

# Praising Vs. Seeking

Bishop Ron Libby

Notes

Praising is a powerful door to the presence of God. Typically, praising is more “corporate”. In other words, we often offer high praise in the sanctuary along with other saints. However, some of us make it a practice to do it in their personal time with God. Our praise and worship times have made us well-versed in lifting up God higher and higher. Pentecostals generally excel at that. We recognize that there is power in corporate praise. How many times has God’s anointing swept up a crowd during a praise moment? We all have experienced beautiful manifestations of God’s spirit. Seeking, on the other hand, is generally more “private and personal”. Seeking is defined as to desire to obtain, to go places or to search for something. You seek to get higher, deeper and wider. Seeking humbles and changes you. It is demanding and prompts you to give more room to God, and ultimately unrestricted rulership to Him over your life.

Seeking can be equated to the resilience of a flower’s roots, digging deeper in order for it to blossom into a stable and healthy plant. Seeking holds potential for newness. Praise, though important, cannot in and of itself sustain our spiritual development, nor can it lead us to a wholesome and ever-growing relationship with God.

## Hebrew Definition of Praise:

- Adoration, thanksgiving paid to God.

## Hebrew Definition of Seek:

- Darash: to resort to, to seek with care, to enquire, to consult, to investigate, to study
- Baqash: to desire, to request, to seek to find, to seek to secure, to seek the face.

## Greek Definition of Praise:

- A thank offering, to laud, to extol, to sing

## Greek Definition of Seek:

- to seek after, strive after, to crave

What is your level of craving for God? How deeply are you craving Him?

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There is praising, but then, there is seeking. Praise lifts us and takes us into the heavenlies, but when it's over, you've had an "up and down" experience. It was a good, ecstatic, helpful and most times a needful experience, but its effect can dissipate rather quickly. Seeking is a different matter. When you seek, you move to deeper places in the Lord. Praising gets you a "roundtrip ticket" but seeking gets you somewhere else entirely. It takes you to a place of depth, where you are more surrendered, where you experience breakthroughs and where you constantly avail yourself to be broken in a positive sense. It is transformational; and if it isn't, you have not really surrendered. In other words, "leave you off", "park it" while Jesus expertly leads you.

You can go to church and praise until you have "thrills" or a joy experience but when it's all said and done, did you change and become something different? Did your great praise truly impact you? You're probably refreshed, which is something to be sought after, however, there is more to experience. Have you gone through a transformational change, or just on a spiritual high? What we must have is both. As Christians, we are not after a feeling, but after metamorphosis.

## **English Definition of Metamorphosis:**

- a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means.

**Synonyms:** remodeling, modification or reconstruction.

God desires to "remodel" us!! He wants us to experience more and more metamorphosis; the sort of change that can only come from the spirit. We morph by unashamedly exposing ourselves to God's spirit and divine influence, as we allow Him to mold us. In fact, the spirit demands that we grow and change. In Romans 12:1 Paul "beseeches" us to give our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord. In Romans 12:2, Paul teaches that we should not conform to (fashion alike or pattern after) the world but rather be transformed (or metamorphosized) by the renewing of our mind, intellect, thoughts, feelings and will.

This transformation cannot, by any means, be natural. It requires the supernatural indwelling of God's spirit. The new-birth begins this process. To continue to grow, we must place ourselves into the potter's hands and allow Him to mold us over time. He will shape us into spirit-minded men and women if we relinquish control

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and slip into the passenger seat. We need to “die spiritually” (1 Corinthians 15:31). We have to keep moving to stay saved or we will “back-slide” which is certain spiritual death. Just praising will not create the metamorphosis we need to undergo. Praise brings about a beautiful atmosphere, but generally, we’ll not be able to grow and change.

Change is undeniably painful. When an edifice is undergoing renovation, there is often a demolition process taking place. God allows “demolition crews” to ready us for His will. Are you willing to submit to the “demolition” (pulling down, tearing down, flattening and bulldozing)?

## **An Example of Metamorphosis**

The metamorphosis of one’s mind is likened to that of the caterpillar into a butterfly. This process takes time. Its three main stages are the caterpillar, the cocoon, and the butterfly stages.

