Ephesians 5:17 to 21, and it helps us to understand how we are to approach God in song. "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father help us to know what the will of God is, and to do that will. Help us to show our love to You as we sing from our hearts. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."

To learn the truth about Christian worship in song, we must go to the New Testament. So let's review the relevant passages pertaining to musical worship among Christians. The first mention of singing a hymn in the New Testament is found in Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26. The Lord instituted the Lord's Supper; "And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

In Acts 16:25, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison with their feet in stocks for the healing of a servant girl. And the Bible says, "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Now so far, we've only seen simple statements of people singing.

In Romans 15 and verse 9, the apostle Paul speaks of the Gentiles glorifying God; as it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." Well this quotation emphasizes how a congregation together with one voice glorify God (Romans 15 verse 6).

In 1 Corinthians 14, there are two references to singing. Verse 15 says, "What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also." Now here the emphasis in singing is on the spirit and the mind. Verse 26 says, "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." The early church edified each other by teaching songs.

Ephesians 5:18 to 19 says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Now the emphasis in this passage is on speaking to one another and in making melody with the heart to the Lord. The voice and the heart are involved. The idea of playing instruments in worship is absent. There were no choirs in those days, because everyone was to sing.

Colossians 3 and verse 16 is a similar passage: "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." Now the emphasis again is on singing words that teach and admonish. These are activities that require the heart, the mind, and the lips.

The writer of the book of Hebrews twice mentions praising God in song. First, Hebrews 2 and verse 12 quotes from Psalm 22:22, "I will proclaim Thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise." Again the idea is verbal, proclaiming and singing. Second, Hebrews 13 and verse 15 says, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Now the last mention of Christian worship in song is found in James 5 verse 13, which says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises."

In every instance, the music described in Christian worship emphasizes verbal communication: singing, speaking, teaching, admonishing, making melody in your hearts, confessing, giving thanks, proclaiming, and the fruit of lips. The clear instruction of the New Testament is that we should sing from our hearts praise to God. Now instruments of music cannot speak, teach, admonish, give thanks, praise, proclaim, confess, or make melody in your heart. Instruments of music fail to do any of them. And that's why they become additions; they go beyond the instructions of the New Testament.

No mention of instrumental music in the New Testament worship is remarkable! Neither Jesus nor the apostles commanded them. The New Testament gives no example of churches using them in worship. And God desires music of the mind and of the spirit. God purposely did not include instruments.

Now you might question why we're discussing instruments in Christian worship. Well most people think churches have always used instruments of music in worship. They're surprised that some churches don't use instruments, and they think it's peculiar. Churches, however, didn't always use instruments; and some churches, like the Orthodox churches, have never used instruments. The word a cappella is a reference to singing unaccompanied and means "in the manner of the church."

You see, early Christians rejected the use of instruments in worship. In fact, for several centuries they were firmly opposed to using instruments. Not until several centuries later did churches begin using the instrument. While Jews and Greek pagan religions used instruments in worship, Christians did not. Converts from the Jews and pagans knew this, but early churches didn't start using instruments to placate their converts. They consciously said no, because they had no God-given reason to use them.

Dr. Everett Ferguson, a noted church historian, said, "It's quite late before there is evidence of instrumental music, first the organ, employed in the public worship of the church. And recent studies put the introduction of instrumental music even later than the dates found in reference books. It was perhaps as late as the tenth century when the organ was played as part of the service. This makes instrumental music one of the late innovations of the medieval Catholic church."

As late as 1250 AD, Thomas Aquinas said, "Our church does not use instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God with all, that she may not seem to Judaize." He understood harps were for Jews not Christians. Instruments of music came along as an innovation brought in because people wanted them, not because the New Testament instructed them.

God has spoken to us in His Word. And the Lord promised the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all the truth in John 16:13. Now "All the truth" means the New Testament teaches us everything God wanted us to know to have eternal life and to live the Christian life. Nothing is missing. God hasn't forgotten something.

And since God has revealed all the truth, He didn't need to say more. He's taught us everything that we need to know. To add more or to pursue additional practices says to God that His teaching was not sufficient. And how is God honored when men are not content and decide to add practices to their worship? To start new practices, going beyond God's teaching, is presumptuous. It fails to listen to God and does what it wishes.

The Lord said in John 8:31 to 32 that "If you abide in my word, then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Christ here defines a true disciple. A true disciple abides in His word. He doesn't add to it, take away from it, reinvent it, or change it. He stays in the boundaries of the teaching and instructions of the word. The person who stays with the word will know the truth, and the truth will set him free. When you leave with the word, that word, and you tamper with the truth, then you begin to buy into half-truths and man-made religion.

