

# God At Our Side

HOW THE LIVING GOD TRANSFORMS US

## PART FIVE: SEE[K]ING GOD

**By Pastor Ricky Stephen**

Psalms 63

## MADE TO SEEK

## Why do people do things?

They freeclimb 3000 ft rock faces. They tightrope walk between skyscrapers. They write books thousands of pages in length. They get up, wrestle with little humans and drive in the dead of winter to church on a Sunday morning.

Why do people do things when they could not do things?

Human beings possess both a capacity for rest and a capacity for pursuit - but pursuit often wins. From the beginning, humanity was designed not to merely exist but to seek. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden to exercise dominion, to work and to keep it (Genesis 2:15).

At the neurological level, desire and pursuit are reinforced by dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated not primarily with pleasure, but with motivation and chase. Drugs increasing dopamine turnover have the effect of creating more pursuit, not more rest.<sup>1</sup>

We are explorers, conquerors and creators by design.

Given this propensity to seek and pursue, an important question to ask ourselves is, 'What am I seeking?'

Jesus names the proper object of human pursuit in a single line:

“...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)

Spiritual formation can be described as seeking the Living God as the source of life. This seeking is not merely a practice or a program, but a posture — an attitude and habit of the heart. Scripture, community and spiritual rhythms matter deeply, but they bear fruit only when this posture is assumed.

Scripture: Psalms 63 offers a sustained vision of this posture. Written from the wilderness, it presents four movements of seeking God as the source of life: seeking God diligently, blessing God, remembering God and clinging to God.

## NOTES

## SEEK GOD DILIGENTLY

In the first couple of verses, the psalm gives language to seasons when God feels distant. The psalmist remembers having seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary (v2), yet now finds himself in a wasteland (v1).

In Scripture, we are faced with the reality of God's perpetual presence—being everywhere at all times. Yet, also, witness is given to God's manifest presence—times and places when God's presence is tangible.

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon declares:

“But will God really dwell on the earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven cannot contain You”

1 Kings 8:27

A.W. Tozer expresses this truth clearly:

"Wherever we are, God is here...No point is nearer to God than any other point. It is exactly as near to God from any place as it is from any other place. No one is in mere distance any further from or any nearer to God than any other person."<sup>2</sup>

God is perpetually present. Yet, Scripture also affirms that God's presence is sometimes experienced in a particular way at particular times and places. God's glory filled the tabernacle and later the temple (Exodus 40:34–38; 1 Kings 8:10–11). Moses met with God in such a way that his face shone (Exodus 34:29–35). Under the new covenant, believers have access to God's presence through the indwelling Spirit.

While difficult to contemplate theologically, we understand this tension between perpetual and manifest presence relationally. We know what it is to be close to someone yet, somehow, far away.

Scripture consistently portrays God as the one whose face is turned toward His people (Numbers 6:24) and as a Father watching for His children's return (Luke 15:20).

James summarizes this relational reality:

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

## James 4:8 (NRSV)

Often the distance is not God's withdrawal but human turning away. Shame, disappointment, doubt and remembered sin incline hearts to hide. Yet, to turn from God is to turn from the source of life. Without Him, we're in the wasteland.

## NOTES

*“For your love is better than life;”*  
Psalms 63:4a (NSRV)

God's love is better than life because He is Love, and His love is Life. To seek God diligently is therefore not optional. It is the fitting response of creatures who live, move and have their being in Him (Acts 17:28).

#### **BLESS GOD**

Seeking God also involves blessing Him. Yet, many struggle to trust God as the source of life in practical terms. God may be acknowledged as the source of moral guidance or inner peace, but dependence often stops there. When decisions are made trust shifts elsewhere.

Psalms 63 expresses blessing in embodied language:

*“I will [bless] you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands”*  
Psalms 63:4<sup>3</sup>

In Scripture blessing typically involves conferring life, abundance or protection. Isaac's blessing of Jacob reflects this pattern (Genesis 27:28). God, however, lacks nothing. To bless God is not to give Him what He does not have, but to recognize Him as the source of what we have.

Blessing differs from praise. Praise magnifies God's glory and power. Blessing acknowledges God as the source of delight, pleasure, peace and satisfaction.

Like a good host at a dinner party, God is blessed when we recognize Him in the enjoyment of His gifts. It's when we look up from the dinner party of life and lock eyes with our smiling Host.

Have we any joy? Have we any peace? Have we seen the crystal drops of snowmelt on the pine needles in the rising sun? Then we've had an opportunity to bless the Blesser.

*“I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;”*  
Psalms 63:5

The psalmist can say with confidence, 'I will be satisfied with the fat of the earth.' Perhaps, because it is in blessing the Blesser that we find true satisfaction. Because most of us are invited to God's dinner table, but we're taking the plate and going away and eating in front of our screens. We're missing out on the feast of life because we fail to recognize the Host.

#### **REMEMBER GOD**

To sustain this posture of seeking and blessing, God must be remembered.

