

Think back for a minute and remember, when was the last time that you truly desired something? It may be when you were dating your future spouse and you were wanting to be able to be with them all the time. Guys, maybe it was your first car or getting your driver's license. When Cindi and I were first married, she was living in Kansas City and I was living here in Sioux Falls. We got married in January, but had decided that she wouldn't be moving to Sioux Falls until her kids finished the school year. So, for the first roughly 4 months of our marriage she was there, I was here, and I would drive down most weekends so we could be together. I learned at least a couple of things during those 4 months:

- I learned that when the phone company's commercial said "long distance is the next best thing to being there", they didn't tell you how distant a second that "next best thing" was.**
- I learned what it was like to desire something so badly that it hurt, and what it was like to have almost every thought held captive by that something.**

Well, today as we continue in our series on loving God, today we are going to look at the concept of, and need for, truly desiring God.

Please stand with me if you are able as we read today's scripture from the book of Psalms - Psalm 63. It's a bit long, so it won't be on the screen...

(Read)

Have you ever been thirsty? Really thirsty? I was on a business trip to western Africa about 40 years ago and went out to walk around the town I was in and take in some of the sights and culture, but I made the mistake of forgetting my water bottle. It was between 115 and 120 degrees that afternoon, and I'll tell you – "I thirst for you; my body faints for you" took on a whole new meaning! I would have done just about anything for my water bottle, and I was physically sick without it... It actually took me several weeks before I really felt totally right again.

The freedom to be transparent before God, to express to Him exactly how you feel, is an important part of prayer and

your relationship with Him. David's life exhibited those qualities. David lived with an intense desire for God's presence and the fellowship that came with it. His longing for God was, in itself, something God caused so that David would learn to anticipate God's special presence with Him. What we don't long for, we don't really appreciate once we have it. And the things which we do long for, if the desire fades once we have them, we tend to take for granted and stop longing for.

David's yearning for... longing for... desire for God, caused him to appreciate and be thankful for those many, many times when God ministered to and communicated with him, both publicly, as in when he led corporate worship while bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem, and privately.

We all need to be more fervent and less complacent in our pursuit of our relationship with God. Here we can learn how David overcame complacency and ritualistic religion. David pursued intimate fellowship with God. First, we're going to look at:

I. THE DESIRE OF DAVID'S BEING, vs. 1-4.

Let's look at verse 1 where David cries out to God for His life-giving Presence. "God, you are my God; I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.

There is passion and desire in the way that David cries out, "God; you are my God" (By the way, these are the same words Jesus cried on the cross when he said, God, my God why have you forsaken me?") He is our God by choice, by covenant, and by confession. Let me be clear that when I say He is our God by choice I mean that we have the choice of whether or not we will accept, believe, and honor Him as God or not in this life, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess... and many will regret the choice they made in this short life for the rest of eternity. May we profess it with the same passion and intensity with which David did. Whether we are saying it by casual repetition or saying it with heartfelt meaning makes all the difference in

the world. Not only does God possess His people, but He has permitted us to possess Him!

David said, “I eagerly seek you.” The things that we long for, we eagerly and earnestly seek. Matthew 7:7-8 says that if we seek Him, we will find Him, but that also means that if we don’t eagerly seek Him, we won’t find Him. It is good to seek God both eagerly and early. Early in life, while in the days of your youth. Early in the morning before the day starts. Early in the time of decision or need. It is best to seek God early.

The intense need of David’s soul and body, his whole being, is expressed as thirst for God. Nothing else will satisfy his soul but God. His very body is moved by the intensity and urgency of desire. His being yearns to encounter God. For many people, the desire for God is casual and occasional; for David it was a matter of spiritual life or death.

King David compares life without God's abiding presence to “a dry and weary land without water.” It is an inhospitable place - a land without the ability to sustain life for any length of time. This dry and weary land experience is common with

so many believers today. We've all walked through those dry days or seasons in our life where it feels like God is far away, but in reality, it's us who have gotten off course. Like the world around us, we believers also get captivated by "stuff" and the pursuit of more and more stuff. As a result, there is inner barrenness in our soul. We may acquire lots of stuff, but still not have found water for our soul.

