

How To Seek God's Face - Holiness & Sovereignty

REVIEW: We are continuing to look at how we seek God's face. The premise has been all along that to seek God's face really means to seek and to know God's character. With that in mind, we have looked at some of the characteristics of God, but then asked the question, "so what?" In other words, what difference does it make in my life that God is personal, or knows everything.

We said that because God is personal, we can treat Him as a Person. Too often we don't do that. It's more like some kind of impersonal force, yet the Bible shows us a different picture. We see a very personal God that loves us and desires to have a close relationship with us. We have also seen that God is with us everywhere we go. This should affect how we live, in that it will be a deterrent to sin, but is a great comfort, and brings boldness before man. God is all powerful. He is able to handle the deepest, most difficult moments of our lives. He is also capable of handling our deepest, most difficult sins. God is all knowing. We can take comfort from the fact that God knows us, He knows the manual on life because He wrote it. We can trust Him when He tells us this is the best path for life.

INTRO: This morning I want to look at two characteristics: God's holiness, and His sovereignty. These are again two characteristics that we often speak of in relation to God, but don't often think through the implications to our lives completely.

I. God is holy

- A. This is an attribute that we often do not think as long about its implication to us - we tend to keep it in the theological realm
- B. What do we mean by God being holy?
 1. God is set apart from His creation - entirely different from what has been created
 - a) God has not been created
 - b) He is eternal - which makes Him different from everything you and I know
 2. We also mean that God is separate from all moral evil and sin
 - a) This motivates God's love for what is right, good and pure
 - b) It also motivates His hatred of sin and evil
 - (1) Go to Proverbs 6:16-19 (p. 633)
 - (2) Did you hear what the first verse said: God HATES these things
 - (a) These are all sinful behaviors
 - (b) It is God's holiness that motivates this hatred toward this type of behavior
 - (3) Go to Amos 5:21-22 (p. 918)

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- (a) Here the Bible tells us of God's hatred toward false religious celebrations
 - (b) This is one that too many churches, and too many so called Christians need to understand
 - i) Because of God's holiness, He cannot stand fake religion
 - ii) God has always been after the heart of individuals, the heart of His church - nothing else, and nothing less
 - iii) VIDEO: God In The Center
 - iv) Those last few words about God's love being higher and deeper and stronger come from several verses throughout the Bible
- C. God's holiness is found all over the Bible
- 1. I could list off hundreds of verses talking directly about God's holiness
 - a) I don't think that is necessary
 - b) We can read that for ourselves at any time
 - 2. There are some less common ways in which God communicates His holiness
 - a) For example, the whole, confusing to us, sacrificial system of the OT
 - (1) God is communicating the need for payment for sin so we can approach God
 - (2) God appointed priests to stand between the people and God
 - (a) These people were set apart for the task of bringing the sacrifices to God
 - (b) Again showing a buffer between man and a holy God
 - (3) Let's not forget the tabernacle and the Temple
 - (a) Both had places which the common man could not enter
 - (b) Only the priests could approach God
 - (c) And even then there was still the Holy of Holies
 - i) Only the High Priest could come - once a year with a special sacrifice
 - b) All of this reveals the necessity and magnitude of Christ's sacrifice for us
 - (1) We could not approach a holy God
 - (2) Jesus, offered the perfect sacrifice that would not have to be offered again and again - His was sufficient for all time, and for all people
- D. God's holiness translates into His desire for us to be holy as well
- 1. When we talk about human holiness we are talking about separation from sin
 - a) We cannot be separated from creation

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- b) We are created - but we can be set apart from sin
- 2. God gives us a simple, yet difficult command - "Be holy, for I am holy"
- 3. Let me give you a way to look at this
 - a) Sin pains God, sin profanes His name
 - b) What pains Him, also hurts and injures us
 - c) So when God gives us commands to be followed, they are for our eternal good
- 4. Not only does God want us to be holy, He provides what we need to be holy
 - a) He chose us - He chose us so that we can be "holy and blameless" (Eph. 1:4)
 - b) In Christ, He has already sanctified (cleansed and set apart) us for Himself
- E. When we understand God's holy character, what are some results in our life?
 - 1. First of all we become humble
 - a) When you understand God's holiness, that we as sinners have offended a holy God, and we stand condemned, it should produce humility
 - b) If your offense before God doesn't produce humility, then the fact that God chose to redeem us from this sentence of death by taking His own Son and putting Him in our place - that should bring humility
 - (1) You committed the offense
 - (2) You stand condemned before the holy God
 - (3) And the holy God says, "No, I can't let this happen. I'll pay the price."
 - 2. Second, we become grateful and confident
 - a) The only response from a humble heart is gratitude
 - (1) When we are brought down to understand what our true position is before God, that God would not let punishment happen because He loved us - there can be no other response
 - b) Not only are we forgiven, we are accepted
 - (1) God encourages us to "approach God's throne with confidence"
 - (2) You can't approach the throne with confidence if you fear the One on the throne
 - (a) There is no reason to fear
 - (b) We have been accepted - adopted into His family (Rom. 8)
 - (c) That is no longer the Judge on the throne, that is your Daddy
 - 3. Third, when we understand God's holiness, we worship

