

# IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

LESSON: SEEK THE LORD AND HIS STRENGTH; SEEK HIS PRESENCE  
CONTINUALLY

**2 SAMUEL 6:5-19; 1 CHRONICLES 16:11**

**MAY 23, 2021**

## MAIN POINT

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Let us seek the LORD's strength and presence.

## CHURCH CONTEXT

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Last Sunday, Dr. Smith informed us of how God is stirring in his heart. Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Smith is entering into a brief season of prayer and seeking the LORD. As a church, we want to join him in prayer and seeking God's presence for the next three weeks.

So, we are taking a detour from our normal routine of studying through a book in the Bible. We desire to be a church who is sensitive to God's leading. Thanks for joining in this journey!

Our goal for Sunday school the next three weeks is to prioritize prayer. Where the typical or normal Sunday school practice is to teach/discuss a lesson for 40 minutes and pray for 20 minutes, we want to encourage our groups to flip their normal routine. We encourage you to teach/discuss a lesson for 20 minutes and then dedicate 40 minutes to prayer. (Teachers, feel free to cut the lesson short if you notice your teaching time is going to long. Prioritize praying.)

## INTRODUCTION – TIPS AND EXPECTATIONS (5 minutes)

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Praying for 40 minutes might seem daunting. No worries, this is new to most of us. Here are some tips and realistic expectations for how this time might go.

1. We have a guided plan – As class leader this morning, I'll provide instructions and designated segments for us to pray.
2. Everyone is welcome/encouraged to pray – Some of you may feel comfortable praying out loud and perhaps others don't. Just know that during this time, no one is grading

prayers, making judgments, or criticizing others. Scripture informs us, “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matt. 6:7-8). Our hope is that you feel comfort and freedom to pray out loud knowing that you pray to a Father who already knows what you need. If you are guest with us, we are glad you are here. We would love for you to pray, but no pressure.

3. At the same time, our prayer time might feel uncomfortable – And that is ok! This is a new venture for us. There may be extended times of silence. People are welcome to take a different posture than normal. Praying for 40 minutes might seem long for some, and someone might get restless. All this is ok. We can stretch ourselves in prayer and through any perceived awkwardness.
4. Allow yourselves to enjoy it. If I am honest, when going to extended prayer times, I often assume the time will be hard, awkward, pressured, or boring. I hate to admit it, but it is true. However, despite often going begrudgingly, I discover that many extended prayer times surprise me in how refreshing, enjoyable and how fast the time goes by. So, if you are hesitant, allow yourself to be surprised with the joy of prayer.

## **EXPLANATION // 15 minutes**

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Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 SAMUEL 6:5-19**

**What did David bring to Jerusalem?**

**What happened when Uzzah touched the ark of the covenant?**

**How did David bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem the second time that was different than the first time?**

In this story, David executed a plan to bring the ark to Jerusalem. This was a huge undertaking. The ark represented the very presence of God. Briefly, we are going to look at why David wanted to bring the ark of God’s presence to Jerusalem and how he chose to do it.

## Why Bring the Ark?

David's desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem was motivated by at least three reasons. First, 1 Chronicles 13:3 shares David's reasoning: "Let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we *did not seek it in the day of Saul.*" So, it seems David's motivation was that he could *seek* the LORD's presence. Not wanting to be like the previous king, David wanted to seek the Lord.

Second, David appears to want a permanent dwelling place for God. Psalm 132:3-8 describes the event when it says,

I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. Behold we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool! Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

Third, David desired to be *blessed* in God's presence. Two verses hint at this conclusion. In Psalm 132:10, David prays, "For the sake of your servant David, do not turn away the face of your anointed one." Likewise, when the ark resided with Obed-edom, David rejoiced when he learned that the ark brought blessing to Obed-edom. Reading between the lines, it appears David concluded that blessing follows the ark.

To summarize, David desired to bring the ark so that he could seek God's presence continually in a permanent place where he might be blessed.

## How did David bring the Ark to Jerusalem?

As the ark arrives, several things are worth observing. First, David *reveres* the presence of God. Having witnessed the death of Uzzah for touching the ark, David chooses to revere the presence of God in several *new* ways. Rather than have the ark carted by oxen, the ark is now carried by Levite priests (See 1 Chronicles 15:2, 13-15). Doing it this way would have prevented the ark from falling, as well as be in obedience to how God instructed the ark to be carried (Num. 4:15). Also, in addition to the music that was first played, David instructed sacrifices to be made. In fact, 2 Samuel 6:13 describes an ox and fattened animal were *sacrificed every six steps*. To put this in perspective, to walk from the North entrance to South entrance of our church is roughly 150 steps. That means if the ark were being carried from the North to the South entrance there would have been 25 different times that animals were sacrificed. Obed-Edom to Jerusalem would have been a 10-mile journey.

Second, David wears a linen ephod. This ornamental breastplate was reserved for priests to wear as they performed their duties in the tabernacle. The ephod was clothing considered holy

and set apart for worship by the priests. David reveres the LORD through his dress according to Old Testament law.

Third, David rejoices with unashamed dancing. This likely communicates the extreme joy that David had as the ark entered into Jerusalem---a kind of joy that doesn't care what other people think of him.