Someone says, "Well Phil, don't you know that David played the harp?" Well yes, I'm aware of passages like Psalm 150 and 2 Chronicles 29:25. I also know that David lived a thousand years before Jesus Christ. David was not a Christian, and we are exploring how Christians worshiped not how the Israelites in David's time worshiped. We don't offer animal sacrifices as David did. You see, David lived under the old covenant, while we live under the new covenant. According to 2 Chronicles 29:25, God approved of harps in the worship of the temple under the old covenant; but the New Testament never speaks of the use of instruments of music in Christian worship.

Some say the word "psalm" and the Greek word psallo, used in Ephesians 5:19 for "making music in the heart," permits us to play instruments. Well while it is true that many years before the time of the New Testament the Greek word psallo meant to pluck on a string or to play a harp, the word changed in its meaning over time. Well how did this happen?

Well the Jews sang psalms with instruments in the Temple, but sang without instruments elsewhere. Musical worship in the temple was limited to the Levites who had choirs with many instruments, but the worship of the synagogue, that had been going for centuries had no musical instruments. From day to day, and Sabbath to Sabbath, in their homes and in the synagogues Jews regularly sang psalms for hundreds of years without any use of the harp.

So when the word psallo or the word psalm was used, they normally thought of singing the words of the song unaccompanied. It never occurred to early Christians, who knew Greek better than we do, that the words psallo or psalms meant that we should or we could use instruments in our worship. Now if those words had pointed to instruments, why didn't the early church use them? Why did they refuse to use them? Why did it take many centuries before someone started using them?

You see others ask, "Well Phil, aren't people playing harps in heaven?" Yes, John's visions found in the highly figurative book of Revelation speaks of harps in heaven. But saints in heaven also wear crowns and cast them before the throne of God. Angels and people in heaven say many things in heaven that we're not allowed to say on earth (2 Corinthians 12 and verse 4). You see, heaven and earth are very different.

Now our task is not to imitate the worship in heaven, but to obey Jesus and His teachings in the New Testament. If harps in heaven means the church ought to play harps, why didn't the apostles and the early church understand they were supposed to play them? Why did they refuse to play them for centuries?

Someone says, "Well the Bible doesn't condemn playing a piano!" Well that's true; it doesn't say that. But neither does the Bible specifically condemn burning incense, praying to Mary, using roast lamb in the Lord's Supper, offering animal sacrifices today, substituting sprinkling for immersion in baptism, or baptizing infants. Just because the Bible doesn't specifically condemn something doesn't mean that God approves it. The word of God is all-sufficient,

containing all that God wants us to believe and to practice. If God wanted us to use instruments in the church, He would have told us to do so.

Using instruments of music in worship comes not from God but from men. The right question is not "Where does the Bible condemn an instrument in worship?" but rather, "Where does the all-sufficient Word of God authorize using instruments of music in Christian worship?" You see to act without God's permission or instruction is presumptuous.

Now if the Bible included everything that God condemned, it surely would be too large to carry. The Lord chose to instruct us in positive terms what His will is for worship. He has shown us the way, which rules out other ways. There is "one baptism" (Ephesians 4 and verse 5); and that means there are no other approved baptisms. The Bible says there is "one gospel" in Galatians 1:6 to 9 and condemns any other gospel. The Bible says there is "one body" (or church, in Ephesians 4 and verse 4; and chapter 1, verses 22 and 23). That means there cannot be other approved churches.

The specific instruction to sing means one should sing. There is no authority for us to add other forms of music. When God instructs us through His Word, He tells us what He wants. We shouldn't expect God to exclude all other possibilities with a series of "don'ts."

If I order fried chicken and mashed potatoes at my favorite restaurant, I expect the waitress to bring just what I ordered. If she brought me liver and onions, I'd say to her, "This is not what I ordered; I ordered fried chicken and mashed potatoes." You see, telling her what I specifically want excludes everything else. Wouldn't it be ridiculous if I read the menu and told her everything I don't want? We should hear God and do what God wants.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly father we're thankful that You have given us Your word, and it has taught us what You wish for us to do, and for us to believe, and for us to be. Help us always to put ourselves aside and to do Your will, and Your will alone. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 to 27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Wisdom is hearing God's word and doing what God said. Foolishness is hearing God's word but doing what you want. The New Testament reveals the Lord's instructions about singing in Christian worship. Not one word is said about using instruments of music. There weren't any used in church for hundreds of years. Now, let's put singing in worship on one side and singing with instruments on the other. They're different, aren't they? Which one is wise and follows the Lord's teaching and which one is foolish? Which does the Lord's will and which is an innovation of man?

