

**Introduction:**

- A. Do you know that in 1&2 Chronicles the expression “*seek the LORD*” appears 29 times! When the writer retold the stories of Israel’s history to the Jews who had come through the humiliation of exile one thing he wanted to be sure they understood was that if you are going to be God’s people you need to seek the LORD.
- B. But what does that mean. Is God hiding? Is this like spiritual *Where’s Waldo?* When the Bible tells us as God’s people—Christians—to *seek the Lord* it is a warning against spiritual distractions. God will not share a temple with other gods. If they come, he leaves. Furthermore, sin clouds our vision like heavy smoke hiding the sun. And then there is our spiritual ADD—attention deficit disorder, an affliction of the heart which we all were born with. Have you seen the T-shirt that says, “*I’ve been told that I have A.D.H.D. but I don’t think I – hey, look, a squirrel.*” We’re like that with God. “*How great is our God, sing with me, how... when is this service over?*”
- C. Turn to **2 Chron 14-16**. These three chapters tell the stories of King Asa, the great grandson of Solomon. He was a good king. The Bible says, “*Asa’s heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life.*” And the key phrase in his stories is *he sought the Lord*. The phrase appears nine times in these three chapters. Asa’s life is the Chronicler’s illustration of **2 Chron 7:14**, “*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*”
- D. We’re going to move quickly through these three chapters. I’ll highlight four key principles that Asa’s life teaches us about seeking the Lord.

We’re introduced to Asa in ch.14. In the first 8 verses there are two themes: seeking the Lord, and God’s rest or peace. So as I read when you hear either of those I want you to say **Aha! Vv.1-8...**

I. **WHEN WE SEEK THE LORD WE WILL ENJOY HIS PEACE (14:1-8)**

A. The idea of “seeking God” might conjure up the idea of a great religious quest. Bill Cargill told me that before he became a Christian he did all kinds of things to find meaning in life, including trying a 30 day silent Buddhist retreat. He didn’t make it to the end! When God’s people seek the Lord it isn’t like that. Look what Asa did to seek the Lord.

1. **V.2:** *“Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.”* The same idea is in **v.4**, *“He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands.”* What’s more, he kicked away all the other back-up gods so that there was no one to lean on except the Lord. Because God says, *“You shall have no other gods before me.”* **Obeying God is how we seek God.**

Illus.: Recently I was really ticked off about something. I couldn’t let go of it. I smoldered and prepared eloquent speeches. But having preached on James I knew I was in danger of sinning because of my warring inner desire to win. So I really pleaded with the Lord to help me; to calm me down and figure out how to trust him. It was a close call. But when I sought the Lord and obeyed his word something changed in me. And I knew God had met me; that I had found him in my seeking.

2. **When we are determined to be good and godly people we will inevitably see all the more clearly that we are *not* good and godly.** We see just why we most need to seek the Lord. To find him we have to get small, get low, because God dwells with those who are *“lowly and contrite in heart.”* That is why Jesus said, *“No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Jesus forgives the sin that separates us from God *and* he the Holy Spirit he sends to live within us gives us an inward homing instinct to seek and serve the Lord.

3. As we move through this story we see one other key aspect of seeking God: **To seek God we pray and we listen to his Word.** In a moment we'll see one of Asa's prayers and twice in these stories God sent prophets to speak his Word. No one can seek and find the Lord who doesn't listen to his Word, beginning with Scripture, and who doesn't pray to him instead of relying on ourselves.
- B. That brings us back to the result of seeking God: peace and rest. **V.1**, "*at peace for ten years.*" **V.6**, "*the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the Lord gave him rest.*" **V.7**, "*we sought him and he has given us rest on every side.*" **They were at rest on every side because they were at peace with God within.**

During that ten year season of peace **v.7** says, "*they built and prospered.*" What were actually growing stronger and richer were not their cities but their hearts. That's what happens in churches and our lives as well. When we seek God we grow stronger and richer at heart.

But then trouble came. As someone quipped about kings, "*Into every reign a little life must fall.*" Asa had his fortified cities and a large army of "*brave fighting men,*" but then **vv.9-10...**

## **II. WHEN TROUBLE THREATENS OUR GOD-GIVEN PEACE SEEK THE LORD (14:9-15)**

- A. Why is it in Bible stories that God's people are *always* the underdog!? In fact, if we happened on a story somewhere in Third Kings that God's people outnumbered the bad guys two to one, we'd wince and think, "*Oh, this can't turn out well!*" **God always shows his strength from our position of weakness.** No church or Christian worth our salt is ever stronger the enemies of our souls whom we must face.
- B. Asa marched his army out to meet this overwhelming force. **V.10** says "*they took up battle positions.*" Then, before the battle could be joined, Asa brought out his secret weapon: prayer. **V.11...** That is another vivid picture of what it means to seek the Lord. Illus.: My wife just got some new

glasses which she wears when she takes out her contacts. The problem was, she just couldn't focus—especially on her computer screen. She figured the prescription was wrong but when she went back, they just tilted the lenses a little—just repositioned them—and things came into focus. That is what prayer does. Asa isn't *coming back* to God here. He's praying to the God he has served faithfully for ten years. **But his prayer positioned him to trust God.** That's why we pray, too.

