



WordPoints

Challenging Every Person to Take God More Seriously

Diligently Seeking God

Six Sermon Outlines

Gary Henry

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Gary Henry

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Contents

Lesson 1 — Can God Be Pleased?

Lesson 2 — Do We Believe That God Is?

Lesson 3 — What Does It Mean to Seek God?

Lesson 4 — How Does God Reward Those Who Seek Him?

Lesson 5 — Why Is Diligence So Important?

Lesson 6 — What Motives Should Move Us Toward God?

CAN GOD BE PLEASED? Two Truths That Can Give You Hope

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. Even more disturbing than the signs of *unbelief* around us are the signs of *shallow faith* in many of us who do believe.
 - 1. Too many congregations have too many *nominal* members, i.e. Christians in *name only*.
 - 2. Too often, our ranks are riddled with *weakness* and *watered-down commitment*.
 - 3. Too many of us are too far behind in our *spiritual growth and development*.
- C. It is urgent that we *take God more seriously*.
 - 1. In the language of **Hb. 11:6**, we need to *seek God more diligently*.
 - 2. During this series of studies, we're going to take an in-depth look at every key word in this text.
- D. In this lesson, we want to focus on the idea of **PLEASING** God.
 - 1. Frankly, this is an issue that we struggle with.
 - 2. *Discouragement* is all too prevalent, even among those who seem to take God the most seriously.
 - 3. Genuine *hope* sometimes seems to be the exception rather than the rule.
- E. **Can God be pleased?** Based on **Hb.11:6**, I want to present *two truths* that can give you *real hope*.

I. TRUTH ONE: YES, GOD CAN BE PLEASED

- A. In regard to this truth, *two dangerous extremes* need to be avoided.
 - 1. At one extreme is the **self-righteous** approach.
 - a. The "Pharisee" is out of touch with the reality of his own sinfulness.
 - b. Two texts which address the self-righteous attitude: **Isa. 64:6** and **Lk. 17:10**.
 - 2. But at the other extreme is the **doubting** approach.
 - a. This person is out of touch with the reality of God's grace.
 - b. He may doubt that God can be pleased by *anybody* — or he may just doubt that *he* can do it.
 - 3. When we fall into these errors, we swing back and forth between *pride* and *discouragement*.
- B. But the Scriptures teach that **God can be pleased**.
 - 1. The example of Enoch - **Hb. 11:5**.
 - 2. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" (**Num. 6:24-26**).
 - 3. "The Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation" (**Psa. 149:4**).
 - 4. "Well done, good and faithful servant" (**Mt. 25:21**).
 - 5. The possibility that we — yes, we! — can please God ought to warm our hearts with **confidence**.

II. TRUTH TWO: IT IS OUR FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD

- A. What it means to please God *by faith*.
 - 1. There are *only two ways* one can be "righteous" before God. In the Scriptures, these are called:
 - a. The righteousness of *law*.
 - b. The righteousness of *faith*.

2. Consider the *contrast* drawn in the Scriptures between these *two ways of pleasing God*.
 - a. The **righteousness of law** belongs to those who have never broken God's law. To "live" by God's law in this way, we would have to "keep" it completely - **Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:10-12**.
 - 1) But not having kept God's law, this path is now closed to us.
 - 2) If, as Christians, we try to use the law of God that we're now under as a means of accomplishing our own salvation, we make the same mistake that Israel made long ago: we reject *God's way of making people righteous* (the righteousness of faith) in order to pursue *our own way of being righteous* (the righteousness of law) - **Rom. 10:1-8** (esp. **v.3**).
 - 3) Even the sincerest effort to keep God's law perfectly is a losing battle - **Rom. 7:19-24**.
 - 4) There can be no hope for those who base their confidence on their keeping of God's law!
 - b. The good news, however, is that God is willing to accept us on the basis of our *faith* rather than the perfection of our *law-keeping* - **Rom. 5:1,2**. Cf. **1:16,17; 4:3-5**.
 - c. God could not do this, of course, if Christ had not died to atone for our sins - **Rom. 3:25,26**.
 - d. But Christ having died for the sins of mankind, a new kind of righteousness is made possible.
 - e. This **righteousness of faith** is *the hope of the gospel of Christ* - **Phil. 3:9-11**. Cf. **Hb. 9:15**.
3. **Hb. 11:5,6** is simply asking us to believe what the entire rest of the New Testament teaches: **by faith we can please God!**

