

# Learning To Wait On God

Genesis 18:1-8

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"Walking by Faith" Series on the Life of Abraham - Lesson 14 of 20

Far too many people treat God as if He were little more than a vending machine in the sky. They come to Him when they want something. They tell Him what they think He wants to hear in the hopes that He will grant their requests. Afterward, when *they* are done talking, they walk away and don't return until they need something else. Our God is faithful to honor His Word and the promises it contains concerning our lives. However, His heart must long for us to spend time with Him for no other reason than for Who He is, and not just for what He can do for us. Tragically, we have lost sight of the fact that the Lord desires to have an intimate relationship with each one of us.

Take a moment, and review the last ten prayers that you prayed. How many of those prayers were free from any requests for God to help you or to give you something? If we treated our spouses like we treat God, our marriages would be very shallow and challenged. If we treated our friends like we treat God, our relationships would always be suspect and would suffer.

Somehow, our thinking has become twisted. We treat God as if His sole purpose for existence is to please us and to meet our needs ... this is wrong! Revelation 4:11 tells us that we were created for the pleasure of God; *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Our study in the life of Abraham will teach us how to develop a deep friendship with God. Abraham encountered the presence of the Lord in Genesis 18 and instead of asking Him for something, Abraham asked the Lord if he could serve Him. Abraham responded to the Lord's presence by waiting on the Lord. I use the word "wait" not in the sense of the passage of time; rather, the word "wait" which means "to serve," like a waiter in a restaurant. We need to become consumed with how we can serve Him.

## Waiting On the Lord in Humility

A perfect starting place for learning to wait on the Lord is to bow in humble submission before Him. When Abraham recognized one of the three men who were passing by to be the Lord, he ran out to meet Him and bowed himself to the ground. We find this in Genesis 18:2-3, *So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant."* This was not only a posture of worship; it was also an expression of humility.

One day, a woman, whose life was stained with sin, approached Jesus as He was sitting at a table eating with Simon, a Pharisee. She bowed down and humbled herself before Jesus and washed His feet with her tears. The Apostle Luke tells us in Luke 7:37-38, *And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.*

On another occasion, Mary, the sister to Lazarus and Martha, also bowed in humility before Jesus. She anointed His feet with expensive oil and wiped them with her hair. John 12:1-3 describes her worship; *Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

In both cases these women, who had humbled themselves at the feet of Jesus, found joy and forgiveness and a deep sense of His grace. Notice that neither woman asked Jesus for anything. They just wanted to express their heart-felt thanksgiving for His forgiving grace to them. Their worship was free from any requests other than the opportunity to love and worship before Him.

## Waiting On the Lord in Worship

When Abraham bowed before the Lord, it was more than bowing in humility; it was also a posture of worship. Many believers are reluctant and uncomfortable when it comes to expressing their praise and worship to God. They justify their lack of physical response as an attempt to preserve their dignity. They forget that what we call dignity, the Lord calls pride. The Word teaches that pride repels the presence of God; *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6). Tragically, many are more concerned about what the person next to them thinks of their worship, than what God thinks.

The Bible is replete with expressions of worship that the Lord enjoys: singing; shouting; dancing; lifting and clapping hands; kneeling and bowing before Him, etc. We would do well to remember that the Lord never changes; *“For I am the LORD, I do not change”* (Malachi 3:6). The writer of the book of Hebrews reinforces this truth by stating; *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). God has not changed His mind about the physical expressions of worship that He enjoys. We are the ones who have decided that some of the expressions are not conducive to our modern way of worship. We have withheld these expressions from the Lord as a means of maintaining the dignity and reverence of our worship. Truth be told, we have merely protected the pride of our flesh!

Many make the mistake of relegating worship to a church activity on Sunday. While worship may have a corporate expression ... it is not an activity ... worship is a lifestyle. Worship can be defined as; “love that responds to love.” To fully understand the activity of worship we must take the collective whole of Scripture.

Perhaps the closest single verse of Scripture that captures the essence of worship is Deuteronomy 6:5, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”* We are instructed to love (worship) the Lord with all of our *hearts*. In other words, we are to worship the Lord with all of the emotional expressions of our hearts. Unfortunately, emotional worship is very rare in believers today. Tragically, when they sense they are reaching the threshold of an emotional response, they resist and withhold their emotions in an attempt to maintain the dignity of their appearance to others.

