



# 2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: June 1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: May 31<sup>st</sup>



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus



June 1

### Exodus 33

We live in a consumer driven society. The messages that surround us fixate on what we can purchase or the commodities that are made available for our consumption. This way of thinking brings many pitfalls but towards the top of the list must be the damage this kind of perspective does to relationships. In a consumeristic society, people becomes a means to an end instead of the end itself. We use people to gain what we truly desire.

Unfortunately, this way of thinking has permeated the church. Think about how many people talk about Christ as a key to heaven. It has often disturbed me to hear people speak of loved ones who have passed along “in heaven” with “uncle so and so” and how they are now fishing, or drinking beer, or playing cards with no reference to Christ! For many such people, Jesus is just a name of a Person who made it possible for them to get into heaven. He is nothing more than a means to the desired goal of pleasure which has little to nothing to do with Him.

The prospect of a Christless heaven should both offend and repel the believer. Jesus, God in the flesh, IS the reward of heaven. It is heaven because God is present. It is heaven because God is the greatest, most glorious, most fulfilling Being in the universe and we get to bask in His presence. Nevertheless, there are many people who don't see it this way. For those who are tempted to utilize Christ as the conduit to blessing, the narrative of Exodus 33 is very instructive.

In this passage, the Lord offers this exact prospect to Moses and the people. Essentially, the Lord says that He will allow them safe travel and protection into the Promised Land (a type of heaven) but He would not go with them. It seems to me that many in our modern society would take such a deal! After all, if the Promised Land is all there is, who cares if God is present. For those who may be tempted to think in this manner, the response of Moses and the people is both shocking and instructive. For Israel, it was simply unthinkable to have the Land without the Lord.

Why is this the case? Because what would make the Promised Land so special was not chiefly the natural beauty and resources (although those were immense), what made the Promised Land was the blessing and presence of God. Recall, they had been commanded by God to build an intricate structure in order to house the presence of God. Their lives were to revolve around His blessing and presence and this meant that their entire existence revolved around Him (at least it should revolve around Him!).

I wonder how many of us think this way. Would we rather have God in the wilderness than paradise by ourselves? Do we consider and consult the Lord prior to our actions? Do we seek Him with the conviction that all of the other things will be added to us or do we

June 2

**Psalm 16:11**

Have you ever been somewhere beautiful and been miserable? The prospect of being in paradise without those you love might lead to such a condition! Years ago, I was given the opportunity of a lifetime! After my freshman year of college, the Georgia Baptist Convention called me to be a summer missionary to the country of Greece. I was supposed to go in order to help host Christian baseball camps. What could be better than baseball and Greece?

I've always wanted to see Greece and I love baseball... so what was the problem? Well, in between the time that I was called to go to Greece and my destination date, a young lady named Ashley Nolen became my girlfriend! Whereas paradise and baseball sounded marvelous to me before, now paradise without a young lady that I was growing to love sounded like torture! Stated differently, I didn't want paradise without her presence.

I would surmise that this kind of logic makes sense to anyone who has been in love. Those who have been in similar positions understand the joy of being in the company of someone you care immensely for. Their very being brings fulfillment and pleasure and this is a microcosm of something more transcendent and ultimate.

Today's passage helps us understand why Moses and the Israelites were right to insist upon God going with them as they entered the Promised Land. The Psalm teaches us that joy is found in the presence of the Lord. In fact, we could argue, that God's presence is the very source of joy such that any desolate locality with Him is far more pleasurable than any picturesque destination without Him. Just as I would have chosen Columbus, GA (a less than beautiful city) over Athens Greece because of the presence of Ashley, so all true believers will choose the presence of the Lord over anything competing for our affection.

The implication of the text is clear... cultivate a close relationship with Christ! Some of us are so intent on our circumstance changing that we miss the reality that our circumstance is not the source of our joy. You can be joyful in difficulty if God is near and you will never be truly joyful, even in times of great material blessing, if God is distant. Do you believe this? If so, then you will labor, by God's grace and in His strength, to draw near to the Lord.

June 3

**Psalm 27:8**

If the presence of the Lord is what we should desire over all other possible blessings, then it stands to reason that passages like Psalm 27:8 constitute the overwhelming obligation of all believers. All of us are wired by God to pursue what we most desire. Our affections are the very root cause of all of our actions and this means that we can know what we love by how we behave!