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Remembering in Scripture goes beyond recalling information. It means taking account of someone, factoring them into plans and attention. Forgetfulness is not neutral - it erodes love.

*“On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night”*  
Psalms 63:6

Despite God's constant presence, human beings forget. Life accelerates. Demands multiply. Attention fragments. Remembering God requires intention.

Frank Laubach writes in Practicing His Presence:

“We shall not become like Christ until we give Him more time.”<sup>4</sup>

Laubach was famous for trying to give his remembrance to Jesus. Encouraging people to talk to Jesus rather than to themselves.<sup>5</sup> He had a practice of trying to bring Jesus to mind one second of every minute.<sup>6</sup>

Christian practices function largely as practices of remembrance. Songs, Scriptures, gatherings and symbols exist to remind believers of God's reality, importance and nearness.

Psalms 63 frames remembrance at both ends of the day. The verb translated 'earnestly...seek' (Psalms 63:1) is rooted in a word associated with dawn, while Psalms 63:6 places remembrance at night. Throughout Christian history, mornings and evenings have been recognized as formative moments for attentiveness to God.

Psalms 63:7 grounds present trust in past faithfulness:

*“Because you are [have been] my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.”*  
Psalm 63:7

The Hebrew emphasizes God's past action. Memory fuels faith. David recalls deliverance from the lion and the bear when facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17:34–37). Learning to pay attention and take note of God's faithfulness builds our faith. It gives us a backlog of God's past actions, to give us peace in the present and hope for the future.

To seek the Living God as the source of life requires remembering Him.

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## CLING TO GOD

The psalm concludes:

"I cling to you; your right hand upholds me."

Psalms 63:8

From there, the psalmist asks that his enemies be destroyed and a righteous king be established (Psalms 63:9-11). Closeness to God does not remove conflict. Those who draw near to God often feel, most keenly, the gap between God's goodness and the world's brokenness. The enemies named in the psalm are not merely personal adversaries, but embodiments of wickedness, deception, and destruction.

To draw near to God is to draw near to His heart, a heart both warm and broken. Seeking God is not primarily for spiritual experience or personal peace, but because He is the source of life and goodness needed in the real world.

Scripture repeatedly shows that nearness to God coincides with hardship: Moses pursued by Pharaoh, Daniel in the lions' den, Jesus in Gethsemane, Stephen at his death.

Clinging to God means remaining attached to Him amid struggle, trusting His strong right hand to uphold. It means aligning with His justice and His mission rather than withdrawing from the world.

Jesus models this posture. As Peter writes:

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate... Instead, he entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly”  
1 Peter 2:23

We swear by, live in allegiance, to this King who muzzled the liars. The King who muzzled the roar of death by entering it. The King who muzzles every principality, power, throne and dominion.

We cling to the God we seek as we join with Him in His mission

## THE TABLE IN THE WASTELAND

The communion table is the appropriate place to ponder this Psalm. It is the table set for us by our Good Host. An emblem, a reminder, that it is God who is our bread and God who is our drink. The Living God is the source of our lives.

## NOTES

To come to His table is to say, 'I will seek God.' I declare His love is better than life, because His love is Life.

Remember James' words:

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

James 4:8a

To say it another way, those who seek Him see Him. It may not be in the timeframe you expect. It may not feel how you want it to. It may lead to being in a desert or surrounded by enemies; but it is the promise of this passage, seek Him and you will see Him.

May we earnestly seek our God, like water in a parched land.

## NOTES

## ENDNOTES

1. See Huberman Lab episode #39 “Controlling Your Dopamine for Motivation, Focus & Satisfaction.”
2. Tozer, A.W. (01 Apr 2015). The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine. Moody Publishers, pg. 62.
3. Contrary to the NIV, the language of verse 4 is the language of blessing (barak) and not strictly praise (hallel).
4. Laubach, Frank & Lawrence, Brother. (03 Oct 2017). Practicing His Presence. Seedsowers, pg. 29.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 32

[6] See, Laubach, Frank Charles. (08 Feb 2023). A Game with Minutes. Mockingbird Press.



**God At**  
HOW THE LIVING GOD TRANSFORMS US  
**Our Side**  
**DISCUSSION**

**Open Up:**

What are some of the most difficult or scary things you've ever done? What were you seeking by doing those things?

**Dig In:**

Re-read Psalm 63.

- On vv1-2:
  - o When and where has God's presence been tangible to you?
  - o How distant does God feel now?
- On vv3-5:
  - o What would it look like to recognize God as the source of the blessings in your life?
- On v6-7:
  - o What practices do you have to remember God throughout your day? What would you like to try?
  - o When has God 'been your help', share or write it down.
- On v8-11
  - o How can we keep the real world in mind in your seeking of God?

**Prayer:**

Consider praying for those who feel particularly distant from God, that God would reveal Himself to them and their hearts would be open.

Also consider praying for those places where we need God's justice, ask the Lord to reveal how He would like you to participate in those areas.