- B. *Abraham* is the great example of the righteousness of faith.
 1. It was not the perfection of his obedience that God counted as Abraham's righteousness.
 2. Rather, Abraham "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (**Gen. 15:6**).
 3. This text is quoted no less than 4 times in the NT - **Rom. 4:3-5,20-22; Gal. 3:6-9; Jas. 2:23**.
 4. Abraham, then, stands as the spiritual forefather of all, from creation until now, who have sought to please God as he did: *through faith* - **Gal. 3:6-9**.
- C. The critical issue is *trust* — if we trust God as Abraham did, then we can *please* God. Cf. **Hb. 11:8-19**.
 1. Trust is what was lost in the Garden of Eden, and trust is what we must return to!
 2. Hence, obeying the gospel can be described as "trusting in Christ" - **Eph. 1:12,13**.
- D. Thus, to our **confidence** is added the healthy balance of **humility** - **Hb. 4:16; 1 Jn. 4:17-19**.

Conclusion

- A. It is extremely *important* to know that we can please God.
 1. If not, we're defeated before we start.
 2. If not, we won't seek God — we will run from Him.
- B. Pleasing God ought to be our aim, our goal — *our highest aspiration*.
 1. **No higher goal**. "Therefore we *make it our aim*, whether present or absent, *to be well pleasing to Him*" (**2 Cor. 5:9**).
 2. **No more powerful goal**. "For the *love of Christ compels us*, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should *live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*" (**2 Cor. 5:14,15**).
- C. The most powerful reason to repent and obey God is *eagerness to please a Father who can be pleased!*
- D. The gospel of Christ is a gospel of **HOPE** — it is the message that *we can come home to a God who wants to receive us and be pleased with us!*
- E. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (**Mt. 11:28-30**).

DO WE BELIEVE THAT GOD IS?

Taking a Hard Look at Our Own Convictions

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. In this series of lessons, we are emphasizing the need to *take God more seriously* — and there is *not a single one of us* who does not need to do this!
- C. In the last lesson, we saw that it's possible for us to actually **PLEASE** God — that ought to be our *confident hope* and our *highest aim*.
- D. In this lesson, we'll look at **FAITH** — “for he who comes to God must *believe that He is*.”
- E. **Do we believe that God is?** Let's take a *hard look* at our *own convictions*.

I. DO WE NEED THIS LESSON?

- A. Some will already have said *they don't need to ask* whether God is — *of course we believe that God is!*
 - 1. Well, perhaps we do, but in all honesty, the “faith” that many of us have is little more than a hand-me-down religion. Some indications: (1) carnal attitudes and worldly lifestyles, (2) non-involvement in congregational life, (3) ignorance of the Scriptures, and (4) vulnerability to temptation.
 - 2. Ours may be a “Christian” nation — but few may really believe that God is.
 - 3. And ours may be a “faithful” congregation — but real, personal faith may be in short supply.
- B. The Scriptures speak of things like a “sincere faith” (**1 Tim. 1:5**) and a “genuine faith” (**2 Tim. 1:5**). This means that it's possible to have a faith that is something *less* than sincere and genuine!
- C. As individuals, our faith is somewhere on a **continuum** between the *faith of others* and a *faith that is our own*. The question is: what can we do to move toward a faith that is *more* our own?
- D. Let's look first at the *difference* between these two kinds of faith, starting with the one that we're striving for: a truly genuine, personal faith.

