



THE WELL
PRAYER • WORSHIP • COMMUNITY

Wednesdays | 6:30-8:30P | Harrison Lane Campus

**LIVESTREAMED ON FACEBOOK & YOUTUBE
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WHAT TO EXPECT

The Well is simply a place where we enter into the presence of the Lord through worship & prayer.

It is very simple to participate in The Well. We usually begin by having a short word from the leadership team, letting folks know if the Lord has revealed any particular direction for the evening.

After an opening prayer, the worship team moves into worship music. Worship music continues throughout the evening and at appropriate times, individuals verbally speak prayers they sense the Lord wants released to the group. Of course, personal prayer between individuals and the Lord is going on throughout the evening. On many evenings, towards the end of our time, we stop and ask if anyone present would like to be prayed for specifically by small groups of others.

WHO IS THE WELL FOR?

The Well is for anyone who would like to spend time in the presence of the Lord. It is open to all 2RC members as well as non-members. Feel free to invite friends, family, children (parents, please use wisdom when bringing kids), coworkers, neighbors or anyone else you think would be blessed by spending time in God's presence.

TIMEFRAME

The Well starts at 6:30P and ends around 8:30P. Feel free to come when you can and stay as long as you can!

WORSHIP POSTURE

Any Biblically recognized posture that is God honoring is OK! Sitting, standing, kneeling, laying prostrate on the floor, walking around, lifting of hands and voices, dancing and waving of flags or banners are all appropriate ways to show honor to God. No one is being judged at The Well, so feel free to worship the Lord as He prompts you.

PRAYING OUT LOUD

There is never any pressure for anyone to pray out loud if they are not comfortable doing so. Many people come just to soak in the Lord's presence and pray to listen to Him privately. However, we encourage folks to release public prayers if they sense the Lord is leading them to do so, and trust in His goodness and strength if they are nervous doing this the first few times.

MICROPHONE USE

The room we gather in is a fairly large venue and people are free to scatter (and usually do) all over the room. When public prayers are released, we ask that individuals come to a microphone at the front of the room to make sure everyone in the room can hear. This gives others the opportunity to agree with the prayer they just heard and to pray it back to the Lord. It also gives the Holy Spirit the chance to prompt others to pray for the same topic, maybe in a different way. Finally, it gives our worship team advance warning that a prayer is about to be released so they can adjust the volume of the music they are playing.

In order to show honor to each other, we ask that only one person pray using the microphone at a time, and only when the worship team is not engaged in "active worship." Everyone is free to agree verbally with the person praying at the microphone if you so desire. Additionally, there may be times when the worship team may ask all participants to pray verbally to the Lord in unison. Don't worry about this...it's not hard to figure out, and you'll be an expert after your first time.

Have More Questions?

Please contact:

Bruce Wagner | Elder Chairman & The Well Team Member

P: 865.966.3604

Danny Matthews | 2RC Prayer & Care Pastor

P: 865.777.2121

E: Danny.Matthews@2RC.tv

PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES

PRAYER TEAM MEMBERS

There are facilitators & prayer team members in the room throughout the evening available to pray as you need, or to help you with any questions about The Well or any of the following prayer ministries. Just search the room for anyone wearing a red lanyard.

LISTENING PRAYER MINISTRY

Each week at The Well, listening prayer is available. This is a special time for you to receive a personal blessing and allow God to speak to you. There will be a team of 2-4 people praying for you. These people are volunteers with a heart and passion for Jesus, a desire to minister to the body of Christ through prayer, mature character & proven gifts of hearing our Father's voice. You can sign up for a 15-minute session at the Resource Table, located at the back of the room (to the right as you come in the room).

HEALING PRAYER MINISTRY

We believe that God still heals today in many ways, one being through prayer. We often have times set aside at the WELL where we pray specifically for physical healing. If you desire prayer for physical healing, please see one of our team members wearing red lanyards and they will gladly set up a time of prayer for you during the evening.

FREEDOM PRAYER MINISTRY

Wounds and hurts are inevitable in a fallen world. So many hurting Christians are falling short of the abundant life that Jesus promised. The healing presence of Jesus is the birthright of every born-again believer. You can't fix it, but God can heal the broken-hearted in answer to prayer.