The very first stage is the larva or caterpillar stage, which gives way to the cocoon stage. It is during this phase that the most dramatic transformation occurs. It is the dark time. Although it seems like not much is happening, the caterpillar’s body is dramatically morphing into something else. This leads us to the butterfly stage. All the metamorphosis is to lead us to this point. The growing pains and struggles serve a purpose; they are meant to bring the caterpillar to this place of maturation into a full-fledged butterfly. It is not three different and distinct beings; it is the same creature morphing through different stages in its life.

Similarly, as we get closer to both God, and also to who He intends us to be, we go through several stages that each have a distinct purpose. The three natural stages we discussed parallel supernatural stages we must go through. (Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.) Metamorphosis must take place in everyone’s life. Only spirit-filled people can experience it. God’s spirit is indispensable to go from a fallen, rebelling, empty and purposeless creature to a victorious, purposeful man (or woman) who embraces God’s will for his/her life.

## **Praise God!**

**2 Chronicles 20:21-22 (KJV)**

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*"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."*

*We see how much praise is powerful. Just as It brought about deliverance and allowed the children of Israel to overcome their foes, it can bring about freedom in your life today.*

## **Psalm 22:3 (KJV)**

*"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."*

## **Psalm 34:1 (KJV)**

*"I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."*

## **Psalm 48:1 (KJV)**

*"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness."*

## **John 4:23 (KJV)**

*"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."*

There will be worshippers dedicated to lifting God up. Will you be apart of this sold-out group? Or will you remain on the fringes lift Him up only when it is convenient for you?

## **Hebrews 13:15 (KJV)**

*"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."*

Though it is of paramount importance, the reality is that praising is relatively easier than seeking. When we seek, it's a humbling experience. It connotes a lifestyle of being dedicated through prayer, through intently searching the scriptures as well as through other facets of our walk (fasting, being consecrated from the worlds and unto God, etc.) It is a pouring out of self, taking the "dross"

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out of our being, denying our carnality and filth for the sake of obeying and serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

English definition of dross: something regarded as worthless; rubbish.

## Seek God!

### **Deuteronomy 4:29-31**

*"<sup>29</sup> But **if** from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. <sup>30</sup> When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, **if** thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; <sup>31</sup> (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them."*

The "soul" in this verse refers to a "living being"; to our emotion and passions. Do not serve God by rote or mere repetition, you have to invest your "all" in this relationship.

"If" is a conditional word. As such, it introduces a conditional promise.

- If we do, He'll do. If we don't, He won't!
- Notice, you cannot find Him, if you do not search for him. We are not to seek the Lord lackadaisically, but with passion, fervor, enthusiasm, eagerness, desperation and ardor. Have you ever gotten desperate for an answer or a miracle? For God to step into your situation because of a life or death matter? If you're not passionate, are you even seeking?

Hebrew Definition of "find" is to acquire, to find out, to detect (to discover, to identify the presence or existence of something).

### **Psalm 105:4**

*"Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore."*

Hebrew definition of evermore is perpetuity or to stretch. Are you stretching or reaching for God? For many, stretching proves difficult. Some could go further, but they do not want the effort. Some can speed walk but refuse to run. (Leozah)

### **I Chronicles 16:11**

*"Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually."*

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## **I Chronicles 16:11 (AMP)**

*"Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually [longing to be in His presence]."*

Longingly, not flippantly or lackadaisically; rather passionately. This is serious business for the true seeker. What is your passion level? You can measure it, because you alone know what it is. Can you do better?

## **Psalm 42:1**

*"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."*

(This is one of my favorite verses in the Old Testament.)

Hebrew Definition of Panteth: to long for.

## **Psalm 42:1 (AMP)**

*"As the deer pants [longingly] for the water brooks, so my soul pants [longingly] for You, O God."*

The psalmist yearns to be in the purity of the presence of God. This passage speaks of his desperation, and by proxy, the desperation we should all develop. I believe we grieve God when we are lethargically following after him. We must pour ourselves out so that Jesus can pour Himself in. So many people remain spiritually shallow because they really have not "poured out". Greed, attitude, unrepentance a few examples of things that need to be dealt with... Can you think of any that are specific to your life?

