

Introduction

Several months ago, a Fox News commentator reported a prison escape but then assured viewers that **"the police are in hot pursuit."** That phrase, **"hot pursuit"**, is accurately descriptive in law enforcement isn't it? Police do pursue criminals hotly.

But the phrase should be just as accurately descriptive in your life and mine. We should pursue something even more hotly than police pursue criminals. David tells us what that something is in Psalm 63:1-8.

God Is Real

Let's start with the opening words of verse 1, **"O God, You are my God."** They teach something that all of us need to grasp. God is real. You may think I'm preaching to the choir in saying that but I'm not.

A pastor, for instance, counseled a Christian widower who was gripped by loneliness. The pastor tried to help him by explaining the availability of God to him, whereupon he declared, **"But I need something real."** That was a revealing reply. Like all Christians, the widower believes that God exists. But his reply demonstrates that he also believes that He isn't real in the accepted meaning of the word.

Many Christians are just like him. They certainly believe that God exists. But they also believe that He isn't real in the sense that the world is real. The world and everything in it, including people, are material and visible. They are, therefore, real. God and His kingdom are spiritual and invisible. They are, therefore, not real in the accepted meaning of the word – not real in a practical sense.

Nothing could be further from the truth. God and His kingdom are real. He in fact is the only absolute reality. All other realities are derivative. Nothing is necessary for Him to exist. He, however, is necessary for the world and everything in it to exist. He is real.

God Is Personal

But God isn't just real. According to verse 8, He's personal as well. The first line describes you and I doing something to Him, clinging to Him. The second line describes He doing something to us, upholding us. Those two lines together reveal what Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Psalms, calls "**The divine-human interplay.**"

Interplay is the essence of personal relationship. It connotes two persons thinking and acting in relation to each other. The Holy Spirit's still small voice once said to me: "**Treat every person as someone's son or daughter - as the person's parents would want him or her treated.**" God spoke and I heard. That's one kind of interplay.

And it illustrates that you and I can actually have a personal relationship with the perfect and infinite God. A.W. Tozer stated it more precisely in his book *The Pursuit of God*. Listen as I read one of the most significant statements that you will ever hear, bar none: "**The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of intimacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience.**"

Tozer was absolutely right. We can know God as intimately as we can know anyone or anything else. We can have a relationship with Him that's as personal as any we can have with anyone or anything else.

In Hot Pursuit – Generally

Now, verses 1 and 8 reveal what our part in that relationship is. In verse 1, the words "**seek earnestly**" suggest the eagerness of a lover to engage his or her beloved. The words "**thirsts**" and "**yearns**" suggest the strongest of all desires. Then in verse 8, the Hebrew word translated "**clings**", according to Derek Kidner, "**is strenuous, as if in hot pursuit.**" That is the best way to paraphrase what David is saying in verses 1 and 8. We should be in hot pursuit of God.

The thirst metaphor captures the gist of what pursuing God hotly is all about. Thirst for water is probably the strongest of all physical drives. A normally functioning human being cannot live without water for

more than three days. How many of you have ever been so thirsty that you could “spit cotton”? Magnify that desire by imagining how strong it would be if you hadn’t had anything to drink for three days. Would there be anything that you’d desire and seek as much as you would water? Would you desire and seek a million dollars, for instance, as much as you would water. The answer is a resounding **“No!”**

That helps us understand what it means to pursue God hotly. It means that we desire and seek knowing Him more than anything else. We don’t desire and seek anything else as much as we desire and seek having a personal relationship with Him.

Now, pursuing God hotly, in general terms, is a matter of attention.

A 70 year-old woman who had never been married became engaged to a man who loved her deeply. While a friend and she were having dinner at a restaurant one night, he called her. She was soon crying and after she hung up, her friend asked her why. **“Because,”** she replied, **“He asked me what I was wearing and what the colors were. No one has ever loved me enough to care about what I was wearing.”**

That illustrates what attention is. We concentrate our mind and body on someone. We direct our thoughts and acts, with focus, to his or her nature, presence, acts, interests, and concerns.

Attention is the foundation of all of our relationships, including the one we have with God. *The person who would have a personal relationship with God must give attention to Him.* That person must regularly direct his or her thoughts and act, with focus, to God’s nature, presence, acts, interests, and concerns.

In Hot Pursuit – Particularly

Now that we understand, in general terms, what it means to pursue God hotly, we’re ready to understand, in particular terms, what it means. Let’s examine the central ways that we give attention to Him.

One way is found in verse 2 and the clause **“see Your power and Your glory.”** The word **“see”** is metaphorical and refers to seeing God’s

power and glory, His nature, with our mind's eye. Dallas Willard reveals a profound insight in that regard: **"The single most important thing in our mind is our idea of God and the associated images."** That's what verse 2 is about, our ideas and images of God. It's about how we think of Him. Which reveals the first way we give attention to Him. We build a purposeful, objective, and thorough vision of Him. We learn as much as we can of what He reveals about Himself to us.