We have teams specifically prepared to pray and allow God to heal those wounds. These prayer sessions are usually 2 hours in duration & can be scheduled by contacting Cybil.Murray@2RC.tv.

WORSHIP, INTERCESSION & WARFARE THROUGH FLAGS & BANNERS

Flags and banners can be used as instruments for worship, intercession and spiritual warfare. Worship is all about expressing our love, devotion and affection to our King and our Lord. God Himself is the essence of creativity, and He inspires us to worship Him in creative expression. When we intercede for others, we are praying on their behalf and are standing in the gap for their break through. A flag of intercession can build up one's faith. We are at war with a defeated foe, but our enemy will still try to trespass on our territory. We have to be vigilant to stand our ground in the Truth and to evict the liar. A visual reminder of our victory in Christ can be a powerful witness.

The Bible Uses Words Such As Standard Or Signal That Can Be Translated As Banner Or Flag:

Standard: *The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their father's households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance.* **Numbers 2:2**

These standards, which were flags or banners, distinguished one tribe of Israel from another, and it therefore distinguished which tribal army was located where.

Banner: *He brought me into his banquet hall, his banner over me is love.* **Song of Solomon 2:4**

This suggests the Lord's billowing love and protection over us.

Signal: *One thousand shall flee at the threat of one man, You shall flee at the threat of five; until you are left as a flag on a mountain top, and as a signal on a hill.* **Isaiah 30:17**

This suggests a flag or banner being raised as a warning or a sign of occupation.

WORSHIP, INTERCESSION & WARFARE THROUGH FLAGS & BANNERS

FLAGS & BANNERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF WORSHIP

In the same way that musical instruments are used to worship God and express our praise to Him, so it is with the visual language of flags and banners. They bring a certain beauty and grace to our worship.

There are times when we cannot find words that adequately express our worship to God. A symbolic flag can visually declare what we cannot find words to express. Waving a purple flag can declare the majesty and greatness of our God. A gold flag can declare that we are in the presence of a Holy and awesome God and that His glory is beautiful. So, even if we cannot find the words, we can raise a banner or wave a flag as a way of entering into worship.

FLAGS & BANNERS AS TOOLS OF INTERCESSION

When praying for someone, a flag can declare our petition.

- RED - applying the blood of Jesus over a bondage in someone's life
- YELLOW - praying for the joy of the Lord to be her strength
- GREEN - praying for life and restoration to flow into barren places

If we cannot find the words to pray for someone, we can raise a banner over them to declare the Lord's love or to cry out for their healing.

FLAGS & BANNERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

When the Lord calls us to stand against the attack of the enemy, we can raise a flag of warfare, declaring that greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world.

*...When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. **Isaiah 59:19b***

When we are in the midst of battle and someone waves a banner of victory over us, we are strengthened and encouraged.

WORSHIP, INTERCESSION & WARFARE THROUGH FLAGS & BANNERS

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN USING FLAGS & BANNERS

- Make sure the leadership has released the use and ministry of these instruments.
- Flags and banners should be used respectfully and sensitively (don't be obnoxious).
- The use of flags and banners is not gender or age specific. They are for males and females, adults and children.
- Colors can mean a variety of things depending on how the Holy Spirit instructs.
- It takes a certain vulnerability to pick one up. The first time is always the hardest, but you will feel a new freedom when you do.

WHAT DO THE COLORS MEAN?

