A Daily Pursuit

Deepen your relationship with God by spending time with Him every day.

When can you remember being incredibly thirsty?

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

5 Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

6 Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things.

9 Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
I have a friend, Jon, who is an avid outdoorsman, and one of his favorite activities is sea kayaking. Recently, when he was on a trip along the coast of Hawaii, a storm swept in and dragged him out to sea. For 24 hours, John struggled to stay alive as 20-foot waves pounded his little boat, capsizing him repeatedly. When the storm finally subsided, his struggle was only beginning. For three days, he faced blistering sun and sharks seeking to turn over his kayak as rescue planes searched for a tiny dot in the vast Pacific ocean. When they found him 130 miles offshore, he was delirious from dehydration.

We all do a pretty good job of taking care of our physical condition, but we’re often not as sensitive to our spiritual needs—too many of us experience spiritual dehydration. The health of our souls depends on drinking from the water that comes only from a relationship with Jesus. Without this, we’ll have symptoms of spiritual dehydration: spiritual, emotional, or relational pain; irritability; and believing things that aren’t true.

But when we realize we’re dry and turn to God, He’s happy to replenish us with living water. The cure is as simple as a time of prayer and praise to the One who keeps us going. We need Jesus. Every day.

FACT:
Water is one of the most valuable resources on earth, but it costs us very little. The average cost in the US is about $2 for 1000 gallons—that’s 5 gallons for a penny.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

1. When was the last time you really rejoiced over something?

2. What’s your favorite way of expressing praise to God?

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE
Our response to God’s love is to remain pure in all aspects of life—with our bodies, thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech—and He empowers us to obey His commands as we live by the Spirit.
3 What are some obstacles to experiencing the joy and peace of God?

4 Why do we often neglect to bring the little things before God?

5 How is prayer the answer to worry?

6 How does the world tempt us to think on negative things?

7 Which of Paul’s commands in verses 4-9 are easiest for you? Which are more difficult?

8 How can we focus our minds on the things that are pleasing to God?

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Joy isn’t something that happens by accident. It is a daily decision to choose joy in Christ—regardless of our circumstances. #BSFLsimplicity

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9
LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

Our response to God’s love is to remain pure in all aspects of life—with our bodies, thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech—and He empowers us to obey His commands as we live by the Spirit.

Though we all face difficulties in life, as followers of Christ, we have many reasons to rejoice. First and greatest, we have received the gift of salvation. Beyond this, we receive God’s blessings every day as signs of His love and goodness. The world will tempt us to be discontent and to complain about our circumstances. However, in Christ we have all we need and more. Therefore, we’re called to rejoice in Him, to protect our minds from thinking on things that are negative and false, and to devote our minds to what is true and honorable in God’s sight. Our thinking is transformed as we spend time with Jesus in His Word every day.

CHRIST

Our relationship with Jesus depends on our choosing to engage with Him continually—every day!

**PRAY**

Make it a point every day this week to engage with God in prayer.

**GRATEFULNESS**

Pay special attention to the blessings God has given you and express gratitude for those good things.

**READ**

Get into God’s Word daily. Use the devos or another reading plan to help you focus daily on God’s Word. Journal the things God is teaching you.

**WORSHIP**

Make sure not only to focus on the things God does, but who He is. Express your praise to Him.

**DEPENDENCE**

Ask God to provide for your needs and ask Him to help you grow in trusting Him.
COMMUNITY

Our thinking is influenced in a big way by the people we spend time with. When we allow worldly values to drive our thinking, we will struggle. However, when we choose to engage intentionally with other Christ-followers, we’ll grow in godly thinking and living.

9 Partner with others in your group to support and encourage each other in your daily prayer and reading.

10 How will you do this? Be specific.

CULTURE

Though we are called out from among the world, God has called us to reach the world. And as we think and live differently, others will take notice, giving us the opportunity to share about the difference Christ makes in our lives.