Likewise, we should come to God in faith and obedience. And if you're not yet a Christian, a child of God, why not become one today. You can do so by believing Jesus is the Christ, by repenting of your sins, by confessing Jesus as the Son of God, and by being baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). That's how people in the book of Acts became Christians, and how you too can become one.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshipping at church. Today is a good day to start back to church if you haven't been attending. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ that's near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We hope that you'll watch our program regularly. We will be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about this program, let them know that you're watching and that you want them to watch. Be sure to tell the folks around you about what we do here. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

Help Me Pray

The disciples once asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." I too need to improve my prayer life and draw closer to the God of heaven. Let's pray more often and more effectively.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Most of us have heard the Lord's Prayer at one time or another. Luke's version is a little shorter than the one that we read in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 6, but there are many of the same points in both places. Jesus taught us to pray in this way. And this passage is worth a very close examination. And it's our task to go to the Bible and see what Jesus our Lord desires from us—not looking at what Jesus will accept, but what He desires. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

I believe all of us feel the need to re-enroll in the school of prayer. Recently a friend asked me to help him learn to pray more effectively. As I pondered his question, I thought about my own prayer life and how I need to improve. Today we're going to the Bible to find out how to pray more effectively. To do so, we must listen to what Jesus taught his disciples. We must pay close attention and take seriously the model prayer He gives.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He wasn't trying to teach a ritual prayer that we memorize and repeat without serious consideration. Rather, He was helping them to know what to pray when we speak to God, the Father. Like the disciples, we too need to learn how to pray acceptably to our Father. Our task is to please God and to pray in the way that He desires. Worship to God is when holy people praise a holy God in a holy way. The worship and prayer in spirit and in truth matters. God seeks such people, and we should be such people.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, chapter 11, verses 1 through 4, and the disciples are wanting to learn how to pray. "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He'd finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, As we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Those are things that are really valuable to pray.

Let's pray together. "Father, Heavenly Father, hallowed be Your name, and may Your love and Your grace always be showered upon us as we strive to do Your will. Help us to forgive others as You've forgiven us, and give us each day our daily bread. Lead us not into temptation. And Father we're thankful for all our blessings. In Jesus name, Amen."

If we wish to make our prayers more effective, we should remember we're praying to God. God is occasionally called a father in the Old Testament. He's called the Father who created us in Isaiah 63:16 and Malachi 2 and verse 10; but, for the most part, the Old Testament rarely speaks of God as a Father. Jesus, however, uses the phrase "our Father, who is in heaven." Have you ever thought about that? When we pray, we're not talking to a peer, an acquaintance, or even to a boss. We're speaking to a Person greater than a governor, a senator, or the president. We're speaking to the God who created us and who is the Ruler of heaven and earth. And we should give Him our utmost respect.

Throughout his life, Jesus called the God of heaven his Father. The relationship of father and son is different than merely a creature to his creator. God is not some strange and distant "Force" out there in the universe; no, He's close like a father to his children. And when we become Christians, we also become children of God. John said about Jesus in John 1, verses 11 to 13: that "He came to his own, and his people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Through Christ, we too can say "our Father."

Then, have you considered the phrase, “Hallowed be your name” (that is, God’s name)? The word “hallowed” is an old word that means to make holy or to consecrate as sacred. I fear we’ve lost the sense of the sacred in our day. We’ve forgotten holy things are to be revered. God is God, and we’re not. We’re speaking in prayer to the One who has all power and all authority. We’re speaking to the One who will judge our souls. We’re speaking to our God, who knows all things, who is all-wise, all-loving, and entirely pure and holy. When Isaiah came in to the presence of God in Isaiah, chapter 6, he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. The seraphim called out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” My friend, when you pray, do you think of the holiness of God?

Isaiah said in chapter 6, verse 5: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I’m a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” When we compare the holiness of God to our own sinful lives, we realize how none of us can stand righteous before God on our own. We’re all lost without Christ. We’re all sinful people living in a sinful land. Remarkably, because of Jesus and His blood, we can be cleansed from that sin. God’s grace shouldn’t lead us to take God for granted. Rather it should cause us to appreciate God all the more.

Titus 2:11 to 14 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Well, how can we approach God in prayer and how we do that really affects how we live. God wants us to pray to Him with reverence in our hearts and in our lives. We can’t live like pagans and expect to come running, a God to come running to hear our prayers. James 5 and verse 16 says, that “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” Reverence is not merely to be in our tone of voice; it must also be in our lives.