RED	The blood of Jesus and redemption (Lev.17:11, Heb. 10:15-25, 9:14)
GREEN	Life, healing, restoration, new beginnings (Ps. 92:12-14, Ps. 23:2, Rev. 22:2)
PURPLE	Royal majesty, daughter of the King, King of Kings (Judges 8:26, John 19:2)
GOLD	God's splendor, glory, purification (Job 37:21-23, Re. 3:18, 4:4)
ORANGE	Holy Spirit, fire, harvest (Dan. 7:9, Ez 1:4, 8:2)
WHITE	Purity, holiness, bride, surrender (Isa. 1:18, Matt.28:3, Rev. 7:9)
BLACK/BROWN	Humility, repentance, hiding place (1 Peter 5:5, Ps. 18:9-11, Lam 4:8)
BLUE	Heaven, grace, provision, river of God (Ex. 24:10, Deut. 28:12, Isa 43:20)
YELLOW	Celebration, joy, light (Mt. 17:2, Nehemiah 8:10)
PINK	Mixture of red & white –all of God's character & provision (2 Peter 1:3)
TAN	Bread of life, communion (Luke 22:19, John 6:35)

LISTENING PRAYER

We hope you are blessed through your personal listening prayer. This is a special time for you to receive a personal blessing and allow God to speak to you. There will be a team of two to four people praying for you. These people are volunteers with a heart and passion for Jesus, a desire to minister to the body of Christ through prayer, mature character, and proven gifts of hearing our Father's voice.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PERSONAL LISTENING PRAYER

Come With An Open Heart:

Your Father has new and fresh things He wants to speak to you about. Ask Him to till up the soil of your heart and make it a fertile place to receive His words of life. He is a good God and loves to speak to His children.

Come In A Posture Of Rest:

Relax, rest in Him. We welcome you to record your session on your personal device so you can listen without trying to remember everything or be distracted by taking notes.

Come To Receive:

In general there will be four kinds of things happening in a session. First, there will be periods of silence when the prayer team members are waiting on the Lord. Second, there may be impressions, mental pictures or images, phrases or words spoken to you that a prayer team member believes he has heard the Father "speak" to him. Third, there will be prayers for you based upon what the team members believe they have heard the Father say to them for you. Fourth, there will be prayers for you in response to your prayer requests.

Come Without An Agenda:

The Lord knows the needs and desires of your heart. Don't be in a rush to tell the team your prayer needs. Don't come with a list of prayer requests. Time is limited and the team is asking and trusting the Lord to place things on their hearts to pray about for you. So, trust the Father to first speak to you through them. If at the end of the session, you still have something that you want prayed for, let the team leader know, and they will pray for you about that.

Come With An Expectation:

Although we want you to come without your personal agenda or prayer list, we do want you to come with an expectation. The Lord loves you and desires to speak encouraging, comforting and edifying words to you. So come with the expectation that He will speak these to you.

At Your Personal Listening Prayer Session:

Please be seated in the chair outside the assigned room and wait for a prayer team member to come for you. We will do our best to stay on time. We ask for your patience and flexibility.

RESPONDING TO LISTENING PRAYER

We encourage you to listen to and meditate on the recorded words and prayers of your session. You may consider transcribing the session so that you can carefully reflect on the words spoken to you. Sometimes the significance of what the Father said in this session will take on a clearer meaning as you reflect back on it from the future. Here are some guidelines to help you process your prayer ministry session.

Turn In The Listening Prayer Evaluation Form:

At the end of the session you will be given an Evaluation Form to complete and turn in at the back of the main meeting room. This allows you to give specific feedback both to the leadership and to the prayer team about the session and the degree to which it was helpful. Please do this. Your feedback is important to the health of this process.

Weigh And Test The Prayers And Words Spoken:

In the Scriptures the word "prophecy" describes the process of a person listening to the Lord and then speaking what He is communicating. In many ways that is what happens during these prayer sessions. So, as you are instructed in 1 Cor. 14:29 & 1 Thes. 5:19-21; discern, weigh, evaluate and test everything you have heard to see if it is from the Lord. This means to assume a posture like that of the Berean's in Acts 17:11.

Some Questions You Might Ask Are:

- Were the prayers/words expressed consistent with the Scriptures?
- Did they resonate in agreement with my spirit?
- Were they consistent with what He has already said to me?
- Did they encourage, affirm, comfort, exhort and edify me?
- Did I sense the love and peace of God in the process?

Another wise means of discernment is to submit it to the Lord together with a pastoral leader, trusted mentor, spouse, or another who is mature in Christ and knows you well. If you are still unsure, ask the Lord for confirmation. He knows your heart, and He will respond to one whose heart is set to obey Him.