II. THE INGREDIENTS OF PERSONAL FAITH

- A. Genuine, personal faith has three basic elements:
 - 1. **Credence** (belief) - **Jn. 8:24**. This includes not only the **what** but also the **why** - **1 Pt. 3:15**.
 - 2. **Confidence** (trust) - **2 Tim. 1:12**. Real **trust** produces **unconditional obedience**: trust > obey.
 - 3. **Constancy** (faithful unto death) - **2 Tim. 4:7,8**. **Faith > Faithfulness**. Cf. **Rev. 2:10**.
- B. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your own faith in these three areas?

III. THE TRAITS OF MERE TRADITION

- A. **Definition:** “tradition” simply refers to that which has been “received.”
- B. In religion, some people's faith is **nothing more than tradition** — they've simply been going with the flow, and their convictions are nothing more than those of the “chameleon.” Their faith is not really their own — it is a matter of *convenience* rather than *conviction*.

- C. Now, what is wrong here is *not tradition itself*. **There is nothing wrong with tradition!** We are fools if we throw things away simply because they are traditional - **2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14,15**. Cf. **2 Thess. 2:15**.
- D. Our point is not that faith and tradition are opposites — but that **real faith is MORE than tradition!**
- E. **The difference is not in the CONTENT, but in the QUALITY of our faith.**
1. If our faith is *mere* tradition, then it's probably very *weak*.
 2. We've probably never *examined it or thought it through*.
 3. It's probably never been *seriously tested*. Cf. **Jas. 1:2,3; 1 Pt. 1:6,7**.
 4. It's probably quite *abstract & impersonal* — God is little more than an *idea* to talk about.
 5. Worst of all, we're probably not able to give a "reason for the hope" (**1 Pt. 3:15**) that is within us — **we don't know why we believe**.
- F. Three dangers of a faith that is mere tradition:
1. It won't stand the test of **temptation**.
 2. It won't stand the test of **hardship**.
 3. It won't stand the test of **judgment** - **Mt. 7:22,23; 15:8,9**.

IV. STEPS WE CAN TAKE TO GROW IN OUR FAITH

- A. Many never really confront the issue of real faith until they're faced with *some serious crisis in life*. **Yet this is too IMPORTANT an issue to postpone until a crisis makes it URGENT.**
- B. Can't we *decide right now* to move from "hand-me-down religion" to a deeper, more genuine faith? What practical steps can we take?
1. First, we can be **honest** about our faith - **Mk. 9:24; Rev. 3:1**. Cf. **2 Cor. 13:5**.
 2. Then we can:
 - a. **Feed** it.
 - b. **Challenge** it.
 - c. **Refresh** it.
- C. Like most valuable things, real faith has to be **grown** — there is no "get faithful quick" scheme - **1 Tim. 4:15**. We need *incremental growth, little investments in our faith day by day*.

Conclusion

- A. We say we "believe that God is," but **how much do we trust Him in making real-life decisions?**
1. Do you believe that somebody could walk over Niagara Falls on a tightrope while pushing a wheelbarrow? Many might say they believed it, but how many would . . . **get into the wheelbarrow?**
 2. It's when the tough, real-world decisions have to be made that we find out whether we truly "believe that God is."
- B. The goal of gospel teaching is to produce **love** out of (1) a **pure heart**, (2) a **good conscience**, and (3) a **"faith unfeigned"** (**1 Tim. 1:5 KJV**) — what we want is a faith that is the *"real deal."*
- C. In future, we won't be able to "go with the flow." The flow is moving in too many different directions!
- D. It has never been more important to decide what kind of **FAITH** we're going to have.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK GOD? A Lesson on the Heart of Real Religion

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. *A right relationship with God* does not happen by *accident* — it requires *deliberate action*. We need to make more careful *decisions* about God.
- C. In the last lesson, we saw that we must **BELIEVE** that God is.
- D. In this lesson, we will focus on the word **SEEK** — God is “a rewarder of those who diligently *seek* Him.”
 - 1. “Seeking” God has become somewhat of a fad in recent years.
 - 2. Unfortunately, much that is called “seeking God” is little more than an exercise in *self-gratification*.
- E. **What does it mean to seek God?** This will be a lesson on *the heart of real religion*.