I've spent countless hours the past several years doing that. And during 2011, I am going to share what I've learned with you. To prepare for our worship time each Sunday morning, I'm going to communicate several details about God's nature to you. At the end of each month, I'll then make those same details available in written form. If you listen to and review what I share, by the end of 2011, you will have given attention to God in a way that almost no Christians, including pastors, ever do – by building a purposeful, objective, and thorough vision of Him.

Verse 6 reveals a second way we give attention to Him. Notice what David does during the night watches. He **"remembers"** and **"meditates on"** God. At Fellowship Gardens one time, I saw a man kneel down, get close to a rose, and linger over it. He gazed at it with his eyes, felt it with his fingers, and smelled it with his nose. That's the kind of thought and action that **"remembers"** and **"meditates on"** connote.

What that man did with the rose, verse 6 teaches us we need to do with God. Thomas Watson expressed it so beautifully over 300 years ago: **"The first fruit of love is the musing of the mind upon God. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God."** The words **"muse"** and **"contemplate"** are synonyms and reveal a second way we give attention to God. We muse upon Him. We bring Him before our mind and ponder Him, give Him serious thought.

Building a vision of Him enables us to do that. Last week, for instance, I was home alone one evening and mused on His eternity: **"God isn't bound by time. Time has no application to Him. He is the Alpha and Omega and the beginning and the end – simultaneously."**

He has no past or future, only an everlasting now. He isn't compelled to wait because everything that will happen has already happened in His experience. That means that He has already lived all of my tomorrows as He has already lived all of my yesterdays. The moment of my birth – this moment – and the moment of my last breath on earth. He experiences all of those moments now."

That illustrates one kind of musing upon God. We get alone and for a period of time, five minutes or fifty, ponder some of the details we know about Him. Again, building a vision of Him enables us to do that.

But we can also muse upon Him as we go through our normal days. We call this practicing the presence of God. We open our consciousness to Him. We direct and redirect our minds to Him as much as we can in the experiences, activities, and events of our everyday lives. You and I have a habit (and that's what it is) of dwelling on things less than God. So we develop the habit of dwelling on God when our mind isn't necessarily absorbed. Essentially, we occupy our minds with Him instead of the clutter and noise of the world around us.

Examples abound. I ask God to bless and to draw to Himself the drivers behind, beside, and in front of me at the red light. Or I see a loaf of bread and think of Jesus as the bread of life. Or I notice the stars and recall that God names and numbers each one. Or I look at the back of a person's head and consider that God knows how many hairs are on it. You get the idea. We muse upon God as much as we can.

Verse 4 reveals two more ways we can give attention to God.

The clause "**blessing the Lord**" refers to worshipping Him. We should worship Him publicly and privately, but the phrase "**as long as I live**" shows this is private worship. Such worship isn't just something we try to do. It's also something that flows naturally from the musing of our mind on God. Our thoughts of Him cause us to break forth in what verse 3 calls "**praise.**" We actually declare to Him verbally or mentally what we're thinking and feeling about Him. Having mused on His eternity that night, for instance, I broke out in verbal praise: "**My God, you are great**

and awesome beyond my ability to grasp it. No reality in the universe compares to you and it's a privilege to be in Your presence." Such worship should be the constant undertone of our lives.

The clause "**lift up my hands**" reveals another way we give attention to God. It connotes supplication. We pray in other words. We ask Him to do something for or give something to others or us. Based on the fifth request in the Lord's Prayer, for example, I ask Him every morning to keep bad things from happening to my wife that day. I'm giving Him attention, pleasing Him, in doing so.

Those then are the four ways in Psalm 63 that we give attention to God: build a vision of Him, muse upon Him, worship Him, and ask Him to do or give things. There are other ways, which include: practice solitude and silence, purposefully obey Him, thank Him, fast, talk to Him, and read the Bible with our hearts, all of which I've explained before and will explain again this year. Together with these four in Psalm 63, those are the central ways that we give attention to God.

So give Him that attention. Verse 5 reveals the consequence if we do. Our souls are "**feasted**", which is the literal translation. Or to say it another way, regularly focusing our attention on God makes life a continual feast – abundant and full.

Conclusion

All of which leads me to this question in closing. Do you and I do that, focus our attention on God? Psychologists talk about ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder. They mean of course in an organic sense. But many Christians have ADD in a spiritual sense. They're inattentive to God. They devote little of their mental and bodily life, little of their thoughts and acts, to Him. But what about you and me? Do we have spiritual ADD? How much attention do we give God? What percentage of our thoughts and acts in a typical day are directed to Him? Make it what we call the "**lion's share**." Habitually think and act in relation to God. We're in hot pursuit of Him if we do.