

Seeking God's Kingdom and Righteousness

Joe Slater

Jesus said our number one duty is to seek *“the kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (Matthew 6:33). Establishing a right relationship with God and having Him reign over us involves numerous specific points, many of which the Bible tells us to **“seek.”**

For example, Jesus said, *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will **seek** to enter and will not be able”* (Luke 13:24). Obeying our King takes effort and will not always be easy. Thus Paul wrote that eternal life will be given *“to those who by patient continuance in doing good **seek** for glory, honor, and immortality”* (Romans 2:7).

Our Lord also criticized those who *“receive honor from one another, and do not **seek** the honor that comes from the only God”* (John 5:44). Men may not honor faithful service to Christ, but God will. The Hebrews writer said that God *“is a rewarder of those who diligently **seek** Him”* (11:6).

Innumerable things compete for our attention. Paul taught that since *“you were raised with Christ, **seek** those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”* (Colossians 3:1). For all the allurements it offers, this world is not our home. People of faith have always known this and declared *“plainly that they **seek** a homeland”* (Hebrews 11:14).

As Paul wrote of the sin-ravaged condition of both Jews and Gentiles, he said, *“There is none who **seeks** after God”* (3:11). The same apostle told the philosophers in Athens *“that they should **seek** the Lord in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”* (Acts 17:27).

Are you seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness?

Whose Heart?

Jeroboam would have fit nicely into the modern religious climate. That's the climate that approaches church from the marketing viewpoint. The primary goal is to attract the masses. And, in order to attract the masses, you have to give them what they want and avoid anything that might offend their sensibilities.

A church that has adopted an “accepting” atmosphere, decorated its building to mimic a popular television show (complete with a waterfall and bamboo ladders), and added a 300-seat snack bar, is just such an example. Yes, their numbers have swelled in a three-year period to ten times their original size. They are attracting the masses.

Now, back to Jeroboam. His concern was to reach the masses. He thought that his recently-formed kingdom (known as Israel, carved from Rehoboam's kingdom, which was called Judah) would be in trouble if it's inhabitants continued to travel to Jerusalem (located in Judah) to worship. So, he provided not just one but two conveniently-located alternative worship centers at Dan and Bethel in the northern and southern ends of Israel. He resurrected an old, popular religion from Egypt and dropped the restrictive and exclusive Levitical priesthood in order to make priests of any who desired (1 Kings 12:25 – 13:34).

These modern religionists have nothing on Jeroboam! What today is promoted as “cutting edge” is actually old hat. It is not a new approach at all. The remarkable thing is mankind's insistence on returning to this tried and failed formula.

Some say you can't argue with the numbers. Apparently God doesn't agree. He “lost” the numbers game in the flood (1 Peter 3:20), with Gideon's army (Judges 7), after Jesus fed the 5000 (John 6:66), and He'll “lose” it at judgment, too (Matthew 7:13-14). There was no question as to God's feelings about Jeroboam's efforts, no matter what the masses might think.

Jeroboam became the most remembered king of Israel, but it was as the man who caused Israel to sin (stated no less than 21 times). Why? Because he did what “he had devised in his own heart” (1 Kings 12:33). By contrast, David, whose lineage remained on the throne of Judah, is Judah's most-remembered king. He's the one whose heart was “wholly devoted” to God (1 Kings 15:33) and was even described as being after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

It appears that the question is, “Whose heart will decide what we do?”

--David Deffenbaugh (Oklahoma City, OK) via *Old Paths*

Rejection

“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10, ASV).

Rejection hurts. We know how it feels when we don't get a job we've applied for. We don't make the team. We're not included in a group that we wished to be in. Our self-esteem suffers a severe blow, making us believe we are unworthy.

Our Lord Jesus is the greatest example of being rejected. He made the world, but the world did not make His life easy. He had no place to lay His head, no home to call his own. His followers forsook Him. One of His disciples betrayed Him. The Jewish leaders turned Him away, persecuted Him, and killed Him.

Surely all this rejection hurt Jesus, for He was human just as we are. He grieved that His own people, for the most part, did not believe in Him. They accepted His healing and His food, but when He was crucified, they left Him. Even His closest friends ran away. Jesus did not let rejection stop Him from completing His mission. He set His face toward the task God had asked of Him and completed it.

What is our reaction when we are rejected? Do we sink into a black hole of despair and give up? Do we believe that we are worthless? Do we think God doesn't love us anymore? As Paul would say, “May it never be!”

Consider that rejection may be Satan's ploy to discourage us. We shouldn't believe Satan's lies. Rejection may teach us a lesson. Maybe we could have done things differently to procure a better outcome. Or just perhaps, God has better plans for us. Remember that *“A man's heart deviseth his way; but Jehovah directeth his steps”* (Proverbs 16:9). When we trust God, He will keep us and show us His way for us.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)