Second, Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The kingdom of Jesus, of course, came in the church. Paul wrote the church in Colossae and said in Colossians 1:13 to 14, that “He [speaking of God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us in to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” The kingdom, or the church, is where the King Jesus rules. Jesus taught us to pray the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven. And how I wish every person were doing the will of God on earth! Can you imagine the blessing if everyone followed God’s will?

This would be a world without crime, without war, or violence. People would honor father and mother, honor marriage, and value children. We would treat others the way that we want to be treated. And we wouldn’t be so self-centered but would care for the poor and the downcast. We’d give thanks and stop complaining. We’d show trust and not deceive. We’d be genuine not fraudulent. We’d lift up rather than tear down. It’s easy for us to want everyone else to live out the prayer “Thy will be done”; but what about us? You and me? Can we pray that? Are we willing to live by the will of God? It’s futile to pray something that we don’t mean.

Next, Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us each day our daily bread.” Have you thought about how dependent we are on God? All we possess comes from His hands. Life sometimes hands us a mixed blessing. People work hard, and God blesses them richly with fine houses and cars. And then, as time goes by they forget what God has done for them. No one wants to be forgotten, especially not God. Yet people go through life forgetting all that God has done for them, that every “good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1 verse 17). God is good to us. He

gives us the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. The houses we enjoy are from His hand. Indeed He gives us daily the things that we need.

The Psalmist David reminds us in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." God blesses us from day to day to day. We must never forget his benefits. Prayer reminds us of our own weakness before God. It's God who gives us the strength and wisdom to make a living. Moses said in Deuteronomy 8 and verse 18, "You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth." Whatever we have comes from God. And prayer helps us to remember and be thankful for all of God's blessings.

Next, we should pray, "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Most people would rather forget about their sins, yet the Lord reminds us not only to confess our sins but to ask God to forgive us. Some today say there's no such thing as sin, but down deep in their hearts we know, and they know, that sin is real. Our consciences tell us when we've done wrong, and we can't escape it. Let's face it; we need God's forgiveness. And so we're asking God not to hold the things we have done wrong against us. And none of us want to be enemies of God. We don't want to stand against the God who one day will hold our souls in His hand. We want the blessing and love of God in our lives, and sin stands in the way of that blessing. And so we need forgiveness, freedom from sin. The only way we can get that as Christians is to confess and repent of our sins and ask God's forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 and 10 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Confessing sin takes away the deceitfulness. We're no longer hiding from God but revealing not only that we sinned but also our sorrow for our sins. Godly sorrow should lead us to repentance. And we shouldn't confuse admitting our sins with repenting of them. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of behavior. And just because we admit to God that we've sinned doesn't mean that we've stop committing the sin. Repentance is turning away from sin (because we love God) and turning to God's ways. We deceive ourselves when we ask God to forgive us and then we keep on repeating those same sins. Let's confess and forsake our sin, so we may show God our love.

Now forgiveness isn't a one-way street. God expects us to forgive those who sin against us. If we won't forgive others, we can't ask God to forgive us. If God's love hasn't caused us to love others, how can we expect God to bless us? Jesus said in Matthew 6:14 to 15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." True prayer comes from hearts willing to live what they pray. God knows our hearts. And when our hearts and our lives match our words, God hears our prayers; but when we rebel against God's will, God closes his ears against us.

Remember, Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." The most important step in praying effectively is to get our souls right with the living God. Remember what James said as we mentioned, in James 5, and verse 16: that "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." God will hear our prayers if we put Him first in our lives, if we love Him, and if we stay away from what is sinful. God invites us to pray and wants to hear from us. And so, let's live for the Lord and take our requests to His throne. God is waiting for us.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I've been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day." Many people cheat themselves by failing to pray to God. They cheat themselves out of a relationship with God, out of the help of God, and out of the blessing of God by failing to pray. We can never grow good at praying if we never pray. And those who pray in the sunshine find themselves well able to pray when the clouds roll in, but those who never pray until trouble comes round, always have that hard times in their prayers. Jesus began the agony of the cross praying "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And He ended His time on the cross, praying, "Father into Your hands, I commit my spirit." Jesus couldn't help but pray at the hardest moments. He knew how much He needed His Father. And we too need our Father's love and His ear.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, hallowed be Your name, and father we admit our sins and ask You to forgive us. We admit that we have done wrong, and help us to forgive others who've sinned against us. Father, help us each day to love You, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

We need God as much as we need air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. We can't do without Him, and we don't have to. We can have God in our lives helping us every step of the way. And if you're not yet a Christian, I hope that you'll not waste another day of your life waiting to become one. If you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; if you're willing to repent of your sins; if you're willing to confess the name of Jesus before others; and if you'll be baptized in water in the name of the Lord for the forgiveness of your sins, the Lord will forgive all your sins, and add you to His church, and make you His child.