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- a) All over scripture it tells us to “glory in His holy name” and “worship Him”
 - b) When we understand that God is holy, that He is apart from us, we worship
 - (1) He is greater than we are
 - (2) He is truly exalted, He is on high, He is far above the created order of things, and so we give Him the glory that is due to Him
 - c) This is not a forced thing, nor is it an egomaniac sitting on the throne
 - (1) God is so apart, different from, and exalted over us
 - (2) It is simply a recognition of what is obvious
 - (3) In fact, we are allowed to enjoy God's perfection
 - (a) This world has become so imperfect because of sin
 - (b) And in the middle of it, we have this bright spot of God's glory
 - (c) What other choice do we have but to worship
4. Fourth, when we understand God's holiness, we deal with sin quickly
 - a) God is described as light because of His holiness
 - b) Sin is described as dark
 - c) When we approach the Light, we naturally see more of the dark, and if we truly understand His holiness, we deal with the darkness of sin in our lives
 5. Fifth, we trust Him more when we understand His holiness
 - a) Because God is holy, He hates sin, and evil
 - b) When God directs you in a certain path, we can trust Him because we know His character is to hate the things that would bring harm to our lives
 6. Finally, when we understand God's holiness, we increasingly become joyfully surrendered
 - a) I have told you before, God is not interested in the beat down
 - (1) He is not looking to force you into a place where you will submit
 - (2) He is looking for you to joyfully submit to His will
 - b) The word holy means to be set apart
 - (1) Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship.”
 - (2) God is looking for living sacrifices - those that willingly give their lives to Him
 - (3) The Bible tells us that God loves a cheerful giver
 - (a) I honestly think that could be applied to any command God gives

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- (b) God loves a cheerful forgiver, or a cheerful lover, or a cheerful servant
 - c) When we understand God's holiness, we will see these things increase in our lives
- II. The second characteristic I want us to look at today is God's sovereignty
- A. This is one that can be huge for many people
- 1. We often admit that God is sovereign - meaning that God is in control
 - 2. The time you will see if people really believe in God's sovereignty is when tragedy strikes
 - a) During tragedy many people quote Romans 8:28 "All things work together for good for those that love Him and are called according to His purpose."
 - b) Inherent in the verse is the reality that it is for those that love and are called by God
 - (1) Largely because they are the ones that will recognize God's sovereignty
 - (2) So for example, a few months ago I shared about a friend of Nicole Dean that was supposed to work a shift, but had a hospital appointment in the morning because he has been very ill and told he may only have months to live. His boss took his shift. His boss was killed on a run for the ambulance company.
 - (3) We, as believers in Christ see God's hand at work
 - (a) Because of the change, God is giving this young man more time to come to faith
 - (b) Trying to tell that to this young man probably won't make sense to him as he has not yet been called according to God's purpose
 - i) However we are praying that God will work that miracle in his heart with whatever time God grants him
- B. God is sovereign over His creation, over His redeemed people, and over His kingdom
- 1. God is described as an everlasting King
 - a) There have been some mighty kings over time
 - b) I'm thinking everlasting just wasted them all - He is King for all time
 - c) Which would also imply over everything
 - 2. Psalm 2:1-6 (p. 537)
 - a) I love this passage
 - b) The Lord in heaven laughs!
 - (1) There are two things that imply God's sovereignty here - first God's location, He is in heaven