If you thirst for intense fellowship or something incredibly satisfying and lasting in your life, remember David's prayer. God alone can quench your deepest longings!

His thirst and longing for God enabled him to find His Lord in public worship, as verse 2 states. "So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory..."

David's intense longings for God permitted him to behold God in worship. His anticipation and expectation during worship open His eyes to see the power and glory of God. One sign that you truly long for God is that worship is powerful and meaningful in your life.

If your worship experience is not powerful and moving, check out your daily life and see if there is a yearning for companionship for God alive in you. If not, seek Him eagerly, urgently and early, before it's too late!

Also note that in worship, David witnessed the power and splendor of God. Through his deep, intense worship, David saw the Almighty high and lifted up in glory.

Verse 3 tells us some of the “why” for his longing and worship. “My lips will glorify you because your faithful love is better than life.”

God's love and favor “is better than life.” In our love, we must praise God because our love owes its existence to Him. “We love because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Love is birthed, grown, and nurtured by God. The love of God that is poured out in our heart is the source and focus of our relationship with Him. A true covenant relationship with God is better than honors, riches, pleasures and applause. In life there is good and evil, but it is all temporary. God is good and gracious, and our relationship with Him is eternal.

Notice that the decision to love the Lord develops “lips of praise.” Praise expresses appreciation, gratitude, joy, affection. Praise is to be verbally communicated, by speaking well to God and by speaking well of Him, of His wisdom, justice, love, grace, kindness, mercy, etc.

A husband and wife came in for counseling. The wife said, “My husband doesn’t love me anymore.” The counselor responded, “How do you know that?” The wife replied, “Because he never tells me he loves me.” So, the counselor asks the husband if that was true. The husband says, “Of course not. I told her when we were married twenty-four years ago that I loved her, and If I ever change my mind, I’ll let her know.”

Way too many Christians operate like that. “I told God I loved Him when I accepted Christ, and I haven’t told Him any different!” Unlike that husband, we should let God know often, by the praise on our lips and the prayers in our heart, that we love Him, how much we love Him, and why we love Him. By-the-way, it wouldn’t hurt to tell your spouse that once in a while either.

In verse 4 we see David's dedication and commitment to worship God for as long as he has breath and strength. "So I will bless you as long as I live; at your name, I will lift up my hands."

We should praise God continually, "as long as we live." When we bless God, we are exalting or honoring God. Throughout the psalms we see hands lifted up in worship, praise, and prayer. It is done not to draw attention to self, but in His name, as a way of magnifying the character of God.

Second, we're going to look at THE DELIGHT OF DAVID'S SOUL, vs. 5-8.

David's soul finds its supreme satisfaction and ultimate value in his relationship with God. Verse 5; "You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise you with joyful lips."

David is satisfied in every way because God has filled his life to the brim, and because of that he gives praise to God.

Praise is important. Praise satisfies the soul. Praise gives vigor and substance to your spiritual life like rich food does

to your physical body. Praise is to flow from within us. Praise gushes forth and refreshes us.

Have you experienced the satisfaction God gives? Open your mouth in praises and joy toward Him!

A portion of David's soul's satisfaction comes from times of thinking and meditating in the stillness and silence of night as verse 6 and the first half of verse 7 states: "When I think of you as I lie on my bed, I meditate on you during the night watches because you are my helper"

In Bible times, the night was divided into three periods or "watches" for soldiers and shepherds: sunset to approximately 10:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., and 2:00 a.m. to dawn. David at times thought about and meditated God during any or all of those three watches. By the way, a great cure for sleepless nights is to turn our thoughts to God. There are many reasons we can't sleep--illness, stress, worry--but sleepless nights can be turned into quiet times of reflection and worship. Use them to review how God has guided and helped you.