Why not become a Christian today and enter into a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus. Nothing is more important than this! If you're not a Christian, don't waste another day without the grace of God in your life! Don't allow sin to keep you separated from God! Get right with God. And dear Christian friend, don't complain that God is not hearing you, if indeed you are not listening to God. So many Christians today wonder why God is distant. But it isn't God who pulled away from you, but you who have pulled away from God. When Christians quit the Lord, quit the church, and quit living righteously, they shouldn't be surprised that God is not any longer close to them. They have deserted God. My friend, the Lord would love to have you come back to Him. Won't you do that today? Won't you come back to God?

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word and tell a friend about this program, tell them you're watching. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

God Answers Prayer

The Pew Research Center says more than half of Americans say they pray every day. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring how God answers prayer!

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We love the Lord, because we know He loves us enough to teach us the truth about ourselves and our need for salvation. He opens our hearts and helps us to see ourselves. We learn from Scripture how deeply we need Him in our lives now and what He has promised for our future. The Scriptures teach what is good and acceptable and perfect. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

An anonymous poem was found on the body of an unknown Confederate soldier. It said: "I asked God for strength, that I might achieve, I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health, that I might do greater things, I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches, that I might be happy, I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men, I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life, I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing I asked for—but everything I had hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were all answered. I am, among all men, (he says) most richly blessed."

Alfred Lord Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." And he is certainly correct. Prayer is not an empty exercise but is asking God to exercise His great power for good. The power of prayer doesn't arise from our praying but from God's answering. God doesn't always give us what we ask for, but He does give us what is best for us. God is wiser than we are.

Our reading today is a psalm of David, Psalm 40, verses 1 thru 5, "I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear, And will trust in the LORD. How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count." Oh, we serve a wonderful God.

Let us pray. "Heavenly Father, we praise Your name and we adore You as our God and as the one who has prepared for us a place in heaven, and has forgiven our sins. Father, we pray that You will always be willing to hear our prayers, and help us to be people who walk in Your ways, so that You will hear. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

How does God answer prayer? Well, He answers in a variety of ways. Sometimes God says yes to our prayers. He did so for Elijah, a man like us, and God may bless our lives as well. James 5:16 to 18 says, that "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it didn't rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." God answered Elijah's prayer with a yes.

God expects His children to keep on asking until we receive. The Lord Jesus in Luke 18:1 to 8 says that we ought to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I'll give her justice, so that she'll not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" What we need most is to believe that God will hear us and answer our prayers.

Sometimes God says no to our prayers. A negative answer may be the answer of a loving God who cares for His people. No parent would give his four-year-old son a brand new car. The apostle Paul gives us an example of God saying no. 2 Corinthians 12:7 to 10 says, "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me (that is the apostle Paul) a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I'm well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Christians must learn to pray God's will be done, realizing God's will may be better in the bigger picture than getting what we want. Jesus accepted God's will be done in the Garden of Gethsemane. He said to His disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38). Jesus knelt down and fell on His face to pray. And Jesus prayed, "Father, if You're willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." God's will was for Jesus to bear the cross for the sins of the world, your sins and mine. Jesus didn't escape the pain and the shame of the cross, but He knew that His sacrifice was what was best. Hebrews 12 and verse 2 says that "Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ...for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

God highly exalted Jesus and gave Him a name above every name. And one day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess "Jesus is Lord," because Jesus was willing to obey the Father. Where would we be if Jesus had not obeyed the Father and died on the cross for our sins? Why we'd have no hope. Jesus desired our salvation more than He desired to live. Psalm 37:4 to 5 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it." Jesus despised the shame but He delighted in our salvation.

Don't lose confidence in God if the answer turns out to be no. Your children have likely asked you for things that were unreasonable or unneeded, or things you couldn't provide. And you likely said no to them. God knows what is best, just as we know what is best for our children. Trust God.

Sometimes God says, "Wait a while." Though Israel suffered much in Egyptian slavery and cried out to God, God did not answer their prayers until Moses was eighty years old (Exodus 1 thru 3 tells that story). Jesus also responded slowly to the request of Mary and Martha, that Jesus come and heal Lazarus. Well, Jesus didn't heal Lazarus; He raised him from the dead for the glory of God. You see, in waiting Jesus did a greater work than if he had merely healed His sick friend.