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- (2) Second, He laughs at what the kings and kingdoms of the earth are doing
 - (a) As if they have any power at all
 - (b) As if they could do anything to thwart His plans
- 3. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 (p. 665)
 - a) Another one I love - because it puts us in our place
 - b) God is in heaven - the place of authority, the place above the us
 - c) We are on earth, we are below, we do not have the authority God has, so be careful with being demanding
 - d) Another passage to scream, God is in charge
- 4. One more, specifically to look at the kingdom - Zechariah 14:9 (p. 957)
 - a) In the kingdom, He will be the King, the one and only
 - b) Reminds you of the NT verses we probably know, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."
- C. Talking about God being in charge you have to talk about God's will as well
 - 1. Perhaps one of the better ways I have seen of looking at God's will is by three ways: His preceptive will, His permissive will, and His providential will
 - a) His preceptive will is what God desires
 - (1) 1 Timothy 2:3-4 "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."
 - (2) In no sense does God desire bad things for anyone, He wants all to be saved
 - b) In His permissive will He allows things to happen
 - (1) Out of love, God allowed His creation to have choice
 - (2) Which means they can choose to reject Him
 - (3) Even though His desire is for them to love and trust Him, He gave them the ability to choose not to if they desired - but that choice does come with consequences
 - c) In His providential will, evil cannot overthrow the purposes of God
 - (1) So for example, God hates murder, yet He allowed Jesus to be killed for a higher purpose
 - 2. This story may help bring clarity: It is a story of Moses as the main character, but it is not a biblical story
 - a) READ: *God As He Wants You To Know Him* p. 210-211

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- b) Sometimes we do not always understand why God allows things to happen, but we have to trust that He is in control, and that there is a reason for what He is doing
 - (1) Many, in fact most may not be as clear cut as this story
 - (2) But God is in control
- D. We can apply God's sovereignty in several ways in our lives
 - 1. First it can give us great comfort and confidence
 - a) God's sovereignty works together with His other attributes like wisdom, goodness, and righteousness
 - b) Because God is sovereign we know that God can use evil for His own good purposes
 - (1) The ultimate example being the death of Jesus Christ
 - c) Even more so, evil cannot push any further than the limits that God sets for it
 - (1) Think Job
 - (2) Satan asked to harm Job, and yet God set limits on exactly what Satan was allowed to do
 - d) The reality is that God wins in the end
 - (1) While evil may have what seems like victories in this life
 - (a) People dying before we think they should
 - (b) Diseases
 - (c) Disappointments, relational breaks, and problems of all sorts
 - (2) In the end, God is using those things to push us toward a final culmination that will result in eternity with Him for those that trust Him
 - 2. God's sovereignty also means that we will be accountable to God
 - a) All authority is accountable to God
 - (1) Does not matter what authority you hold, all authority is accountable to God
 - (a) From the king to the president, to the dad with their children
 - (b) All authority is accountable
 - (2) Even employers will be held accountable to pay fair wages
 - (a) Malachi 3:5 "I [God] will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages..."
 - b) God also makes us as individual Christians accountable for the gifts God has given you
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 4:7 "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

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- (a) Everything we have we received from God
- (b) So thinking that it is ours, that we are self made people is foolish - God gave us everything
- (2) This includes material things that God has allowed us to have
- (3) It also includes gifts and talents that God has given to us
- (4) God will hold us accountable for how we use them
 - (a) Remember the story Jesus told of the servant that buried the money his master gave him rather than putting it to work so the master would gain more?
 - (b) The master expected a return on his investment
 - (c) The same is true for us
 - i) God has graced us with gifts to be used for the building up of His kingdom and for His glory
 - ii) God expects a return on the investment He is making in us
- 3. God's sovereignty also means hope in trials
 - a) When we know and trust in God's sovereignty, we can have confidence that whatever the situation, God is using it for His glory
 - b) We may not understand things
 - (1) How the death of a baby is glorious is beyond me
 - (2) How a divorce after 20 years of marriage is glorious is outside my understanding
 - (3) How someone enduring rape or cruelty of other kinds can be used for glory is above my pay grade
 - c) We can always ask God to help us understand that
- 4. Finally, because of God's sovereignty we should pray for our leaders
 - a) Proverbs 21:1 "In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water..."
 - b) In other words, God can bend and control the king's heart as He pleases
 - c) Which means praying for our leaders is essential
 - d) Paul said the same thing in 1 Timothy 2 "Pray for those in authority, for kings that we can live peaceable lives" (Keith's paraphrase)
 - e) We do not have to govern the world, but we do need to pray for those that do

CONCLUSION: The more we get to know God, the better we can apply His character to our lives. It takes time to think deeply on things, and discover why specific character traits are so important. It is well worth the effort! That is when you really get to know God like what it says of Moses in Exodus, that Moses would speak to God face to face as one speaks to a friend. That is the relationship we are after.