

## ***“Setting our Heart to Seek the Lord”***

### ***“A Lesson from King Asa”***

*2 Chronicles 14-16*

#### **REVIEW / INTRODUCTION**

I started this year with an invitation to revisit and reset our priorities. I revisited four Biblical purposes adopted by Chico. Chico exists to encourage one another to...

Continually cultivate deeper relationship with God

Persistently pursue meaningful connection with each other

Resolutely resist evil (without and within) and restore godly living.

Reach out to all nations to baptize them and teach them to obey Christ

We actually spent the bulk of this month focusing on the first purpose. It is my desire to stir us to commit ourselves this year to exploring the true meaning of a relationship with God that demonstrates the truth of true community with the Trinity. I want to know the meaning of us in Them and Them in us.

Here is my personal purpose statement.

*Continually cultivate deeper relationship God until it transforms every part of my life and meaningfully touches every person in my life.*

Many in the Bible set their heart or made a decision to seek the Lord. God calls us to seek Him.

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad. Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually. Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth, Psalm 105:1-5*

The Psalmist calls us to GIVE THANKS.

He calls us to CALL UPON HIS NAME.

He calls us to MAKE HIS DEEDS KNOW.

He calls us to SING PRAISES.

He calls us to SPEAK OF HIS WONDERS.

He calls us to GLORY IN HIS HOLY NAME.

He calls us to LET OUR HEART BE GLAD.

He calls us to SEEK THE LORD.

He calls us to SEEK HIS STRENGTH.

He calls us to CONTINUALLY SEEK HIS FACE.

He calls us to REMEMBER HIS WONDERS and MARVELS.

He calls us to REMEMBER HIS JUDGMENTS.

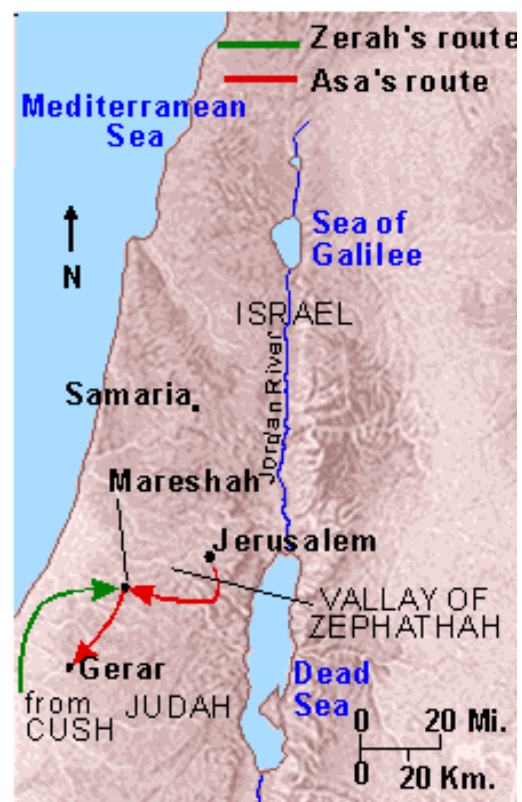
To seek is to pursue, to give attention, draw near, cling, long for, thirst, desire to know.

The intensity of our pursuit depends on several factors.

1 -- Our ability to search.

2 -- Our sense of need for the thing sought.

3 -- The value we have assigned to the thing sought



Paul expressed a concern that the Corinthian believers were straying from the main thing.

*For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. 2 Corinthians 11:2-3*

Satan devalued the need for unencumbered relationship with God.

Satan questioned the value of relationship with God.

Ultimately Satan degraded the ability to maintain relationship with God.

That is still his agenda today. God is equally concerned.

*The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Psalm 14:2-3*

*Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD! Isaiah 31:1*

The place and necessity of a heart set to seek God is very clear.

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Hebrews 11:6*

Jeremiah zeroed in on Israel's failure to keep a healthy connection with the Lord.

*The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' And those who handle the law did not know Me; the rulers also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal And walked after things that did not profit. Therefore I will yet contend with you," declares the LORD, and with your sons' sons I will contend. For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, and send to Kedar and observe closely and see if there has been such a thing as this! Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD. "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns That can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:8-13*

From time to time we lose the urgency of our need for God and along with it the intensity of our pursuit of God. Too many other things crowd in to take His rightful place in our life. We neglect those necessary frequent visits to the rivers of living water to refresh and refuel our soul. Gratified to grub what we can from the broken cisterns of our own design that cannot and will never hold water we are content to merely:

- Sift through interesting Bible stories...
- Decipher and discuss complicated doctrines...
- Practice accepted Christian protocol...
- Promote new and improved programs...

Yet we sense down deep in the core of our being that there is more to life. We have this nagging sense that we have missed the meaning amidst all the methods. We must realize that we have neglected to diligently pursue the presence of God in our everyday experience.

We manage motion without meaning.

We prefer procedure without passion.

We invite interface without intimacy.

We defend doctrine without devotion.

We learn living without life.

We file facts without a fire.

Every serious Christian throughout history has lamented their lack of fervor for God at particular points in their life. It is time to stop lamenting and do something about it. It begins by setting our heart to seek the Lord.

*How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. Psalm 119:2*

*Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.*

*For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him. Isaiah 30:18*

*O LORD, You fill their womb of the wicked with treasure; they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Psa 17:14-15*

Listen to the heart of David.

*O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; Psalm 63:1-6*

*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:1-2*

Today I direct your attention to one who set his heart to seek the Lord. I want us to observe not only his heart but the actions that flowed from his commitment to seek the Lord. Asa inherited the throne of Judah from his father Abijam the son of Rehoboam the son of Solomon. The foolishness of Rehoboam's greed and pride ended up splitting Solomon's kingdom between tribes in the north and South.

