

Find Time to Pursue God Despite the Daily Drama

You would not be reading these words if you did not have a genuine desire to **pursue God**. But at the same time, you're probably feeling a degree of **frustration** about how to pursue Him while busily facing life's challenges.

In our culture we are surrounded by **distractions**. And just as there will never be a time of "enough time," there will never be a time without distractions; that is the **impossible dream**. The reality is that the urgent can often crowd out the important.

We have all had a good case of the "if onlys" at some point in our lives. Your spirit keenly feels that pursuing God is your greatest desire and delight, yet your life abounds with things that compete for your attention. You've probably said: "I would love to **pursue God** more fervently, if only I had more time ... if only I had more help ... if only others were more thoughtful ... if only my family didn't take so much of my time."

The "if only" list is virtually endless. Almost always it includes "if onlys" related to jobs, spouses, children and the church.

Decision to Pursue God

I can still remember a rainy day in late autumn many years ago. Our son, Tommy, would soon be 3 years old, and now we had our new baby girl, Teri. They were exactly what my husband and I had hoped for.

The carefree days of "just the two of us" had been replaced with the responsibility of the four of us. I stared out a window, blinking away tears as I watched my husband, Tom,

drive away to his ministry appointment. I was happy with the children and had vowed to be the best mother I could possibly be. Yet I had the inward stirrings of spiritual giftings and a deep yearning to be used of God.

I struggled with these two callings: chasing God and chasing kids; heavenly passion and earthly parenting. Both of these required time and energy. Neither of them could ever really be completed in the space of time allowed.

I made a decision on that day that has helped me balance spiritual pursuit and earthly responsibility. It helped keep me on track in my chase after God while chasing my lively children.

Perhaps it was more of a desperate decision than a deliberate one. I know my frustration came from a heart desperately hungry for God. With two babies at home and a husband in a traveling ministry, I could either seethe in frustration or find a way to feed my spiritual hunger.

I couldn't do too much at the time. It was all I could do just to be what I was, but I could prepare myself for the time when I would be able to do more.

I made my decision: I would read, study, pray and meditate in the precious few moments of a young mother's "down time." At first, it was usually while the kids were down for their naps; then later, when they were at school.

For a special seven-year period, I carefully planned my time so that most evenings and every early morning would take me a little further in my pursuit of God. I am by nature an early riser, and this was a time that suited my God-chasing efforts.

My Bible and my books fed my hunger for learning about Him. My prayers brought Him intimately near so that in meditation, I learned from Him. The deliberate pursuit provided time to get to know Him.

Commitment to the Chase

What seems like an unreachable, impossible dream—**time to pursue God** with all our hearts, free from distractions and hindrances—will become a possibility only with commitment.

True commitment is the driving force of life. Commitment evolves into passion, and passion is contagious.

Often, we sabotage our own good intentions of pursuing God because of a preconceived idea of how it should be done. Then if we fail to conform to this idea, we abandon our pursuit.

Perfectionism produces procrastination. And procrastination robs us of commitment. Perfectionism also produces pharisaical self-condemnation, which takes the joy out of the relationship. Joyless duty undermines commitment.

I wonder if there have ever been any God-chasers who did not have the opportunity to succumb to the “I would—if only” dilemma. Surely Abraham was tempted, considering his life circumstances:

- He had a mandate from God that no one, not even he, understood.
- He had an aging promise and an aged wife with seemingly little faith.
- He was stressed with the responsibility of caring for his nephew Lot and his family, whose values and goals differed from his own.
- After the birth of his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the tension in his family over sibling rivalry erupted into major conflict.

Many times in his life, Abraham could have succumbed to the “if onlys.” He was a traveling man with a large household, much wealth and much stress, but he had his priorities right—he pitched his tent and built an altar in all the moves

of his life (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:2-4,18; 22:9).

Through it all, he was committed to the course in his pursuit of God. He isn't known as the "father of the faithful" without reason.

If you are committed to the chase, somewhere along the way your "if onlys" will become "in spite of."

Had we known Jacob, his 12 boys, Dinah, his daughter, and his extended household, we would have labeled them a dysfunctional family. Few parents have suffered a rougher ride with their kids than he.

You could name almost any perplexing issue, and Jacob could tell you about it from firsthand experience. He faced family problems, work problems, devastating disappointment and tragic events. But his commitment to pursue God at any cost kept him in the chase, even though he had to run with a limp.

A limp is not necessarily an indication of failure; it can be a badge of success. For Jacob it was a reminder that he refused to give up his hold on God during an all-night wrestling match (Gen. 32:22-32).

Jacob's passion pushed him to gain the birthright, even though, at the time, he was probably motivated for material rather than spiritual reasons. In a time of extreme family stress, his pursuit of God intersected with the very door of heaven (Gen. 27-32).

Pursuit Under Pressure

It is surprising how often God is found in the rock-hard places of life. Surely Jacob would not have chosen this process, but there is no doubt that his pursuit of God, along with the pressures from his mother, father, brother, uncle, wives and children transformed him from a fast-talking, manipulative man into a prince with God.

At Bethel, which means the “house of God,” Jacob envisioned a ladder extended toward heaven with ascending and descending angels (Gen. 28:10-19). Peniel, the site of his wrestling with an angel, means the “face of God.” Both locations became for him points of course correction.

Esau, his brother, had no limp; neither did he have direction. Scripture calls him “profane” (Heb. 12:16, NKJV).

Jacob’s passionate pursuit of God gave limited access to much in his life and served as a course corrector to keep him on track. His struggle was worth it. He—not Esau—gave his children the legacy of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Even the apostle Paul was a survivor of multiple crises and stresses (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Yet he stayed on course by the strength of his commitment. He “resolved to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2, NIV).

Wistful longing for freedom from the common disturbances of life will never take you to the finish line in your pursuit of God. This was not the experience of the saints before us nor will it be ours.

However, commitment to the priority of your relationship with God will become the stabilizer in your pursuit. It does not come preset or prepackaged. Constant course corrections will be needed

Staying On Course

The *Apollo* space mission to the moon was on course only 1 percent of the time. It was constant course correction that made the mission a success.

A statement Jesus made has kept me going at times when I felt more like a plodder than a racer. With many distractions around Him and people trying to deter Him from His purpose, He said, “In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and

the next day" (Luke 13:33).

Jesus was steadily moving toward the fulfillment of His purpose, one day at a time. Direction is more important than speed.

We've all come to understand that the only constant in life is change. Therefore, to a God-chaser, course corrections in the chase are essential.

Your children's requirements will change. Your babies need you; your toddlers demand you. Your teens practically ignore you, and your grown children move on beyond you.

Doesn't it make sense to give priority to the one thing that never changes? No matter the distractions, "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8).

Read a companion devotional.

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