Secondly, we are instructed in Deuteronomy 6:5 to love (worship) the Lord with all of our *souls*. Our soul is comprised of our intellect and it is the place where our will is determined. We are to focus our thoughts on the Lord as we offer Him our worship. We are to surrender our will to His will, in all matters of life.

Thirdly, we are instructed to love (worship) the Lord with all of our *bodily strength*. In other words, we are to offer the Lord the full expression of our physical bodies in worship. Whether it is standing, bowing, kneeling, clapping and lifting our hands, or dancing before the Lord; we are to do it with all of our strength. Anything less than a whole-hearted expression of worship is distasteful and dishonoring to the Lord. A half-hearted expression of worship is a blatant indicator that we are indifferent to what the Lord desires from us in our worship of Him.

In corporate worship, there are some that lament and say, “I just don’t feel the presence of the Lord in this worship service.” While this statement is usually meant as a criticism of the leadership, it is actually a self-indictment. The truth is that one who makes such a statement has failed to worship properly. They haven’t released the emotions of their hearts to the Lord. When it comes to worship, many have the emotional response of a tree stump! They want the leader of worship to stir their emotions instead of exercising their responsibility to release their emotions to the Lord in worship. If the truth be told, it is hard for some to worship the Lord as they are too consumed with what they are going to do when the church service is finally over.

The Lord made a promise through the Prophet Jeremiah. He promised that whenever we engage our whole heart in pursuit of Him, we will be able to find Him; *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart* (Jeremiah 29:13). Don’t think for a minute that the Lord is not aware of the quality of your worship. He knows whether or not your heart is engaged in worship in spite of the fact your lips may be moving. Consider what the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah; *And so the Lord says, “These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote”* (Isaiah 29:12). As a matter of fact, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well that true worshipers were so scarce, that His Father was actively searching for them ... *“The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him”* (John 4:23).

## **Waiting On the Lord in Sacrifice**

*And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate* (Genesis 18:7-8). The Bedouin culture of Abraham’s day mandated that; one feed, house, and entertain strangers when they were present. However, I believe that when Abraham sacrificed a calf to prepare a meal for the Lord, he was doing something that transcended his culture. He was serving the Lord with a sacrificial offering.

After Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, God taught him that it would be the rite of sacrifice that would become the only prescribed means of approaching God to ask for forgiveness and fellowship. The sacrifice of the Old Testament was a fore-shadow of the ultimate sacrifice of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus. The Prophet Samuel understood that animal sacrifice was not God’s ultimate plan for the forgiveness of sin and the fellowship of relationship with Him. Samuel said in I Samuel 15:22, *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”* David said in Psalm 51:16-17, *“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.”*

Jesus completely satisfied God’s righteous judgment against man’s sin when He died on the Cross. Now, we have been made justified through His blood. In other words, it is just as if we had never sinned. When we place our trust in Jesus, and accept His death on the Cross as full payment for our sins, we are made innocent again!

Many people assume that God wants their money; their time; their talents; and their influence. This is not true ... God does not want any of those things from us. The only sacrifice that God wants from us is “us”! He wants all of “us” to be laid before Him on the altar of our hearts. He wants the complete surrender of our wills so that we can walk in total obedience to His Word. He wants the whole of our hearts to be open to the leadership of His Holy Spirit.

## **Waiting On the Lord in Service**

Abraham requested that the Lord allow him to serve Him by washing His feet in Genesis 18:3-4, *My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.* Jesus taught that He receives our service to others as a ministry to Himself. Consider what He said in Matthew 25:34-36, 40, *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."*

When we understand that we are actually serving Jesus when we serve others, we won't care if they ever say, "thank-you." We can also dismiss our egos and our driving need to be recognized by people for our acts of kindness. When Jesus becomes the focus of our service, the one that we are serving simply becomes the beneficiary of our love for the Lord.

We can rest in the assurance that one day on Heaven's shore, the Lord will reward us for service that we have rendered to others in His name. Hebrews 6:10 tells us that Jesus will personally acknowledge our actions when He gives His rewards for faithful service ...

*For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

***Wait on the Lord in Humility ... Be Diligent to Resist Your Pride!***

***Wait on the Lord in Worship ... Worship with Your Entire Being!***

***Wait on the Lord in Sacrifice ... Surrender All of You to Him!***

***Wait on the Lord in Service ... Serve the Lord by Serving Others!***