11 How will you leverage the following to impact lost friends?

Joy in Christ  Peace from God  Prayer, trust, and gratitude
God made a covenant with His people, Israel, and promised to bless them as long as they obeyed Him. As a sign of His promise, God commanded them to fashion an ark—a chest to hold the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments. This ark was a sign of God’s blessing, and the “mercy seat,” which sat atop the box, was the place where God dwelled among His people. On an occasion when Israel was defeated in battle, the Philistines captured the ark. The Israelites realized God’s presence and blessing had been removed. Both Israel and the Philistines mistakenly thought controlling the ark meant they controlled God, but the ark was merely a symbol of God’s presence. While the Philistines possessed it, they experienced curses, so they sent it back to Israel. On the day the ark was returned to its rightful place—in the tabernacle in Jerusalem—there was great reason to rejoice. David called for Asaph, a skilled musician, poet, and worship leader, to lead the people in giving thanks for God’s promise and presence.

How have you experienced God’s presence in your life?

How do you give thanks and praise to God for His presence?
In response to the ark’s returning to Jerusalem, the people celebrated together by singing a psalm. Asaph led them in expressing their thanks to God for His goodness. We often think of God’s goodness as being expressed in what He gives us, and though this is certainly true, the best thing we have from God is His presence. The people were thankful for God’s presence among them, and because He was with them, they could call on Him to work on their behalf. Today, though we are often casual (or even apathetic) concerning God’s presence with us, we need to recognize what a privilege it is that God is with us, and we can call on Him. This is something to celebrate!

- How do you regularly thank God for His presence?

- When have you called on God and He’s answered?

As the Israelites worshiped, they sang praises to God. Praise is related to the idea of value or price and involves lifting up God’s merit or worth. God’s excellence is ultimately tied to His character, and His goodness is made known through the ways He relates to His people. The Israelites, as they remembered all God had done for them, praised God for His goodness—and for returning to them once again. Further, Asaph led the people to tell of God’s wondrous works, not only directly to God, but to one another. With this reminder of God’s faithfulness to His people, the Israelites were encouraged to celebrate God. Today, we are called to worship in the same ways—to praise God directly for His goodness and to worship together in order to encourage our church family in their worship. Praise is ultimately about the heart of each individual worshiper. Worship is also a corporate activity, and we need to celebrate God’s goodness together for the sake of others.

- What reasons do you have to praise God?

- How have others encouraged you to grow as a worshiper?
God isn’t honored by any external act of obedience when it’s not representative of our hearts. In fact, during a confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus quoted Isaiah about their worthless traditions, declaring their worship was in vain because, though they honored God with their lips, their hearts were far from God (Matt. 15:8-9). God is never honored solely because we lift our voices or our hands, because we come to church or even share with our friends. These things bring honor to God when they serve as a picture of hearts that truly rejoice in God’s goodness. The Israelites knew what it was to have God dwell among them, and they knew what it meant to live without God’s blessing. When the ark was returned, they had reason to celebrate, and their praises were a true reflection of joyful hearts. Today, because of Jesus, God is in our lives, and God is most fully honored when we are truly thankful and joyful about our relationship with Him.

How would you describe the joy you experience about your relationship with God?

What will you do to cultivate more joy so God is honored in your life?

In Scripture, the face of God refers to His presence. To Israel, God’s presence among them was their source of hope, and when God’s presence was removed from among them, they wept and mourned (1 Sam. 4:13). Today, we should view it the same way. In fact, we are called not only to desire God’s presence, but to actively seek to live in His presence. Thankfully, He’s freely given us that opportunity. God no longer sits on the mercy seat on top of the ark. He is enthroned in our hearts, and when we seek Him, we can find Him in the Scriptures, through prayer, and in times of corporate worship. God has made Himself available to us, and to love Him means to pursue a relationship with Him always.

How do you seek His face always?

How is God calling you to deepen your relationship with Him by pursuing Him more faithfully?