I. WHAT SEEKING GOD IS

- A. First, let’s consider some things that seeking God is *not*. (These things will certainly *accompany* seeking God, and if things like these weren’t present in a person’s life, that would indicate a deficiency in that person’s seeking. But *by themselves* these things don’t necessarily mean that a person is seeking God.)
 - 1. Church membership, attendance.
 - 2. Bible study, prayer.
 - 3. Helping others.
 - 4. Doctrinal soundness.
 - 5. Personal evangelism - **Mt. 23:15**.
 - 6. Spiritual feelings - **Rom. 10:2**.
 - 7. Love for the truth - **Jn. 7:17**.
- B. What seeking God is.
 - 1. Growth in **OBEDIENCE**
 - 2. With a desire to **LOVE** and **HONOR** God
 - 3. **MORE** each day.
- C. *A deep longing to be closer to God* — closer to Him than our sins have allowed us to be in the past!
- D. *A conscious, deliberate goal that we reach for* - **Phil. 3:13,14**.
- E. Some *similar expressions* in the Scriptures.
 - 1. **Desiring God**. A fervent longing - **Psa. 27:4**.
 - 2. **Loving God with all our hearts**. A wholehearted affection - **Mt. 22:37,38**.
 - 3. **Calling upon the Lord**. An earnest appeal - **Psa. 145:18; Isa. 55:6**.
- F. When we seek God, we are seeking to **relate ourselves rightly to His glory!** Cf. **Phil. 1:20**.

II. WHY SEEKING GOD IS SO IMPORTANT

- A. If we must seek God, it is not because He is “hard to find” - **Ac. 17:27**. But God desires fellowship only

with those who deeply *desire* such fellowship.

B. Seeking God is a “first-principles” issue.

1. Having to do with the heart, this is surely among the “weightier matters” (**Mt. 23:23**).
2. Some “first-principles” passages: **Deut. 10:12,13**; **Mic. 6:8**; **Mt. 22:37-40**; **23:23**; **Ac. 24:25**.
3. Much more fundamental than many of the “basics” that we emphasize — a “prior” consideration.

C. God’s promises to the seeker:

1. “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*” (**Jer. 29:12,13**).
2. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (**Mt. 7:7,8**).

III. ARE WE SEEKING GOD OR NOT? A SELF-TEST

A. Our need for an *honest self-inventory*.

1. Are we seeking to fill our minds more and more with the **KNOWLEDGE** of God?
2. Are we seeking to bring our thoughts, words, and deeds more into line with the **WILL** of God?
3. Are we seeking more and more to engage in **WORSHIP** unto God?
4. Are we seeking more and more to be with the **PEOPLE** of God?

B. God is seeking those who are seeking Him - **Mal. 3:16**.

Conclusion

- A. Many of us have grown up in *sound, faithful congregations* and never learned a *real desire for God Himself*.
- B. Religion is not only about *servicing* God — it is also about *desiring* Him.
- C. “One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (**Psa. 27:4**).
- D. Having a **DEEPER DESIRE FOR GOD** every day is what this life is all about!

HOW DOES GOD REWARD THOSE WHO SEEK HIM?

Defining the Reward and Responding Rightly to It

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. Of all our concerns, surely the question of God is the one that *deserves our most careful attention*.
- C. In the last lesson, we tried to see what it really means to **SEEK** God.
- D. In this lesson, let's consider the **REWARD** — God is “a *rewarder* of those who diligently seek Him.”
- E. The whole concept of “rewards and punishments” is controversial, of course — at this date, some think it is crude to speak of God meting out rewards and punishments.
- F. **How does God reward those who seek Him?** Let's see if we can *define* the reward that God gives and determine that we will *respond rightly* to it.

I. DOES GOD'S LOVE MEAN THAT EVERYBODY WILL BE SAVED?

- A. The doctrine of “universalism” teaches that *everybody* will be saved eventually.
- B. But if the Scriptural account of God is accurate, *two different destinies* stand before us - **Rom. 2:4-8**.
- C. God could not be good and not punish evil. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (**Gen. 18:25**). Cf. **Gen. 4:10**; **Job 19:25**; **2 Thess. 1:-6-8**; etc.
- D. Jesus is the Savior of those who *obey* Him - **Hb. 5:9**. Cf. **2 Cor. 5:10**.