Asa's father Abijam's reign only lasted 8 years.

*He walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David. 1 Kings 15:3*

Would his son Asa learn anything from the example of his father? Let's find out.

## **1 – Asa decided to seek the Lord 14:1-8**

*So Abijam slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and his son Asa became king in his place. The land was undisturbed for ten years during his days. <sup>2</sup>And Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God, <sup>3</sup>for he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherim, <sup>4</sup>and commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment. <sup>5</sup>He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him. <sup>6</sup>And he built fortified cities in Judah, since the land was undisturbed, and there was no one at war with him during those years, because the LORD had given him rest. <sup>7</sup>For he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. <sup>8</sup>Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors. 2 Chron. 14:1-8*

Removed the foreign altars – temptation to seek life from place other than God. Urged others to seek the Lord and obey Him. Fortified cities

Result – Rest, peace and prosperity.

## 2 – Asa learned a Lesson of God's power to guard those who seek Him 14:9-15

*Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots (against 580,000), and came as far as Mareshah. And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians fell until none remained alive, for they were broken before the LORD and his army. The men of Judah carried away very much spoil. And they attacked all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was upon them. They plundered all the cities, for there was much plunder in them. And they struck down the tents of those who had livestock and carried away sheep in abundance and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.*

## 3 – Asa's Commitment was Affirmed 15:1-7

*Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded, <sup>2</sup>and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. <sup>3</sup>And for many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. <sup>4</sup>But in their distress they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him. <sup>5</sup>And in those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. <sup>6</sup>And nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress. <sup>7</sup>But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work." 2 Chron. 15:1-7*

Conditions: God was not acknowledged, without good teaching, no peace, disturbances, trouble and distress of all kind.

In their distress they turned to God and Sought Him. As a result of calling out to Him, He let them find Him in the midst of affliction and distress. The Prophet then assured Asa that God truly does reward those who trust Him. This affirmation encouraged Him to do what had to be done.

## 4 – Asa Demonstrated his Commitment 15:8-15

*Now when Asa heard these words and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and **removed** the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then **restored** the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD. <sup>9</sup>And he **gathered** all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. <sup>10</sup>So they **assembled** at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. <sup>11</sup>And they **sacrificed** to the LORD that day 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep from the spoil they had brought. <sup>12</sup>And they **entered into the covenant** to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul; <sup>13</sup>and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. <sup>14</sup>Moreover, they **made an oath** to the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with horns. <sup>15</sup>And all Judah **rejoiced** concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, 2 Chron. 15:8-15*

Asa took action to demonstrate their resolve to seek the Lord and inspired commitment in the entire nation. It even inspired those in the Northern kingdom to commit to the Lord.

- Removed idols. The things sought after for meaning in life.
- Restored the altar. The place of sacrifice, the place of worship.
- Rallied the family of the faithful for worship. (Gathered and assembled)
- Rendered sacrifice to the Lord. (sacrificed)

- Resolved to seek the Lord. (entered into the covenant, made an oath)
- Rejoiced over their commitment to earnestly seek the Lord.

## 5 -- God rewarded Asa for Seeking Him 15:15b-16

*and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.*

Fellowship – Rest

## 6 – Asa defaulted on His commitment 16:1-14

I talked recently about how we live in the moment. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is yet unknown.

We live today with all its challenges. It is helpful to live today in light of the lessons learned yesterday.

Asa learned a great lesson about the value of setting your heart to seek the Lord, especially in times of adversity.

*In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. <sup>2</sup>Then Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the king's house, and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying, <sup>3</sup>"Let there be a treaty between you and me, as between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me." <sup>4</sup>So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. <sup>5</sup>And it came about when Baasha heard of it that he ceased fortifying Ramah and stopped his work. <sup>6</sup>Then King Asa brought all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had been building, and with them he fortified Geba and Mizpah.*

*<sup>7</sup>At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you have relied on the king of Aram and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand. <sup>8</sup>"Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim an immense army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. <sup>9</sup>For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars." Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.*

*<sup>11</sup>And now, the acts of Asa from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. <sup>12</sup>And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign (3 years later) Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. <sup>13</sup>So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign. <sup>14</sup>And they buried him in his own tomb which he had cut out for himself in the city of David, and they laid him in the resting place which he had filled with spices of various kinds blended by the perfumers' art; and they made a very great fire for him.*

- Sought the help of men rather than God.
- Forgot the path to past victories
- Forgot the character of God.
- Directed his anger at people.
- Turned self-centered. (Oppressed people)
- Refused to seek the Lord.

## Conclusion

This is not unlike the cycles in the lives of Christians today. Yesterday we trusted God and set our heart to seek Him. Today the going gets tough and we fail to seek God's help. Set your heart to seek the Lord in all circumstance. Entrust yourself to a faithful Creator.

The example of Asa's early years is a commendable example for us to follow.

- Remove the idols, those things you rely on to feel alive.
- Restore the altar, the place of communion with God.
- Rally with the family of the faithful for worship and encouragement.
- Render sacrifice to the Lord. Yourself, your time, talent, treasure.
- Resolve to seek the Lord. Set your heart to seek the Lord. A decision to seek Him.

Draw near, pursue, cling, hunger, thirst, long for desire Him.

*Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Psalm 37:3-6*

- Rejoice over a commitment to earnestly seek the Lord.

Caught in the eddy of our culture we need one another? Feel like God is distant? It is time to seek His face.

*I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face;  
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me. Hosea 5:15*

Seeking God is not so mysterious. It requires the same elements necessary to develop any relationship. Time, effort, commitment, desire, sacrifice, knowing. I will share and help you practice some of the tools to move in that direction this coming Saturday 9-12.

The first step has been modeled by many through the centuries: set your heart to seek the Lord.