## **APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.**

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At the conclusion of the ark entering into Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles 16 records a song of thanks to God. In the song, David thanks the Lord, recounts His wondrous works, His faithfulness to His past promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how He is a living God worthy to be feared in comparison to other false idols, and that all families on the earth should praise him.

**Yet, one verse in the song stands out to me: "Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually" (1 Chron. 16:11).**

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, one of the reasons David wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem was *so that God might have a permanent place near to David, so that he could seek him continually.*

We will pray in a moment, but before we do, I want to explain how this story fits into a larger biblical story and hope you will see why it is relevant to our church context. There are similarities and yet differences between how David sought God's presence and how we seek God's presence. Catch these marvelous truths as we will turn to prayer in a moment.

### Similarities:

1. We still revere God.
2. We still rejoice in His presence.
3. We still look for His presence to bless us.
4. We can still unashamedly posture ourselves before Him.

### Differences:

1. We revere still, yet, not through offering sacrifices every six steps. Instead, we have a once and for all sacrifice already accomplished in Jesus.
2. Linen ephods or external clothing are no longer necessary. As a replacement, God has clothed us with his righteousness and made us all priests to Him.
3. God's presence doesn't reside in a fixed location like Jerusalem. Instead, He lives in the hearts of those who believe.

# PRAYER – 40 minutes

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So. . . we have incredible access to God’s presence. Jesus is the once and for all sacrifice. He has clothed us with righteousness. Jesus has given us his Spirit to live within us. Truly we can seek him and expect to find him!

Teachers, we are trusting you to know what the best format for prayer in your group might be. Do you need to pray as one large group or divide into groups of 3-5? You make the call. If you have a large class, perhaps dividing in smaller groups gives more opportunity for people to pray. If you have a smaller class, perhaps staying in one group is fine. Before you give the first prayer prompt, give instruction to your class what you’d like for them to do: whether to divide in smaller groups or remain as one group.

Teachers, my goal during this time is to give you more prayer prompts than you will likely need. Do not feel like you have to go through all the prompts provided. But in the case your group appears to finish early, you should have a few extra prompts just in case.

For this week, each prayer prompt will consist of three parts.

- First, the class leader can announce the prompt and read a verse associated with a theme.
- Second, inform the class you will give them roughly 30 seconds to be quiet before the Lord. During this time, be still. Think about the verse that was just read. Ask yourself what stands out to you about the verse? Take a moment to listen and let God speak to you through the verse. Then, let the verse guide how you pray.
- Third, as a group, take 5 minutes to pray over the prompt and how God leads you to pray. Encourage the group to allow for everyone in the group to pray who wants to pray. (Teachers, by letting the group know they have 5 minutes, this allows them to pray in such a way that gives others in the group time to pray.). Depending on whether you structure your group into smaller groups or one large group, feel free to be flexible on whether to spend 5 minutes exactly or a little more or less.

## **First Prayer Prompt: Revere (8 minutes)**

- Read Scriptures:
  - Hebrews 12:28-29 – Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.
  - Matthew 10:28-31 - <sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.<sup>(a)</sup> <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?<sup>(b)</sup> And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
  - Romans 11:34-36 - “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

- Say, “Take time to listen and be silent before the Lord.” Be silent for 30 seconds.
- Say, “Spend time in your group revering God. Pray with thankfulness or gratefulness. Tell God how awesome he is.

### **Second Prayer prompt: Rejoice (8 minutes)**

- Read Scriptures:
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 – Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
  - Philippians 1:18-21 - Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
  - Philippians 4:4-7 - Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- Be silent for 30 seconds
- Pray as the Lord leads. Perhaps spend time praying that God would give us joy—joy over our anxieties, fears, circumstances, or worries (feel free to list them). Spend time praying that God would help us pray more—to pray without ceasing. Pray that we can grow in our thankfulness—express additional things you are thankful for.

### **Third Prayer Prompt: Bless (8 minutes)**

- Read Scripture.
  - Ephesians 4:14-21 - For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have

strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- Matthew 7:7-11 - Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
- Be silent for 30 seconds
- Pray as God leads. Perhaps, pray in faith that God might bless. You can pray for his blessing on our church, your family, individually. Ask him to do immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine. Pray for specific ways if possible.

#### **Fourth Prayer Prompt: Pray for Dr. Smith (8 minutes)**

- Read Scripture.
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 - <sup>12</sup>We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup>and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. <sup>14</sup>And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,<sup>(a)</sup> encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. <sup>15</sup>See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
  - Hebrews 13:7-8 - <sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
  - 1 Timothy 3:1-7 - If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup>Therefore an overseer<sup>(a)</sup> must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,<sup>(b)</sup> sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup>He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup>for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? <sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the

condemnation of the devil. <sup>7</sup>Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- Be silent for 30 seconds
- Pray as God leads. Perhaps pray for Dr. Smith's leadership, character, or his family.

### **Fifth Prayer Prompt – Faith (8 minutes)**

- Read Scripture.
  - Proverbs 3:4-6-8- Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
<sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.  
<sup>7</sup>Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.  
<sup>8</sup>It will be healing to your flesh<sup>(b)</sup> and refreshment<sup>(s)</sup> to your bones.
  - Luke 18:1-8 - And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. <sup>3</sup>And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"
- Be silent before the Lord
- Pray as God leads. Perhaps you need to pray that God would increase your faith. Give you greater boldness as you pray or walk in obedience.