



August 26, 2018

“Seek the Lord”

Isaiah 55

Pastor Gary Hamrick

For people who are estranged from God, Isaiah gave a clear invitation: that if they would SEEK the Lord and REPENT (turn from sin and turn to the Lord), he would have mercy and freely pardon them. So, if the Lord is merciful and he freely pardons all who turn to him, the only thing that stands between sin and forgiveness is pride. [Isaiah 30:18](#) tells us that *“the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.”* Pastor Gary’s message today encourages everyone to seek the Lord and receive his mercy and forgiveness!

Seek The Lord

1. [Isaiah 55:6](#) - *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.”*
 - a. In Hebrew, the word for seek is darash, which means to beat a path around something, because you repeatedly go to it.
 - i. Pastor Gary used the illustrations of a cattle path to a barn or a hiking path through the woods.
 - b. Pastor Gary said: “When Isaiah says to *“seek the LORD”* he doesn’t just mean it to be a one-time encounter; he means beat a path down between you and God. Seek after him!”
 - i. [Jeremiah 29:13-14](#) - *“ ‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD...”*
 - ii. [Psalm 145:18](#) - *“The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”*
 - c. Pastor Gary said (re: *“while he is near”*): “The implication is that God may not be as near to you as he is right now. ... The concept is that there is opportunity to draw near to him while the distance is shortest. What creates a great distance between [us] and God is not that God abandons [us], the distance is created because of [our] sin against him. ... The other

concept here is this: [there will] come a day when we will all have to stand before the Lord and give an account. There is a day of reckoning for every single one of us. ... On that day there will be no more seeking; there will be judgment. ... We aren't guaranteed tomorrow, [so] he's here now, call upon him now, seek him now, while he is near and might be found close by."

2. **Isaiah 55:7** - *"Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."*
 - a. The Lord calls us to *"forsake"* or to turn from our way of living, and *"turn to the LORD."*
 - b. Repentance is **turning from** sin and **turning to** the Lord. (Emphasis added)
 - c. Pastor Gary said: "[Some] people don't understand the concept of repentance, and some people make the mistake [of] thinking Christianity is just kind of doing what you do and then just adding Jesus on top. That's not Christianity, and that's not the concept of repentance. ... The concept behind repentance is that [we] give our messed-up life to the Lord and [we] turn from [the life we've been living]."
 - d. When we turn to the Lord we will receive his mercy, we will be forgiven, and we will be pardoned!
 - e. **Isaiah 30:18** - *"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion."*
 - f. Pride is the only thing that stands between our sin and receiving mercy and forgiveness from the Lord.
 - i. **Psalm 10:4** - *"In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God."*
3. **Isaiah 55:8-9** - *"'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' "*
 - a. There is a **distance** between our thoughts and God's thoughts. (Emphasis added)
 - i. Pastor Gary said: "It should be an indication to us [about] something we should already know, [and that is that in] every way God's thoughts and God's ways are higher, superior, and greater than [our] thoughts and [our] ways. God is infinitely wiser, infinitely superior, infinitely greater than [we] could ever hope to [be]. ... He knows what [we] do not and cannot know, he sees what [we] do not and cannot see, [and] he understands what [we] do not and cannot fathom. [In] very way God is superior..."
 1. **Psalm 61:2** - *"... lead me to the rock that is higher than I."*
 - ii. **Isaiah 40:28** - *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is*

the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

- iii. Pastor Gary said: “We can’t always understand the ways of God. His ways and his thoughts are higher than ours. His plans and his purposes are greater than ours. [I] don’t allow my lack of understanding God’s ways and thoughts to dampen my relationship with him. In fact, [it’s] quite the opposite. My lack of understanding God’s ways and God’s thoughts enhances my relationship with him because it is a regular reminder to me that he is God and I am not. ... Often we have to defer to him and recognize that as our Father, he loves us, and all things are not necessarily understood by us this side of heaven, but it’s okay because God’s ways and God’s thoughts are higher than ours. ”

- 1. “If God were small enough to be understood, he would not be big enough to be worshipped.” – Evelyn Underhill ¹

- b. There is a **difference** between our ways and God’s ways. (Emphasis added)
 - i. Our thoughts are evil, impure, sinful, proudful, and selfish.
 - ii. God’s thoughts are righteous, holy, pure, loving, perfect, and just.

4. **Isaiah 55:10-11** – *“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

- a. The Word of God is personified in the person of Jesus.
 - i. **John 1:1** – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*
 - ii. **John 1:14** – *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

- b. God always honors his Word!

- c. Pastor Gary said: “God [is saying] that this is the natural effect of my Word in your life if you choose to hear it and do what it says. ... If we are to see any fruit, if we are to make any impact for the kingdom of God, if we are ever to see lives changed and God to be glorified in our midst, then we must be faithful to teach God’s word. [As] God’s Word goes forth it will not return void, but it will accomplish the purposes for which it is sent.”

- d. Pastor Gary said: “When you get God’s Word in your heart and you honor God’s Word in your life and you do what it says, it will be like snow and rain from heaven that will water your soul and you will bud and blossom and bear fruit for the glory of God, because that’s the nature of God’s Word.”

¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/14545-if-god-were-small-enough-to-be-understood-he-would>

- i. [Psalm 119:105](#) - *“Your word is like a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*
- ii. [Jeremiah 23:29](#) - *“ ‘Is not my word like a fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’ ”*
- iii. [Hebrews 4:12](#) - *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*
- iv. [Ephesians 5:26](#) - *“... cleansing [the Church] by the washing with water through the word...”*
- v. [1 Peter 2:2](#) - *“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk [i.e. the Word], so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Isaiah 55:6-11](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss [Isaiah 55:6](#).
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about seeking the Lord.
4. How was the Lord seeking you before you came to faith?
5. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 29:13-14](#) and [Psalm 145:1](#). (See #1a and #1b above)
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the Lord not always being near. (See #1c above)
7. Read and discuss [Isaiah 55:7](#).
8. How has the Holy Spirit helped you turn from sin and to the Lord? (See #2 above)
9. Read and discuss [Isaiah 55:8-9](#).
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary comments about the fact that there is a difference and a distance between our thoughts and our ways and God's thoughts and God's ways. (See #3 above)
11. Read and discuss [Isaiah 55:10-11](#).

12. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways the Word of God has always brought a return and brought forth fruit. (See #4 above)
13. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).