Once You Have Discerned the Truthfulness Of The Prayers And Words, Ask The Father To Give You The Right Attitudes To Receive And Respond To Them:

The attitudes of humility, faith, patience and obedience are important. Some things are to be prayed into towards their fulfillment. Some are to be responded to by obedience. Things that are yet to come are to be pondered, treasured and prayed into (like Mary's response in Luke 2:19). Faith and patience are often required as you wait for the Lord to bring things to fruition in His timing. Scripture contains many examples of prophetic words that took months or years to fulfill.

If upon prayerful reflection, there are some things that were spoken or prayed that you believe are not from God, those things should be rejected and released. Entrust those words or prayers, and the team, to the Lord's forgiving & sanctifying work. Share it with your leadership and the prayer team's leadership.

COMMUNION GUIDELINES

REQUIREMENTS

Celebration of communion is reserved for those who believe in Jesus and have had a salvation experience.

PREPARATION

Jesus told the disciples to go and prepare to eat the Passover Meal. Crackers and juice will be made available at the Communion table.

Self Examination & Cleansing:

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, Paul warns that we should examine ourselves for sin so that we don't take Communion in an unworthy manner. Thus, as you begin Communion, it is important to have a time of prayer to ask the Lord to reveal the sin in your life, ask for forgiveness, and to receive the Lord's cleansing. (*See also Matthew 5:23-25*) In addition to cleansing, Communion can be a time of healing.

The Blessing of the Elements:

In all accounts, Jesus took the bread and gave thanks before it was served. As part of the time of preparation, you should take the elements (the cracker & juice) and ask the Lord to bless them. We should also give thanks, not only for the elements, but also for the opportunity to participate in the Communion.

RECEIVING THE ELEMENTS

As you are about to receive the elements, it is good to read the Bible description of the Lord's Supper. Accounts can be found in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20 & 1 Corinthians 11:23-30. As you take the elements (by dipping your cracker into the juice), read the section and meditate on the meaning.

THANKSGIVING

When you have finished taking Communion, it is good to have a time of praise and thanksgiving for God's blessing. As you finish, spend time in worship.

MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christ's Death:

When we participate in Communion, we symbolize the death of Christ – our actions give a picture.

Broken bread symbolizes the breaking of His body. It also reminds us that by His stripes we are/shall be healed. (*1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5*)

The Cup symbolizes the pouring out of His blood of the new covenant for us for the forgiveness of sin. We are instructed that as we take the elements, we do it in remembrance of Him.

Our Participation in the Benefits of Christ's Death:

By this action, we proclaim that we participate in or share the benefits earned for us by His death.

Spiritual Nourishment:

Just as ordinary food nourishes our physical bodies, the Lord's Supper gives nourishment to our spirits.

The Unity of Believers:

We all partake. (*1 Corinthians 10:17*)

Christ Affirms His Love for Me:

Jesus *invites* me to come because He *loves me*, individually and personally. Communion reassures me of His personal love for me.

Christ Affirms that All the Blessings of Salvation are Reserved for Me:

He has invited me into His presence. That invitation assures me that He has abundant blessings for me. It is a foretaste of the great banquet table of the King. I come as a member of His eternal family. He has a place reserved just for me.

I Affirm My Faith in Christ:

By my actions, I am proclaiming I need you Lord, and I trust you to forgive my sins and give life & health to my soul. Each time I proclaim again and again that my sins were part of His suffering and death.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I believe God uses young people to do great things. Just as with David, Josiah, Mary, and Timothy, if you are truly seeking and listening to God, He will do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” Thanks to my Abba Father, this process has been such a blessing for me.

This is a devotional about Isaiah 55. This is about an invitation from the High King calling His children home for a feast. He is a good and righteous King, and He loves His children more than anything. This invitation tells of His closeness. He longs for intimacy with His kids. He wants to talk with them, and when they initiate conversation with Him, He is overcome with joy.

He will stop at nothing to get His precious children back home safely. He loves them. It isn't just a superficial love. This love breaks walls down. This love crosses mountain ranges and deserts in search of wayward children. This love sweeps up nations and tears down kings. And when we encounter His love, we are changed forever.