II. WHAT IS GOD'S DESIRE FOR US?

- A. God's *benevolent character*.
 - 1. At the cross, God proved His *benevolence* (“good will”) toward us - **Rom.5:8**; **8:32**.
 - 2. So, contrary to much that may happen in the short term, He asks us to **believe**:
 - a. That He **is** — God's *existence*.
 - b. That He is a **rewarder** of those who diligently seek Him — God's *goodness*.
 - 3. The confidence of the gospel of Christ is that in the end, *good will triumph over evil*.
 - a. The ultimate **triumph** of God over evil. *This is my Father's world . . .*
 - b. God's desire for **us personally to be a part** of His triumph!
 - 4. We are merely bit players in this drama, only footsoldiers in this great war, but — amazingly, given our rebellion against Him and collusion with the enemy — **God is still willing for us to share in the celebration of His victory when the time comes**.
 - 5. “This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, **we shall also reign with Him**” (**2 Tim. 2:11,12**).
- B. God's *desire* that all *respond* to His love and *accept* reconciliation to Him on His terms.
 - 1. Though our destiny depends on our decision, God is not neutral with respect to our choice. He desires us to make the choice to share in His glory - **2 Pt. 3:9**. Cf. **Deut. 30:19,20**.
 - 2. God wants to bless us.
 - 3. When we take any honest step in God's direction, He honors that - **Ac. 10:1-4**.

- C. "Whoso draws nigh to God one step through doubtings dim, God will advance a mile in blazing light to him" (Angelus Silesius). Cf. **Lk. 15:20**.
- D. God's special love for those who do respond and seek Him diligently — His kindness smiles upon those who give themselves to Him - **Num. 6:24-26**. Cf. **Psa. 149:4**.

III. WHAT IS THE REWARD THAT GOD GIVES?

- A. Faithfulness to God certainly brings the enjoyment of many *secondary things* that are of benefit to us.
- B. But more important than all these is the real reward that awaits us: **God desires to give us Himself**.
 - 1. We were created such that fellowship with God is our deepest **need** - **Gen. 1:27**; **Eccl.3:11**.
 - 2. God ought to be our greatest **desire**.
- C. Eternal life is to "know God" - **Jn. 17:3**.
- D. *To be with God for eternity* is the reward that comes to those who seek Him diligently - **Rev. 22:1-5**.

IV. THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO GOD'S GOODNESS: REVERENCE + GRATITUDE

- A. We need to be careful to have *true conceptions* of God's character — but we also need to *respond* to God's character in the right way.
- B. It is a combination of **reverence + gratitude** that is our right response to God's goodness.
 - 1. "Although they *knew* God, they did not *glorify* Him as God, nor were *thankful*" (**Rom. 1:21**).
 - 2. Remember our definition of seeking God: ***growth in obedience with a desire to LOVE and HONOR God more each day.***
- C. This puts the emphasis on the glory of the Giver, not our enjoyment of the gift. Even in our consideration of the reward that can come to us, we still need to keep the emphasis on God, not on us!

Conclusion

- A. **God loves us more than we love ourselves.**
 - 1. When we say yes to God's offer of salvation, *His joy is far greater than we are able to experience.*
 - 2. Likewise, if we choose to reject God, *He will lose far more than we.*
- B. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; **that where I am, there you may be also**" (**Jn. 14:3**).
- C. May we **deeply long** to be with God where He is and see His face.
- D. The more we understand God's **REWARD**, the more we are filled with reverence and gratitude.