Don't just read about it or contemplate it, do it.

## **Matthew 7:7 (KJV)**

*"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:"*

The casual seeker will not pick up on the deeper things of God because they will cost too much for him/ or her.

## **Matthew 7:7 (AMP)**

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*"Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you."*

I am often blessed by this translation. So many praise once and stop; they then wonder why things are not "flowing from heaven." The amplified translation of this verse makes it abundantly clear. The secret is to persevere... Can you see the passion? It's not about having a casual thought or simple inclination to seek God, we must be relentless in our pursuit of a genuine relationship with God. This is speaking to deep hunger (repeatedly and hungerly asking, seeking and knocking are associated with clear promises.) The reason some Christians do not receive these promises is because they do not dig deeper. They settle for low levels of passion, and consequently, lack depth, without even realizing it. Just feeling Jesus a little bit seems to do it for them. Is that who you aspire to be? Are you looking for a breakthrough?

Dying to our flesh, surrendering to God, yielding to the metamorphosis He intends to put us through, being unsatisfied with less than we could get if we deepened... These are a few ways we keep ourselves in a "seeking posture", as opposed to solely praising God. Have you ever gotten really thirsty for God?? To quench that thirst, you will be challenged to go deeper, surrender control and be controlled.

The same verse (Matthew 7:7) displays the fact that God will not do all the "work". You have to demonstrate passion towards God in order for your relationship with Him to truly flourish. As already stated, this relationship calls me to "die". It means less of me and more of Him. Less of my passions, emotions, opinions and feelings. **You must seek to die so you can quit being a vessel of you, and morph into a vessel of Him. Jesus must be glorified**

Your feelings do not matter. Let go of them. They mean nothing. The reality here is that you are to be used. As such, be obedient. You don't have any rights if you really want to be His. It is our privilege to bow before God and to serve Him. You should only worry about being "led". (... nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Luke 22:42). If Jesus had to die to his self and deny his will, don't you think we must plunge into selflessness and not fight against God's design for our lives? When are you going to "die" and completely concede to Jesus? That's why fasting is so important; it is an effective way to condition our vessels to "let go" and "die" to self. Fasting is a "killer"!

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As in the case of a man and a woman who are romantically interested in each other, regardless of how much one party chases, the other must both respond favorably and reciprocate the "seeking"; or else, no relationship will see the light out of their interaction. Later, as the prospective couple gets increasingly acquainted, they discover one another's flaws and aptitudes, and can therefore make informed commitments to each other... then, there is marriage. You have to seek God! Our relationship with Him is like that of a man and a woman. God first sought us. We respond one of two ways: "we seek Him" or "reject Him". Some fall in love with Jesus; sadly many, to their own demise, do not reciprocate God's love.

The following allegory of the courtship by the Shepherd exemplifies:

- 1) the relentless pursuit God is on to woo us,
- 2) How passionately, even desperately, we should seek after God.

## Songs of Solomon 2:8-13

*<sup>8</sup> The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

This is the lover, skipping and leaping, like God when he comes to bring salvation and fellowship to us. He is ecstatic about it.

*<sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*

The allegory continues. He has come down, from the higher place and is now by the window. He is yearning to be with His beloved, but won't push his way in. Instead, he comes to the lattice.

*<sup>10</sup> My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

This is an invitation. He woos her and wants to take her away as Jesus desires to take us away. However, there is a problem. We have the right to resist to be taken by our beloved.

*<sup>11</sup> For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; <sup>12</sup> The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*

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Everything seems beautiful with her beloved. The harsh winter has faded because of her relationship with Him.

*<sup>23</sup> The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

This is a beautiful story. You would be amiss if you did not ponder the passion contained in this allegory, if you do not let it stir you to zeal, vehemence and “heat” about the things of God.

## The Difference Between Praising and Seeking

Praise is lifting up Jesus. Seeking is a reaching exercise. We’re going from one location to another, from a shallow place to a deeper one in God. When you truly seek, a change inevitably takes place in your being; or it should. There must be a shift in your perspective away from self and closer to Christ-likeness, so that God can do anything He wants with and through you. Can you do that? Are you working on it or running from it?