Now, those who love God will desire to be with Him and those who desire to be with Him will seek Him. Notice the way that the Psalmist describes this action as he writes that God's people should seek "God's face"! The imagery here is beautiful and detailed. Seeking the face of God means seeking His very attention and presence. It is one thing to be in the midst of someone whose back is turned to you, it is another thing altogether to seek to be noticed by them, to gain their attention and have meaningful discussion.

God's people are called to seek God's face. We are to earnestly desire His attention and do all we can (in His strength and by His appointed means) to enter into His presence. The term "seek" denotes active and ongoing effort. You do not seek once for all time, you seek by continuing to strive for the Lord and this is consistent with our love for God.

Think about this, you are always seeking something... aren't you? Men are wired to seek. They seek affection, attention, promotions, material wealth, a good reputation and the like. Additionally, what men seek tell us all we need to know about what men value. I've never met a person who seeks something they do not desire. Their reasons for desire might be multi-faceted but their striving always displays their passions.

What are you seeking today? Whatever it is, you can be assured that this is what your heart most desires. Do you want a promotion without the presence of God? Do you desire your child to be a professional athlete without a relationship with the Lord? Do you want a spouse more than a Savior? OR does your life demonstrate that you love and desire God above all things as you seek His face? Rest assured, your responsibility before the Lord is clear but the promised blessing of His face shining upon you is more than worth any sacrifice you might make to seek Him.

June 4

### **Jeremiah 29:13**

Today's devotion is intended as a bit of encouragement for us. Jeremiah 29 is one of the most quoted chapters of all the Bible because of the precious promise recorded in verse 11. God tells His covenant people that His plans are for their prosperity and blessing. This is good news but it is contextual! You will notice that God is not promising blessing for the Hivites or Canaanites in this text, instead He is speaking to His chosen.

This same context applies to verse 13. We know that no one naturally seeks after God (Romans 3:11), consequently, the Lord must seek us first! Nevertheless, once we are sought and redeemed by the Lord, we are called to seek Him with all our might. If you are a believer today, you have been sought by the Lord, regenerated by His grace, and commanded by Him to pursue Him with all the might He has bestowed upon you.

Today's devotion is dedicated to the precious promise God gives those who seek Him which is that they will find Him! The Lord is not playing coy with His people. He is not attempting to avoid their presence, instead He is available to all who seek His presence and blessing.

This is good news but notice the promise is qualified. Those who will find the Lord are those who seek Him "with all their heart". The point here is fairly straightforward, seeking God is not some secondary enterprise, it must envelop our very lives. We cannot expect to find the Lord when we give Him the scraps of our time and mental energy. We cannot expect to be blessed by God when everything else is our priority. Instead, we should only expect the fulfillment of this great promise when God is our goal and prize alone. He must be the Lord and goal of our lives because He alone deserves our allegiance and affection.

Are you seeking the Lord with all of your heart? What do you think about? What do you dream about? It seems to me that many people who claim to seek God without finding Him seek Him with little effort. There is no promise that seeking God will be easy! In fact, Jesus made it clear that coming after Him would require sacrifice (Luke 9:23). We ought not be surprised when seeking the Lord challenges us, instead we should know that the promise of God's presence is intended to be enough to justify the sacrifice. We seek the Lord because He is worth the effort!

June 5

### **Hebrews 11:6**

Admittedly, it can be a bit challenging to seek God, particularly when it feels as if your efforts are not immediately rewarded! One of the challenges in the Christian life is grounded in this reality that our efforts are not always quickly or obviously rewarded. How do we keep going when we are seeking the Lord and it does not seem to change anything?

The biblical answer is faith! Faith, according to Hebrews, is the “assurance of things hoped for” that term “assurance” means a settled conviction. The entire 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews is dedicated to the celebration of those who had faith. You’ll recall that all who were mentioned were required by God to exercise faith in Him prior to the realization of their hopes. Abraham was called to believe God’s promise of a son in spite of the biological challenges. Noah was called to believe God’s promise of a future flood during the years it took to construct the ark. Other believers were commanded to believe God in the midst of persecution with the fixed expectation that God would reward them in the future. In every case, the “problem” was not the clarity of God’s promise, it was the tension of having to wait upon results!

Many of us feel that pain as it relates to our seeking the face of God. Do you know the frustration of seeking the Lord and not getting a response? Perhaps you are tempted to think that this “isn’t working” or even worse, that the Scriptures aren’t telling the truth! If that’s you, rest assured that you are not the first believer to endure times of challenge prior to blessing. In fact, God’s preferred method of dealing with His people is to cause them to wait.