Sometimes God gives us something different from what we ask. The thief on the cross only wanted to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom, but Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43). Now we don't always know what is best or how we should pray (Romans 8 verse 26 says). And we can confidently be assured, however, that God as a loving Father will do what is best for us. God knows us and He will give to us the things that we need—even when we cannot see our own needs. God sees what we can't see and He knows what we don't know. And so let's trust Him to do what's best for us.

Sometimes, perhaps often, God does more than you or I ever ask Him to do or think that He can do. Paul had great faith in God's ability to answer prayer. You remember in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, he said, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the

power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” We live limited lives, but God is not limited. We don't serve a small God but a great One. And God is able—and that is what we must always remember – God is able. And Christianity is built upon what God can do in and through us.

In 1 Kings 3 God granted to Solomon the opportunity to pray for anything he wished. 1 Kings 3:8 to 13 tells the story: “Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. So give Your servant, (Solomon prayed) an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

Well that prayer was pleasing in the sight of the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, “Because you've asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I've also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days.”

God certainly blessed Solomon far beyond his expectations. And we too can thank God for what He's done for us. Who knows how many blessings we have received from His hands and don't even know it. He's likely been far kinder to us than we realize. Let's never fail to be thankful to our Father in heaven.

Jesus said our heavenly Father knows our needs even before we ask. He knows our physical needs of food, and clothing and shelter. He knows our emotional needs of love and respect. He knows our spiritual needs of instruction, encouragement, and even correction. When children of God come to Him humbly, sincerely and fervently, He'll bless them richly. Even though the spiritually poor tax collector couldn't lift his eyes toward heaven (because of his shame), God heard his prayer, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luke 18, verse 13, New American Standard); and he went home justified. God doesn't despise a broken and contrite spirit (Psalm 51 verse 17).

Sometimes God answers our prayers through what He says in His inspired word. The answers were there all along. Life gets hard and we pray for God to help us, comfort us, and to give us patience. And God teaches us patience when we study the Scriptures. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” One can hardly read about the saints of old and not see the hand of God leading them, protecting them, comforting them, and giving them hope.

Do you pray someone might know the truth and obey it? You know, prayer is the first step in reaching the lost with the gospel. Colossians 4:2 to 4 says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.” I tell you there's power in the word itself to help people come to believe. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” John 20:30 to 31 says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Have you ever prayed for a deeper knowledge of God? Well the best way to gain knowledge of God is to study the Scriptures. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, “Be diligent (King James says study) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Read it, study it, meditate, and memorize God's word. And it'll bless you. 2 Timothy 3:16 to 17 says, that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." God is able to shape and mold your life through His word in answer to your desire and request to grow spiritually.

You see, it's in prayer that we come to realize our need for the Father in heaven. It's a great day in a person's life when he realizes that however wise and strong he thinks he is, he still needs a Father in heaven to help him and to bless him. We can approach God with reverence and boldness. We can approach our God, because He is our Father, who makes His ear and His heart available to us when we pray. How sad it is that so many people fail to pray, fail to take their sorrow and heartaches and worries to the only One who can do something about them—and that's God! Paul's advice is worth our hearing today: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5, verse 17).

Let us pray. "Father we're thankful that You are our Father, and we praise You as the One who has made us, who's created all things and has blessed our lives down to this time. Father we're thankful that You listen to our hearts and hear our prayers. Help us to love You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Prayer is such an important part of the Christian life. I can't imagine my life without the access God gives me in prayer. God is ready and willing to listen to my requests, my praise, my thanksgivings, and my penitent heart asking for forgiveness as a Christian. I can think of many good reasons to pray, but no good reason to quit praying. Our world is in such a mess spiritually. Many have decided God doesn't matter, the idea of sin is outdated, and there's no judgment after death. Because the world is moving away from God, crime is increasing, war is threatening, and the traditional family is disappearing.

Some Christian friends and I are calling on every Christian and churches of Christ to begin praying passionately and fervently to God for a revival of our commitment to Christ. We wish and pray that every person would come to know the Lord and be saved. We wish and pray that every member young and old begin the habit of daily, fervent prayer. We can't regularly come into the presence of God and not seek to leave sin and to be more like God. Knowing God will one day judge this world, we seek to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ, the gospel of grace and salvation. Will you commit to praying fervently and daily?

Now to become a Christian, place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the gospel, the story of His death, burial, and resurrection. Turn from wickedness to righteousness in repentance so that you can find healing. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Today is the best day to change your heart, to be born again by your obedience to the Lord in baptism, and then take up your cross every day to follow the Lord Jesus.