This shift can be compromised by carnality. It is the enemy of deepening. In fact, it is **the enemy of All-Things-God**. It opposes your walk with Him, your dedication, devotion and consecration toward Him.

Romans 8:7 (KJV)

*“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

Romans 8:7 (AMP)

*“the mind of the flesh [with its sinful pursuits] is actively hostile to God. It does not submit itself to God’s law, since it cannot”*

The carnal man, left alone, will force us out of the kingdom of God. **It’s only when we want to love God more than we desire to please ourselves that we truly seek.** We must embrace spiritual crucifixion. It often takes place through fasting (a weapon to crucify the flesh by denial.)

## **2 Corinthians 4:7-11**

*<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

*<sup>8</sup> We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

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Notice the suffering coupled with the lack of crying about it. Being still through the pain and struggle is a testament to the maturity and growth of a Christian. It is not so easy to do, but if you want to go into regions of the spirit you've not been before, you have to find that place of total dependence on God, even while under a great deal of pressure.

Look at this verse in the amplified:

2 Corinthians 4:8 (AMP)

*"We are pressured in every way [hedged in], but not crushed; perplexed [unsure of finding a way out], but not driven to despair;"*

Take clear notice, they dealt with some difficulties and concerns but did not give up. They were in the place of "Stillness", not given over to fear and despair. They could have very easily been overwhelmed. Instead, they refused to get anxious. They trusted in their God.

***<sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;***

Look at the dichotomy of some of these statements. Isn't that a beautiful symphony of submission and trust? To be able to be beaten for the cause without rebelling against God. It was awful, but they did not act like it was; they had "Stillness" enough not to react like victims.

In Fox's Book of Martyrs, we see many accounts of people being torn asunder for being followers of Jesus (or for proclaiming His message) without expressing as much as a murmur. In true disciples' fashion, they were "seekers". They had attained depths that allowed them to rejoice because of their suffering for God's sake (Acts 5:41). How are you working on the things that agitate you?

I, Ron Libby, want to be a seeker enough to endure a beating for the kingdom's sake and remain "still".

***<sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.***

Therefore, we must have the dying of this flesh so that the glory of God can shine through us. The more we "die", the better God can shine through. For instance, if your enemy strikes, mocks you, publicly humiliates you because of your affiliation with Jesus, you do not react in your emotions if you are "dead". It's our carnality that wants to strike back, which we cannot do. The apostles had it down and rejoiced in it.

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Although we are not so good at it, we have to surrender to God. That is the “dying of the Lord Jesus” in us. As we get further towards the antichrist’s rule and the gruesome persecution of Christians, we must prepare for the “dying”.

We have to embrace this process. However, our flesh does not want to do that at all. We want to indulge in our carnal desires, not die. (Galatians 5:17)

***<sup>11</sup> For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.***

So, we see the struggles of Paul and the other apostles, and how they saw fit to keep “dying” to the point of experiencing physical torture for the sake of manifesting Jesus.

As Christians, we will have to submit to God more and more. There cannot be more emphasis on the need to become less and less, less self-ruled but rather God-ruled; that we would not react impulsively and fearfully no matter what comes our way.

## **Conclusion**

So, our premise was the idea of praising vs. seeking. Praise is a weapon and a refreshing resource, when God unleashes His glory while we magnify Him. How many times in my own life, during a season of woundedness, fearfulness or desperate need did I throw up my hands in praise with a loud shout and led others to that posture of passionate praise? At a time of desperation, I found deliverance and victory when the enemy thought that I would give up. Thank God I did it and God did His thing time after time again.

But then, there were times that did not call for praise. I knew then that I had to go deeper, not with a shout but by yielding to God, which required “dying” and relinquishing self. The battle with self revolved around conquering me. And through my years of pastoral ministry, when troubles came, disappointments surfaced, they ushered me to fall on my knees and submit to God in a deeper way. There, I found and continue to find strength and revival. Jesus never left me, He always stood with me. He was always my friend. Thank you, Jesus, for being my “pal”.