This devotional is primarily a starting point. It is an invitation. Like all invitations, you have a choice. Will you say “yes” and or will you say “no thanks”? You are free to say no. But, oh, how He wants you to say yes and step into more with Him. When saying “yes” to more with God, there is abundant freedom and joy. I encourage you to truly press in and talk with God throughout this devotional. He delights in you, friend. He loves you more than the world. He will never turn His back on you. He will always run to you, ready to give you a big bear hug. He died for you. He wants to go on this journey with you. Just say, “Yes.”

In Him,

Madeleine Owens

Psalm 16:5-9

JUST COME

*Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods. **Isaiah 55:1-2***

These two verses are an invitation into something deeper than just knowing about God. It is an invitation to relationship. So what are these so-called “waters”? In John 7:37-39, we see Jesus say something similar to verse 1 in the above passage:

On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been received because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Jesus is calling us to press into Him. He is offering the same invitation with different wording: *I want you to go deeper with Me.* Whether or not people ever comprehended the depth of what He was offering, He was promising that when His Spirit came, people would not leave unchanged. This Spirit is the key. This is how the believer interacts or “tunes in” with the Father.

The Holy Spirit is promised to every child of the King. This is our birthright. It’s unfortunate to see so many neglect this opportunity. We have a direct connection to the throne room of Heaven. In verse 2 of Isaiah 55, we see even more of a call. He sets it up very logically, but still personally:

Child, why are you wasting time on things that don’t matter? Listen to me, and grow with Me. The rewards will be great.

Why settle for things that don't last when you can have infinitely better? This is part of the invitation I mentioned earlier. His goodness is free for us; anyone and everyone can come. His Spirit is a gift to those who actively choose to partner with Him, to those who surrender to Him. And the best part is? We have rights as His kids to ask Him for more of it. He freely bestows it on us.

God, we say yes to Your invitation into more. We acknowledge Your sovereignty and Your grace. You made a way when there was no way. You bathed us in freedom, and we are now Your children. Forgive us when we waste time. We want to drink from Your waters. Help us listen more intently than we ever have. We are free to ask You for more. Give us more of You, God. Thank you for Your crazy, radical love, Abba.

NEXT STEPS

- God, how do you want me to respond to this "invitation" right now?
- God, what are some specific ways that I can go deeper into Your love.
- God, where are the areas where I may be wasting time?

LISTEN & LIVE

*Pay attention and come to Me; listen, so that you will live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the promises assured to David. Since I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples, so you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you. For the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel, has glorified you. **Isaiah 55:3-5***

There is way more meaning and more hidden references packed into these three verses than might be recognized from the first read-through. They are part of the aforementioned invitation that has been extended to us because of the cross. Our birthright in Christ is access to His Holy Spirit, completely free and unhindered. Because of this, we can be assured that we hear Him. As simplified and easy as it seems, that is the truth. The main kicker is whether or not we have tuned our ears enough to listen to His voice.

My version of the Bible (HCSB) phrases it “pay attention.” Other versions say “give ear” or “incline your ear.” In this instance, pay attention is an addition to incline your ear and vice versa. You must listen but do so intently and obediently. He says to “listen so that you will live.” Not just survival mode, floating through life. True living.

Not only that, but He promised that He is keeping a covenant with us that is the same one made with King David back in 2 Samuel 7:8-16:

Now this is what you are to say to My servant David: ‘This is what the Lord of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture and from following the sheep to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. I will make a name for you like that of the greatest in the land. I will establish a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not afflict them as they have done ever since the day I ordered judges to be over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. ‘The Lord declares to you: The Lord Himself will

make a house for you. When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod and with blows from others. But My faithful love will never leave him as I removed it from Saul; I removed him from your way. 16 Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever.”

Basically, this is what is happening here: God has spoken through a prophet to King David, establishing the Davidic Covenant. This covenant is very similar to the covenant God made to Abraham in Genesis.

Broken down, here are the high points of what was promised in the Davidic covenant.