Well, as always we ask that you tell a friend about our program. And we always want you to know, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

Keeping Our Zeal

Some live the Christian life to the fullest, while others drift aimlessly. Some passionately pursue their faith, while others remain lukewarm. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." How can we keep our passion and zeal for God alive? Stay with us and find out.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's way; we're here to search the Scriptures for the Lord's Way. We love to study the Bible, because we know the real author of the Bible is God. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:20 to 21, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Men didn't dream up the words of the Bible; rather God's spokesmen, the prophets, were moved by the Spirit to speak. They said what God willed for us to know, to believe, and to do. Because the Bible is from God, we can begin to understand the heart of God and His love for us. Thanks for studying with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

Today we're asking the question, "How can I keep my zeal for Christ and renew my passion for God?" I don't want a bored and dull faith. I don't ever want to forget what the Lord has done for me. The Lord created me, loved me, protected me, provided for me, taught me, disciplined me, and is preparing a home for me in heaven. How could I become apathetic toward the one who has heard my prayers and opened doors for me? David expressed the heart like mine in Psalm 42:1 to 2, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" God is our hope, our joy, and our Savior. And staying close to Him will keep our passion alive.

Our reading today comes from the second epistle of Peter, chapter 1, verses 5 thru 11, and discusses the Christian virtues. "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." Oh, these are good things to put into our hearts and into our lives.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, help us to add to our faith all of these wonderful Christian virtues. Help us to keep fervent in our faith and to remember of how You have forgiven our sins. Help us to do Your will always, and to love You. In Jesus name, Amen."

Have you ever been thirsty, really thirsty? The kind of thirst that demands you find some water to drink? Israel knew what it was like to have little water available. Israel had seasons of rain and seasons of drought and then they endured a lot of months without rain. Their streams would flow in the rainy seasons, but dry up at other times. They could collect water in their cisterns, hoping to have enough water to last until the rains return.

In the seventh century BC, Israel turned its back on God and served vain idols. God said about Israel in Jeremiah 2:13, "for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." By forsaking God, they abandoned their source of life. Don't imagine that you can replace God. Nothing can. And no one can.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." When was the last time you were thirsty for righteousness or even thirsty for God? When

did you last feel close to Him? Do you feel worshipping Him or listening to Him is a must? It's easy to forget what you have and to take God for granted. God knows when people ignore Him, forget Him, or forsake Him. Do you suppose God will run to your side, if you've continually ignored Him?

Good relationships demand time and effort. Marriages can grow stale, unless husbands and wives intentionally fill them, their lives with love. You know our love for God can grow dull over time. And if we want to strengthen our relationship, then we must take the time to make it grow. And we must first start paying close attention to what God says. Hebrews 2:1 to 3 says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" If we neglect to listen to God's word, we'll fail to please Him and risk the salvation of our souls.

Some ignore God until they need Him. They focus their minds on the things of this world while they slowly drift away from God to pursue their own interests. They stop going to worship at church, they stop studying the Scriptures, they stop praying, and they begin talking and acting like people who don't even know God. When some crisis then comes along, they feel God is distant. Well, God's where He's always been, but people frequently forget Him. Now God didn't leave those people; they left God.

If you want God in your heart, take a long look at what the Lord Jesus endured on the cross. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." The Lord Jesus loves you beyond measure. And He opened His heart to reach out to you. He bore the cross to die for the sins of the whole world; and those sins include your sins. Romans, verse 8 of chapter 5 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now He didn't rule you out because you were imperfect. The only people Jesus died for were sinners.

And so, see the crown of thorns on His head, see the nails through His hands and feet, see His back bloodied by the scourge, see His side pierced by the soldier, and see His blood offered for you. He suffered the shame of people mocking Him. And He sacrificed Himself, "and with his stripes we are healed." "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Now if the reality of what happened on the cross doesn't touch your heart like it once did, perhaps it's because you've let other things harden your heart. Worldliness and sin cause people's hearts to grow cold.

Jesus didn't die on the cross to proclaim a health and wealth gospel that puts you in the center of the universe. He didn't die on the cross to help you become a millionaire, lose weight or overcome your fears and anxieties. He sacrificed Himself to redeem your soul from sin and to give you eternal life. His blood washes away your sins and causes you to be born again, so you'll be created in His image and become like Him. The Lord is interested in your inner man; and one day He'll judge your soul on whether you've lived for your pleasures or lived for Him.

