

Wisdom of the Bible ~ Approaching God ~ Leader's Guide

1. Does God ask us to seek him or is it man's idea to seek God? (Isaiah 55:6-9, Amos 5:4-6, Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9, James 4:8a)

Isaiah 55:6-9 – ⁶ Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. ⁷ Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.

⁸ “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. [NLT]

Amos 5:4-6 – ⁴ Now this is what the Lord says to the family of Israel: “Come back to me and live! ⁵ Don't worship at the pagan altars at Bethel; don't go to the shrines at Gilgal or Beersheba. For the people of Gilgal will be dragged off into exile, and the people of Bethel will be reduced to nothing.” ⁶ Come back to the Lord and live! Otherwise, he will roar through Israel like a fire, devouring you completely. Your gods in Bethel won't be able to quench the flames. [NLT]

Matthew 7:7 and Luke 11:9 – [Jesus speaking] Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. [NIV]

James 4:8a – Come near to God and he will come near to you. [NIV]

2. In approaching God, does the Father attract and draw us to himself or does he wait for us to take the initiative to seek him? (John 6:35, 40, 44, especially 6:44)

John 6:35 – Jesus replied, I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never be hungry, and he who believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me will never thirst any more (at any time).

6:40 – For this is My Father's will and His purpose, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up [from the dead] at the last day.

6:44 – No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me attracts and draws him and gives him the desire to come to Me, and [then] I will raise him up [from the dead] at the last day. [Amplified]

3. How did Jesus tell us that we should approach the Father? (John 14:6, Romans 5:2, Ephesians 3:12, 1 Peter 3:18. See especially NLT, CEV or Worldwide English

translations.)

John 14:6 – [Jesus in speaking to his apostle Thomas] Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” [NIV]

Romans 5:2 – Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. [NLT]

Ephesians 3:12 – Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence. [NLT]

In Christ we are not to be afraid to come to God. We are sure we can come because we believe in Christ. [Worldwide English]

1 Peter 3:18 – Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. [NLT]

4. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in approaching the Father? (Eph 2:18)

Ephesians 2:17-18 – [Paul is explaining that by Christ, both Gentiles and Jews are reconciled and both have access to the Father] ¹⁷ Christ came and preached peace to you Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to us Jews, who were near God. ¹⁸ And because of Christ, all of us can come to the Father by the same Spirit. [CEV]

As further explained by Matthew Henry, Christ purchased leave for us to come to God; and the Spirit gives a heart to come, and strength to come, and then grace to serve God acceptably.

5. To approach God and have him accept us, we must do four things:

A) believe (Romans 5:2, Hebrews 11:6)

Romans 5:2 – Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. [NLT]

Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. [NIV]

B) live clean, obedient lives (Psalm 24:3-5, Matthew 5:8)

Psalm 24:3-5 – ³ Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. ⁵ He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior. [NIV]

Matthew 5:8 – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (6th Beatitude)

C) pray to the Father (Matthew 6:6)

Matthew 6:6 – But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [NIV]

D) call upon God's name (Psalm 145:18)

Psalm 145:18 – The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

6. There are many promises for those who approach God. Here are six of them:

A) you will find God (Deuteronomy 4:29, 2 Chronicles 15:2)

Deuteronomy 4:29 – But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. [NIV]

2 Chronicles 15:2b – The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. [NIV]

B) God will listen to you (2 Kings 13:4)

2 Kings 13:4 – Then Jehoahaz sought the LORD's favor, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. [NIV]

C) God will forgive you (2 Chronicles 7:14)

2 Chronicles 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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. [NIV]

D) God will make a covenant with you (Isaiah 55:3)

Isaiah 55:3 – Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David. [NLT]

E) God will bless you (Psalm 65:4)

Psalm 65:4 – Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. [NIV]

F) We can have confidence before God (Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 5:14)

Ephesians 3:12 – In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. [NIV]

Hebrews 4:16 – Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [NIV]

1 John 5:14 – This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. [NIV]