1. The reaffirming of first two covenants (Abrahamic and Mosaic) to Israel, this being “I will establish a place for My people Israel...” This is seen in 2 Samuel 7:10.
2. God’s promise that David’s son (this being Solomon) will follow him as king and that he would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 7:12-13.
3. In v.16, he promises, “Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever.” This is a reference to Jesus, way down the line.

When we read the next couple of verses, it is clear that they flow together for a reason. Verses 4 and 5 provide clearer context, as well as a continuation of the blessings that come from accepting the invitation. But who is the “him” referred to in verse 4? Skipping back up to verse 3, it’s referring to the promises made to David. The next couple of verses after the third are simply saying, “Hey, remember the Davidic

LISTEN & LIVE

covenant? It was for David, yes, but it still stands for you, Ancient Israel." In the mind of an Israelite, this would have triggered the memory of the promises God had made.

This is the same message God is giving us today. These verses describe God's glorification process for those who follow Him intently. The best part of this is that He hasn't stopped doing this. He is continually lifting people up. Whether this is in positions of leadership or just working in normal everyday people, He is keeping His promises and raising up the faithful.

God, once again, we say yes to listening and obeying. Thank you for Your invitation into Your realm of living. We are paying attention, and we are waiting with expectation. Thank you for the freedom you died for. We say yes to freedom and claim it for day-to-day life. Show us where You are at work in the mundane patterns. Give us Your eyes, Jesus. Give us more of you. You are free to work in and through us. Change us. Thank you for Your promises, Abba. We love you.

NEXT STEPS

- God, am I listening to You on an everyday basis?
- God, do I truly believe that You will keep Your promises? Grow my faith, Abba.
- God, how do I continue to say yes to Your invitation into more?

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call to Him while He is near. Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive.

Every once and a while you read a verse that immediately sparks a question. Isaiah 55:6 was one of those. It seems to give the connotation that God isn't in every moment or near enough to Earth to hear you. This verse almost feels out of place because of it. It feels like this verse was just added into the rest of the passage. But if you dig into it, there are multiple things to note here. It really does fit into the surrounding verses.

First of all, this was written in a time where the Holy Spirit did not reside in every single one of His people. There were a select few that did have the Holy Spirit living inside of them. Isaiah, for example, and other writers of the books of the Bible. It was only after Pentecost that the Spirit-filled believers upon receiving the gospel.

Secondly, this verse, while seeming strange, is simply a call to His believers, asking for their commitment and attention. It is not just "scan around for Him". It isn't "look blankly". Isaiah uses the word "seek". Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines seek like this: "to go in search of, to try to discover". This means action. Same with "call". This means activity. We, as believers, are not called to passivity when it comes to following our Abba Father.

And lastly, it is true that some places seem to be closer to Heaven than others. They have clearer airspace and you can sense more of the Spirit's movement there. In the book *The Happy Intercessor* by Beni Johnson, she explains it like this:

"A thin place is a place where Heaven and earth are close. It is easier to experience the spiritual realm in these places. A lot of times, you can tell you are in a "thin place" because there are a lot of spiritual or creative people who are gathered there."

SEEK THE LORD

In Isaiah 55 verse 6, we see a possible reference to this type of setting. Calling to the Lord while He is near may infer that there are times and places where the movement of the Spirit is particularly strong and we may experience opportunities for intense closeness and connection. The Lord is actively seeking these places with his children.

When we keep reading down to verse 7, it is a little less confusing than the verse before it. It is a very simple cry to repent. There is nothing unusual about it; it is simply an invitation.

Once again, an invitation is being offered here. God is a loving, gracious God. He is one who is righteous, but in the same moment, He is forgiving. What a paradox! Often in scripture, God is referred to as a father, and you cannot see this displayed anywhere better than this verse here. Our Heavenly Father is completely in power. He is fully in charge of everything that goes on in this vast universe. There are many descriptions of God in the Psalms talking about His thundering voice from Heaven, or calling Him "The God of glory." This is absolutely, 100% true.