C. You can just pick up this prayer and use it yourself. It will take you longer to pray it than to read it because we have to adjust our hearts to what we're praying, but this is a prayer that God answers. Look what his prayer does:

1. "*LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty.*" **We pray to orient ourselves to God's strength in our weakness.**
2. "*Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army.*" **We pray to express our trust and to align ourselves with God's great name.**
3. "*LORD, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.*" **We pray to affirm that we want God to prove himself to the world through us.**

That is what it is like to seek the Lord when the pressure is on.

D. Even without reading the rest you know what happened. The Cushites "*were crushed before the LORD and his forces.*" What's more, God's people plundered the enemy to enrich God's kingdom.

As Asa and his triumphant army returned to Jerusalem a prophet came out to meet them: **15:1-2....** The prophet reminded them how life falls apart when God's people don't seek him. And all the people listening to the Chronicler retell this story hundreds of years later, nodded solemnly, remembering their exile. The prophet concluded by telling Asa in **v.7**, "*Be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.*" What work was he doing that took renewed strength? Leading his people in seeking the Lord. The

first necessity for God’s leaders then and now, in our church, is courage to keep our eyes fixed on being holy people through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. But look at the wonderful thing that happened next: **15:9-15...**

**III. WHEN WE EXPERIENCE GOD’S VICTORY WE AND OTHERS WILL WANT TO SEEK HIM ALL THE MORE (15:1-19)**

- A. Did you notice in **v.9** how Jews from the rebellious tribes to the north had come to live under King Asa “*when they saw that the LORD his God was with him*”? There is a principle of evangelism there: **Lost people are drawn to God’s people when they see God at work among us.** We’re praying that God will help us be more effective in bringing people to Jesus but it must always start with us seeking God. **A holy church cannot help but draw others to Christ.**
- B. Do you see the stages we’ve been through? Asa came to the throne and for ten years he persistently led his people to seek God by obeying him and removing every false god where they might rest their faith instead. In response God gave them rest and peace. Then an overwhelming enemy came against them, but even under terrible pressure, they had been prepared to seek the Lord, to line up for battle and then to pray. When God delivered them, they were positioned for this new level of commitment and joy in the Lord. Though they had sought the Lord before they experienced a revival.
1. They sacrificed what God had given them to **celebrate God’s forgiveness and fellowship.**
  2. The **covenant** they made to seek the LORD with all their heart and soul gave them a renewed passion to be holy and thoroughly righteous.
  3. Their all-out commitment to the Lord dramatically boosted their **joy and resolve.**
- C. Look again at **v.15**: “*All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought the LORD eagerly [Aha!], and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side. [Aha!]*” Could this be our time? We are seeking the Lord in ways I haven’t seen

in 17 years here. Our leaders are praying. You are coming to pray for the spread of God's kingdom and the revival of the church at our *First, Prayer*. You are welcoming me to pray with you as households and Jesus is meeting with us every single time. You are praying for every child in our church. Could this be our time?

**V.19** says "*There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.*" That's kind of a good news, bad news statement.

Not all stories of good people have happy endings. **16:1-3...**

Here's the thing: it worked. King Baasha, the threat, retreated. Asa built up a couple more cities. But this wasn't good. **Vv.7-13...**

I think this is a special warning to those of us who get the senior citizens' discount, who have walked with God for a long time, who have sought him and seen him faithful over a lot of years. How often have you heard of churches where the old guard are the cause of a lot of trouble. It happens because, like Asa, trouble comes and we think we know what's best. We know how to solve these things. But what we might fail to do is to seek the Lord.

**IV. BE ON YOUR GUARD! EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE SOUGHT THE LORD ALL THEIR LIVES CAN FAIL TO RELY ON GOD ALONE (16:1-14)**

- A. Here's Asa who tore down every idol he could find, who deposed the wicked Queen Mother, who restored the silver and gold to God's temple, who led Judah in a great revival. **15:17** says, "*Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life.*" Yet in his later years he was so sure of himself, so sure about God's will, that he did *not* rely on the Lord. And as a consequence their "*rest on every side*" was gone. I tremble at this warning and so should every other older leader here. For all our years and wisdom, for all our experiences of God's grace, we are dangerous to this church if we rely on our own judgment instead of seeking the Lord.
- B. But there, in the middle of that prophet's hammering words, is this great promise in **v.9**, "*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose*

*hearts are fully committed to him.*” I’ve prayed with over 30 different households over the past 2 ½ weeks. Again and again I have sensed how weak we often feel; how inadequate or confused or besieged. And I’ve thought about how hidden many of your struggles are. But then I come to this verse.

**When God surveys all he has made he looks especially for those who seek him.** Here we are seeking *him* and all the time he is seeing us.

I tremble a little at the standard of being “*fully committed to him,*” but then I sit with people who have no other gods, who pray when they’re afraid and pray for others in need, who want to do what pleases the Lord, whose hope is in Christ, and who want no better homeland than heaven. And I am confident that God is pleased, even when they feel like weak Christians.

**For that is what God looks for, you see. Our weakness, not our strength.** We know that, of course, because the verse says that when his eyes rest upon those committed to him he *strengthens them*. God expects us to be strong and brave in seeking him, but when he sees us, as brave as we can be, his eyes light up and sends his strength.