WHY IS DILIGENCE SO IMPORTANT? A Look at the Ideas of Fervency and Faithfulness

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. According to opinion polls, the average American says that he believes in God, prays from time to time, and even attends religious services periodically — yet for all practical purposes, I fear the average American hardly ever thinks about God.
- C. Certainly, it is not common for people to seek God with anything that could be called *diligence*.
- D. In the last lesson, we saw that God **REWARDS** the diligent seeker.
- E. So in this lesson, let's get down to brass tacks and talk about this idea of **DILIGENCE** — God is “a rewarder of those who *diligently* seek Him” (NKJV).
 - 1. Not all English translations contain the word “diligently.”
 - 2. But the Greek verb *ekzeteo* (“search out”) can well be translated “diligently seek,” as in the KJV and NKJV. Cf. “search for Him” (J. B. Phillips), “seek him out” (Richmond Lattimore), “sincerely look for him” (Living Bible), “earnestly seek him” (NIV).
- F. **Why is diligence so important?** Let's look at this question from the perspective of two terms: *fervency* and *faithfulness*.

I. THE WORST INSULT THAT CAN BE OFFERED TO GOD

- A. **Indifference** — apathy, complacency . . . or worst of all, the *hypocrisy* of caring about God less than one gives the appearance of caring.
- B. The strongest language in the Scriptures is almost always a rebuke of those who *pretend to care but don't* - **Mal. 1:10,13; Mt. 23:27,28**.
- C. Nothing is worse than *lukewarmness* - **Rev. 3:15,16**.
- D. But how can we *avoid* this disrespect to God? **By seeking Him . . . diligently!**
- E. Can we not add extra measures of the following qualities to our seeking of God?
 - 1. Sincerity.
 - 2. Seriousness.
 - 3. Decisiveness.
 - 4. Passion.
 - 5. Energy.
 - 6. Persistence.
 - 7. Love - **1 Cor. 13:1-3**.

II. THE TWO BASIC COMPONENTS OF DILIGENCE

- A. We must seek God **FERVENTLY**.
 - 1. Our *desire* for God must be intense enough that it could be described as a *hunger* and a *thirst*.
 - 2. “Blessed are those who *hunger* and *thirst* for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (**Mt. 5:6**).

3. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, 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? " (**Psa. 42:1,2**).

B. Seek God **FAITHFULLY**.

1. We must seek God "faithfully" in two different senses.
 - a. Faithful in the sense of **truth**. "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship Him in *spirit and truth*" (**Jn. 4:24**).
 - 1) The "God" that many people seek is little more than a *figment of their imaginations*.
 - 2) The God who *truly exists* must be sought — and it is prerogative to stipulate *how He may be approached*.
 - 3) "By those who *come near Me* I must be regarded as *holy*" (**Lev. 10:3**).
 - b. But also faithful as a **lover** — with no *competing* loves!
 - 1) "*Adulterers and adulteresses!* Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (**Jas. 4:4**).
 - 2) "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and *purify your hearts, you double-minded*" (**Jas. 4:8**).
2. So we must seek God with *single-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and purity of heart*.
3. "Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God" (**Mt. 5:8**). Cf. **Deut. 4:29**.

III. THE DIFFERENCE THAT SEEKING GOD WILL MAKE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

- A. Greater **IMPACT** for good on other people. "'And I will *sanctify* My great name, which has been *profaned* among the nations, which you have *profaned* in their midst; and **the nations shall know that I am the Lord**," says the Lord God, '**when I am hallowed in you before their eyes**'" (**Ezek. 36:23**).
- B. The deep **PEACE** that comes from knowing that we are — finally! — *doing what is right toward God*.
- C. The deep **JOY** that comes from taking part in the greatest adventure of all: *walking by faith*.

Conclusion

- A. Spiritual **progress** is the result of **discipline**.
 1. "*Meditate* on these things; *give yourself entirely to them*, that your *progress* may be evident to all" (**1 Tim. 4:15**).
 2. "But I *discipline* my body and *bring it into subjection*, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (**1 Cor. 9:27**).
- B. Faithful **stewardship** of ourselves is the result of **diligence**. "Be *diligent* to present yourself approved to God, *a worker who does not need to be ashamed*, rightly dividing the word of truth" (**2 Tim. 2:15**).
- C. God is greatly *dishonored* if we approach Him with anything less than **DILIGENCE**.