And yet, we see in all of this unbelievably powerful, not-able-to-be-matched deity, He is gentle with His children. Having been born into the family through faith in His Son, Jesus, we are now His kids. He loves us more than we understand. He instructs us, and yes, that does mean sometimes needing tough love. But that is what a Father does.

He wants to be near to us. He longs to be close to us. God is a jealous God, and He will do everything to protect His children. He is loving, gracious, and glorious. We need to focus on all aspects of His nature. Yes, God is gentle, but He commands the cosmos. He is holy. That is incredible, but it shouldn't be scary. If anything, it is awe-inspiring. He loves us beyond any capable measurement in our human minds.

God, thank you for Your mind-boggling affection toward Your children. You are holy and wonderful. We say yes to Your adventure, for following You truly is that. Fill us with Your love and with Your Spirit. Come move in our cities and in our nation. Come break down our

walls and wreck us with Your love. We ask for more of You, Jesus. Thank you for the freedom we have through You. Change us from the inside out. Give us fresh eyes. We love You, Abba.

NEXT STEPS

- God, teach me how to go searching for You at all times. Help me to press in.
- Where am I not running towards You? How do we remedy that, Lord?
- God, where have I fallen into a state of passivity? Call me back to the life You breathe into your children.

A CALL TO ARMS

*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.” This is the Lord’s declaration. “For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do. **Isaiah 55:8-11***

These first two verses are ones that almost every Christian could probably recite from memory. We see it everywhere, from Instagram bios to inspirational journals, etc. It is surprising, then, that while they are a couple of the most used, they are still very underrated verses. With all of the popularity they have, do we truly understand what they are saying? Not everyone really, truly digs into it. We understand that God’s ways are higher, but does that mean that we can do nothing about the painful positions we find ourselves in? Not in the least bit.

Verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah 55 reinforce God’s power and place as sovereign. This is a crucial thing to understand, yes. He created everything, holds it all in His hands, loves us immensely, and is planning on returning to redeem life as we know it. That is hard to wrap our human minds around. However, it doesn’t stop there. If we have received the Gospel message and have His Spirit living inside of us, we are His children.

This isn’t just a verse about God’s evident royal position over everything we know; this is a verse meant to comfort. Not in an “I can survive this because God knows what He’s doing” way. While true, there is so much more depth to the message here. If we are His children, that means we carry the same power that was used when Jesus rose from the grave. This is the same power that was poured out on those at Pentecost. We have the blood of the Lamb running through our veins. We are not meant to just sit by and watch the world bully us. We have the Spirit inside us.

This is a call to arms.

Isaiah is making a point here. He is reminding us that God has higher ways than we know. We know this and we trust Him. God knows us and wants to come back. But He knows when that is. Our job is to stay vigilant until that day comes. One way to picture this is by imagining Him handing you a giant sword and saying, “Yes, I have a plan, all things are going to work for your good, but in the meantime, you can do some serious damage to the kingdom of darkness in my name. You have my power in you and while it’s rough right now, don’t give up and sit there.”

While this verse comforts, it also promises security and gives hope for tomorrow. Knowing who you are in relation to God the Father is key. Sons and daughters don’t doubt that they are their parents’ children.

This continues in the next two verses. When God speaks something, it won’t fail to come to pass. One of my favorite songs, *Promises Never Fail* by Bethel Music, encapsulates this perfectly:

*Darkness, shadows have no power over me
Fear is empty, shame has no authority
Your love, it won't let go; I know it won't
I know Your thoughts, your plans for me are good
And I know You hold, my future and my hope
Your promises never fail, your promises never fail.*

Similarly, Andrew Peterson’s song, *The Sower’s Song*, is Isaiah 55 put to music. These two songs do a great job of highlighting verses 10-11. It screams of God’s faithfulness, and a lot of times that is really hard to hear when it feels like it isn’t true. But that is one of the good things about God that we aren’t used to as humans who know that things fail and die. God isn’t like that. He will never fail. He will never let us down. He will never abandon us. We are His children.

*As the rain and the snow fall
Down from the sky*

A CALL TO ARMS

*And they don't return but they water the earth and bring
they forth life*

Giving seed to the sower; bread for the hunger

So shall the word of the Lord be with a sound like thunder

And it will not return, it will not return void

We shall be led in peace

And go out with joy.