In our “push button” society, we have been conditioned to think in terms of expediency. It is hard for modern men to wait upon anything but our sensibilities do not constitute God’s obligations! He is the same yesterday, today and forever and this means that we can expect Him to move in His timing as He sees fit.

In the meantime, Abraham, Noah, David and the rest are great examples to us. I’m sure that they wondered what God was doing. There is no doubt in my mind that they were tempted to give up but because they had ASSURANCE of what they hoped for based on the clear promise and obvious character of God, they pressed on. Do you have this assurance today? As we saw yesterday, God promises that those who seek Him will find Him. You carry on and allow the Lord the time to honor His Word, He will in due season!

June 6

**Isaiah 55:6-7**

I want to deal with one prominent objection to the command to seek the Lord and that is “I’ll do it later”. There seem to be many folks who justify their lack of action today with the commitment to do something tomorrow. Perhaps this has been you over the years. Maybe you have soothed your soul by saying that this particular season is busy, but in the future you’ll get back to seeking God. This kind of thinking has many holes, let me give you just a couple.

First, it ignores the biblical reality that we are always seeking something. Stated differently, if we are not seeking the Lord, we are seeking something else and that something else is an idol. There is no neutrality in this respect. We are either serving and pursuing God or we are serving and pursuing something, or someone, else. This means that our “logic” is really a justification for sin! Let us realize that we cannot live in obedience to the Lord while we are seeking something in His place and this means that we are in a very dangerous place when we try to excuse ourselves from doing that which God commands.

Second, this kind of thinking presumes upon the Lord in ways that are biblically unjustified. James reminds us that our lives are like a vapor. They pass quickly and sometimes they end suddenly! We cannot know that tomorrow is coming and this means that we should never push off faithfulness today with the assumption that we can be faithful tomorrow. The fool who says they will wait until tomorrow are like the foolish maidens who were not ready for the Lord’s arrival and therefore missed His blessing.

Seek the Lord today! While He can be found. None of us know what tomorrow will bring but we do know what to do today. There is no ambiguity in Isaiah’s words, your calling is to pursue the Lord with every fiber of your being with the opportunity that He has given you upon today’s sunrise. Don’t assume that He can be found tomorrow. Don’t put off the weightier matters for things that will be trivial in eternity.

Isaiah’s ministry was destined to be one of judgment. Chapter 6 tells us that God’s design for Isaiah was to preach to men and women who would largely ignore him. Nevertheless, the Lord has preserved Isaiah’s message for us today. May we not be like the foolish Jews who ignored the prophet, instead may we heed this admonition knowing that it is for our good!

June 7

**Matthew 6:31-33**

I want to end this week's devotions by reminding you that God is not blind to your physical needs. I wonder if some of you read these entries and thought, "that sounds nice pastor, but I've got obligations! I don't have time to sit around and read my Bible all day". If that's you, let me offer you two thoughts, one that might help us define what it means to seek the face of God and another to help us rest in God's promises for us.

First, seeking God's face does not mean that we are precluded from our daily tasks and responsibilities. Recall that the same God who commands us to seek Him also commend and commands work! Remember that God created the world, called us to exercise dominion in it and gave us talents and abilities for the purpose of giving Him glory and assisting our fellow man. All of these things remind us that God's definition of seeking Him must coincide with the world He has designed. We seek God by seeking to be faithful to Him in all things, working hard for His glory, searching the Scriptures for His instructions, praying to Him in all settings, being devoted to His bride (the church) and loving others as He loved them, just to name a few. This means that the God-oriented man is not a monk, instead he is one who seek to redeem and leverage all of the worldly settings he encounters for God's glory as he walks through every moment in communion with God.

Second, notice the promises here. Jesus is speaking about physical, tangible needs. He is sharing with His disciples that they are not to worry about those things which they need (food, clothing, etc.) because God will supply those things AS they are faithful to seek Him. Stated differently, part of faith is trusting that God will take care of His end of the bargain. When you and I begin to think that we are responsible for our daily bread, we can actually ignore... our daily bread! God provides for us. He does this by giving us abilities and provisions but all of these things are intended to free our minds such that we can be fixated on seeking Him.

The Lord is not blind to your physical needs. He is not unaware that you must support your family. Instead, He promises to take care of those things as you prioritize Him. The way this goes sideways is when you begin to fixate on what He has promised to provide resulting in you ignoring what He has commanded you to do! May we be faithful to seek the Lord in faith that He will come through in the ways that He promises. No one who has trusted the God of the Bible has ever been abandoned, God is faithful dear friends, the only question is whether you will be faithful to Him.