Be sure to remember God and meditate on Him and His Word when He has you doing night watches. Much good can be done for your family, your friends, your church, and the kingdom of God as you dutifully stay spiritually alert during those night watches to keep the enemy out of God's camp.

During the most trying and desperate days of America's early history, a man wrote a very pessimistic letter to Benjamin Franklin. He concluded it with the words, "The sun of liberty has set." The great old patriot, who loved a challenge and was not afraid of the "dark," wrote back, "Then LIGHT UP THE CANDLES!"

God sometimes allows us to enter into discouraging situations for the primary purpose of testing our faith. At such times we must refuse to give up in despair. Like Jonah in the belly of the great fish, we must turn to the Lord when our soul is fainting within us, and trust in Him completely.

James H. McConkey wrote, "What can you do when you are about to faint physically? You can't DO anything! In your weakness you just fall upon the shoulders of some strong loved one, then lean, and rest until your strength returns.

The same is true when you are tempted to faint under hardships and trials. The Lord's message to us is. 'Be still and know that I am God'. When you are about to faint and fall under the load that life is putting on you, you can choose if you are going to fall on your face or fall into the arms of Jesus.

Hudson Taylor was so feeble in the closing months of his life that he said to a dear friend, 'I'm so weak that I can't work or read my Bible, and I can hardly pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child and trust.'

And that is all the Heavenly Father asks of you when you grow weary in the fierce battles of life.

In your night of desperation, when it seems that you can't go on, remember that God's everlasting arms are underneath you to support you. When you feel like you're going to faint, trust Him!

God's constant divine protection is shown at the end of verse 7. "because you are my helper; I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings."

David is confident that the protection he had experienced to this point in his life will continue. What David is alluding to here is to come underneath the wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies. In this most sacred place was where the glorious presence of God was found and displayed. There in God's presence he would find joy and protection, and he would sing.

In verse 8, David says, "I follow close to you; your right hand holds on to me."

This is talking about the mutual relationship between God and the believer. A relationship of trustful dependence on our part and of support and grace on God's part. The right hand is the hand of strength. To be upheld by His hand depicts constant strong support and fulfillment.

The third thing I want to look at is THE DEFENSE OF HIS LIFE, in vs. 9-11.

The three verses remaining pull us down from our intense and lofty relationship with God to the corruptness of fallen

man and a fallen world. “But those who intend to destroy my life will go into the depths of the earth.”

Sin has its helpers and champions that attempt “to destroy” the Christian. Evil spirits, evil men, evil habits, and so forth. Their intent is to destroy godly life. The idea is that those who persist in seeking David’s life (or our lives as God’s children) will be destroyed. That destruction ultimately ends in going down into the depths or into the grave or hades. David would not let threatening circumstances steal his joy in the Lord. Do you?

David finds consolation in understanding the destroyers’ end in verse 10. “They will be given over to the power of the sword; they will become a meal for jackals.”

The language suggests swords in God’s hands and men being mowed down by them. God will protect His servants, and He will protect them aggressively and completely.

In verse 11 we’re ensured the ultimate victory of God’s people again. “But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by him will boast, for the mouths of liars will be shut.””

The murderous intent of David's wicked enemies lands on their own head. Those who seek his life are destroyed, and David is rejoicing in God. Those who swear allegiance to the eternal King, King Jesus, will receive protection from God. Joys and triumphs will come to those who take Jesus as their king, and victory will ultimately be theirs. But those who speak lies, the false and treacherous enemies will come to a dead end.

David knows that the thirst and hunger he feels for God (63:1) will be satisfied as he follows hard after Him. In seeking God early, David finds the elements of God's character to reflect upon late into the night (63:6). In searching for Him "in a dry and thirsty land," David finds refreshment "in the shadow of your wings" (63:7). In clinging to God, David finds God upholding him (63:8).

Are you as determined as David to seek God, or are you complacent in your relationship with God? Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." How is your spiritual appetite? Carve out time to get alone with God early each

day. Enjoy His presence; feast on His Word; let Him satisfy the yearning of your heart and let you lips praise Him.