What God has spoken, it will come to pass. Whether that be now or fifty years in the future, it will not fall to the side. The Sower leads us, not harshly. Not in a rough sort of way. He is our Father. God is for us, so what can stand against us?

Thank you, God, for giving Your only Son for our redemption. With His death came our redemption. We are royalty. We are your children. We are co-heirs with Christ. We carry Your name wherever we go. Thank you for the light and hope You have given us. You are so good to Your people. We praise you eternally. Fill us with more of Your Spirit. Pour it all over our hearts, Father. We want to walk with You forever. You are greater and better than anything in this life. We love you, Abba.

NEXT STEPS

- God, where am I allowing darkness to harass me? How do I begin to step into an offensive position against that darkness?
- How are you teaching me how to live in the freedom of His promises, Lord.
- How do I live an "on guard" life for You, Jesus?

You will indeed go out with joy and be peacefully guided; the mountains and the hills will break into singing before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush, a cypress will come up, and instead of the brier, a myrtle will come up; it will make a name for Yahweh as an everlasting sign that will not be destroyed. **Isaiah 55:12-13**

As we come to the end of Isaiah 55, these verses fit right into everything that has been mentioned previously. It serves its purpose as the end-cap, so to speak, of the passage. While only thirteen verses long, this chapter is packed full of important messages. It's an invitation into something more. Jesus wants you to come. It's worth more than all other things of this life. He wants us to pay attention; keep our ears trained to His voice. He promised that He is maintaining a covenant with us, just like His covenant with King David.

He wants us to call on His name, because the Holy Spirit lives in us, giving us constant access to the heart of the Father. He reminds us that He is a compassionate and gentle God. On top of that, He rules with a mighty hand. His thoughts are not ours, and His ways are so much higher. His promises never fail. What He has spoken, He will complete it.

And then we get to verses 12 and 13. The most important part to know and remember about these verses is the fact that they are not a promise of happy sunshine and rainbows. It mentions thorn bushes being replaced by cypress trees, briars being replaced by myrtle bushes. These aren't just random plant metaphors. Cypress trees grow in soil with high acid content. Myrtles grow in shade. Yes, they are replacing things that are ugly and dead, but not without hardship. These plants are extremely valuable, but they aren't grown in "nice" conditions.

It's really interesting to read through the entire chapter as a whole after this verse. The passage is not phrased in a dark way, but reading between the lines, we know that Isaiah and the people of Israel have gone through very hard times. Despite this, verses 12 and 13 proclaim that people "will go out with joy and be peacefully guided."

There is a strong statement being made here.

It's known by Christians everywhere that this world can at times be unfriendly, rough and crude, and often just downright evil. However, because of the Spirit living in us, we have the ability in every situation and circumstance to choose joy. In those moments, that is what brings God glory.

Time and time again through scripture, we see people choose joy in scary moments. This isn't superficial happiness; we are talking about real joy. This doesn't mean goofy smiling. This means having hope and trusting the Lord, even when it hurts.

Christians who are able to do this, do it out of trust in God. How does that happen? In order for trust to be built, a relationship must exist. Not surprisingly, a relationship is born from listening to each other.

It all circles back to constant conversation with the Lord. It seems weird at first if you haven't gone to that place in your relationship with Him, but after some time, you won't even notice that you do it.

It's not a crazy thing like some people might think. It's simply quieting your heart and asking to hear. Everyone hears Him, but it's dependent on whether or not you have tuned your ears to listen.

He wants to be close with you. He already surrounds you and loves you. He is the protector and provider. All He asks is that you accept His invitation. I would challenge you to do so in the next week, and to begin quieting your heart to listen to what He has to say.

When you do, it'll blow you away.

God, thank you for your radical invitation to all of your children. Thank you for pursuing a deeper, more intimate relationship. Plug our hearts into Yours. We want to hear Your heartbeat. We want to walk with You, Father. Make us ready for Your return someday. Lift our heads and call us higher. You are amazingly faithful, and we repent of the times

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