Now in times of great prosperity, people tend to take their minds off God and put them on their personal pleasures. Just as Israel was about to cross the Jordan River and enter into the promised land, Moses warned them in Deuteronomy 8:11 to 14, "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I'm commanding you today; otherwise, when you've eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you'll forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Don't let your blessings keep you from remembering the One who gave you those blessings. James 1:17 says, that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Now apart from God we'd have nothing. God Himself gives us

the ability to think, to work, and to make money. You remember, Moses said in Deuteronomy 8:17 and 18, "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth." The world wants you to be proud of all your accomplishments. But the Lord wants you to remember that every blessing you have comes from what God provides.

Some people turn away from God because they've faced some kind of a trying circumstance. Rather than pull away from God, we need to draw close to God when we face a struggle or a heartache, come to Him. We should turn to God for the strength, and the help, and the encouragement, and the assurance that we need.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I've been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." And in hard times let's remember God can do things that men cannot.

We draw close to God by making Him a priority in our lives every single day. We study the Bible because it reveals God's thinking and His will for our lives. To know God we have to listen to His words. We pray, because we want God to know our hearts. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 teaches us to "pray without ceasing." God doesn't want us to quit praying. James 5:13 says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise." If you want to be zealous for God, then make being with God a daily exercise. You build good relationships; they don't just happen.

To draw close to God, remember what He's done for you. David said in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." God is ever good to you. And consider how God has answered your prayers, given you the Scriptures that give you hope and comfort, and strengthens you through the years.

To draw close to God, keep your eyes on eternity. Colossians 3:1 to 4 says, "Therefore if you've been raised up with Christ (that is when you were baptized), keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

To draw close to God, focus on the good. Philippians 4 and verse 8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." When we concentrate on the negative, we lose sight of God; but when we concentrate on the positive, we grow more thankful to God.

And if you wish to be close to God, give Him room to grow in your life. You must get the weeds out of your heart and soul. You know, just as weeds can take over a garden, so spiritual weeds can take over your heart. Weeds will rob plants of the space and nourishment that they need to grow and produce. And likewise, the distractions of life can rob us of our time and our energy for God. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 8:14, that "The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they're choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they don't mature." Many Christians fail to grow in their faith and in their relationship with God, because they devote themselves to things that push God out of their lives. We must learn not to let the things of this world come between God and us.

Now sin destroys our desire to serve God, because it replaces God and enslaves us. Ephesians 4:27 says, "do not give the devil an opportunity." If you let sin into your life, it'll dominate your heart. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Now to overcome sin,

you must put it to death. Romans 6 and verse 11 says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." You can't cut down a weed and expect to kill it; you must uproot it. If you simply cut it down, you'll see it grow back. And sin is like that. You can't just cut back on sin and expect that sin to go away. You must remove it altogether. And unless it's completely stopped, it'll keep growing and crowding out what is good and productive in your life.

You can't grow to be a productive and authentic Christian, if you crowd God out by your whims and desires. You must give Him room in your life to grow. And many people let their jobs, their hobbies, or their recreation come between God and themselves. And none of these things, none of these things is wrong in and of itself; but if you let something, anything, take you away from your God, you could lose your soul. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom (that is the kingdom of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Now all of this matters because it affects our relationship and our zeal for God. When our relationship is strong, our hearts desire to love and serve God is great; but when our relationship is weak, we let other things dominate our lives. If you wish to be zealous for God, then set your heart upon the Lord Jesus and upon the blessings that He has in store for you in eternity!

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have loved us so greatly to send Your son to die for our sins. Help us to love You with a great love. Help us to be more than just lukewarm people, but to be passionate and zealous, in our compassion for others, in our love for You, and in our service for Your cause. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."

Is anything in your life keeping you from being close to God? Some people never pick up a Bible, never utter a prayer, and never go to church. Is it any wonder that they feel far from God? They've shut the Lord out of their lives. And God grieves when people shut Him out. He hasn't quit loving or caring for us, but it tears at God's heart to be abandoned by His people. And if you're letting a sin have a place in your heart, then it's time to put an end to that sin. You can't love sin and still love God. James 4 and verse 4 says, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? And therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

To be rid of sin, you must repent. Now repentance is an act of the heart that says, "I will no longer do what offends God but will please Him." In repentance we put a stop to sin, but we must also be forgiven. Now, the Lord forgives us when by faith and repentance we're willing to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and to be baptized into Christ. Now in baptism we're crucified with Christ, "in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6 and verse 6). Now baptism is the time that God saves us from sin.

And so, don't let your love for Christ grow cold. And don't grow weary of your faith and lose heart. Renew your faith. Restore your heart. Revive your spirit. And demonstrate your faith and love. You do that by listening to God, loving God, praying to God, growing a desire for God, and telling everyone about His goodness and kindness in Christ Jesus. Get involved today.

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church home. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.