WHAT MOTIVES SHOULD MOVE US TOWARD GOD?

Rightly Relating Ourselves to God's Glory

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 11:6**.
- B. During this series of lessons, we have looked at *each key term* in this great text.
- C. In this last lesson, we want to look at our **MOTIVES** — our *reasons* for seeking God.
- D. It would be hard to overestimate the *importance* of our motives.
 - 1. "All meaningful change starts with right aspiration" (Keith Yamashita).
 - 2. Motive is the key to motivation!
- E. **What motives should move us toward God?** Let's consider the importance of *rightly relating ourselves to God's glory*.

I. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE RELIGION THAT MOST PEOPLE PRACTICE?

- A. When it comes right down to it, most people's religion is **self-centered** — it's more about *them* than about *God*.
 - 1. We're interested primarily in *what God can do for us* - **Jn. 6:26,27**.
 - 2. We're listening to station WIFM (What's in It for Me?).
 - 3. We're more interested in God's *blessings* than in *God Himself*.
- B. We tend to have a "utilitarian" or "pragmatic" concept of God.
- C. We see God as a "voodoo machine."
- D. "Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow, and to love Him as they love their cow — for the milk and cheese and profit it brings them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward comfort" (Meister Eckhart).
- E. **But self-centered motives are not strong enough, no matter how "noble."**
- F. The devil will defeat us if our focus is on ourselves.

II. WHAT IS THE RIGHT REASON FOR SEEKING GOD?

- A. Remember: **motive is the key to motivation**. If we want to be more powerfully *motivated*, we must find *higher motives*.
 - 1. *QUANTITY of motivation* — more will power.
 - 2. *QUALITY of motivation* — better reasons.
- B. What, then, would be the *highest* reason — and therefore the most *powerful* motive — for seeking God?
 - 1. **Love for God Himself** — both *sincere* and *single-minded*.
 - 2. "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (**Mt. 22:35,38**).

C. **Religion is not about us — it's about God!**

D. **We must seek God for His sake, not for ours.**

1. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (**Mt. 6:33**).
2. In context, "all these things" referred to the physical needs of life — but the principle is just as true in regard to spiritual blessings. The blessings that come from seeking God come *indirectly* as we focus on God Himself, not on the blessings.
3. In theory, a right-thinking person would respect the majesty and goodness of God even if God had not provided for our salvation.

E. Having a **deeper desire for God Himself** is what life is all about.

F. "Lord, help us to rightly relate ourselves to Your glory."

III. WHAT CHANGES SHOULD WE MAKE TOWARD GOD TODAY?

- A. **Think about God:** Spend more time every day **THINKING** about God — and spend that time thinking about **GOD!**
- B. **Talk to God:** Learn real **PRAYER** — truly **COMMUNICATE** with God!
- C. **Learn about God:** Root out from our minds **ERRONEOUS CONCEPTS** of God and His will — study the Bible for **HIGHER REASONS!**
- D. **Obey God:** Set goals for growth in our **OBEDIENCE** — get out of our **RUTS!** Cf. **1 Tim. 4:15**.
- E. **Sacrifice for God:** Begin to practice the principle of **SACRIFICE** — quit giving God that which **COSTS US NOTHING!** Cf. **2 Sam. 24:24**.

Conclusion

- A. **GRATITUDE FOR GRACE is what makes seekers diligent.** Those who serve the Lord the most passionately are those who're most lovingly aware of their indebtedness to His grace.
 1. "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But *by the grace of God I am what I am*, and *His grace toward me was not in vain*; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (**1 Cor. 15:9,10**).
 2. "Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, *her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little*'" (**Lk. 7:44-47**).
- B. The Bible is a love story — if our lives are not being moved by **LOVE FOR GOD**, then we haven't really read the Bible.
- C. My fervent prayer for you is twofold:
 1. That you will **take God more seriously**.
 2. That you will **take the next step toward God** that you know you ought to take.