

# Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

#### **KEY THREE: SEEKING GOD LIFESTYLE: RELENTLESS PERSEVERANCE**



#### May God's Kingdom Come



Matthew 6:9-10 - Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

*Sermon on the Mount*, 1877 Carl H. Bloch We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

God has called His followers to seek Him day in and day out, and many blessings do not come until after a season of dedicated striving to draw near to Him. Faithfully pursuing Him pleases Him and attracts His presence.



# Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

- 1. Aspiration and Desperation
- 2. Theological Foundations
- 3. Seeking God Wholeheartedly
- 4. Spiritual Practices
- 5. Supernatural Aspects
- 6. Impacting the Three Spheres
- 7. Leadership



# Seeking God Lifestyle

- 1. Humility with Help of Fasting
- 2. Fervent and Frequent Prayer
- 3. Massive Intake of Scripture
- 4. Deep and Ongoing Repentance
- 5. Faithful Obedience
- 6. Strong Community
- 7. Relentless Perseverance

#### **Perseverance Needed for All Christians**

**Matthew 24:9-13** - "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> **But the one who endures to the end will be saved.** 

However one reconciles these verses in a soteriological sense, perseverance is a serious matter. Perseverance is of eternal consequence; it will be very difficult; and many who name Christ will not endure to the end.

#### **Perseverance Needed for All Christians**

**Colossians 1:21-23** - And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

**Revelation 12:11** - And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, **for they loved not their lives even unto death.** 

#### **Perseverance Needed for All Christians**

**Revelation 14:11-13** - And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." <sup>12</sup> Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. <sup>13</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"



#### 3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 7. Relentless Perseverance

# *Perseverance is needed for all Christians. Perseverance is needed to advance the kingdom of light.*

**Paying the Price** - Many say that they want revival but are unwilling to pay the price. Pushing back the kingdom of darkness and bringing the kingdom of light is not easy! It requires great sacrifice over years and decades.

**Colossians 1:24** - Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

2 **Timothy 1:8** - Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but **share in suffering for the gospel** by the power of God,

**1 Thessalonians 2:9-12** - For you remember, brothers, **our labor and toil: we worked night and day**, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> For you know how, like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup> we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

**Persistent Leadership** - George Otis, Jr, who has documented many revivals around the world, notes that a consistent and key feature of every transformational revival is persistent leadership. The book of Acts recounts kingdom expansion that took place over 30 years. There were ups and downs, mighty works and severe persecution, but they devoted themselves to seeking God to advance the kingdom of light.

Acts 6:4 - But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

**Grit Needed** - Angela Duckworth, Penn professor, documents in her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, that persistence towards a goal predicts long-term success in all areas of life. Perseverance, or grit, can be developed. The long-term success of kingdom advancement requires spiritual grit.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.



#### Princeton Revivals

- 1996-2001 Matt Bennett fasted 40s twice, six months apart before the revival came.
- 2009-13 CU faculty prayed two hours every day for six months (with periodic fasting) before the Spirit came in power and the ministry experienced multiplicative increases.
- These movements, and all historic and international awakenings, were begun and sustained by persevering in paying the price, persistent leadership, and spiritual grit.

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#### **Components of Perseverance**

- 1. Keeping Faith Alive
- 2. Working Hard and Embracing Self-Denial
- 3. Handling Opposition
- 4. Mastering Obstacles, Distractions, Temptations
- 5. Power of Intentionality
- 6. Cultivating and Valuing Self-Discipline
- 7. Cultivating Desperation



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**Courage in the face of discouragement** - Discouragement comes to everyone through let-downs, setbacks, challenges, obstacles, opposition, and disappointments.

Take courage and build faith with:

- Testimonies current and historical stories of revivals, amazing works of God
- Biblical examples, truths and promises
- Listening to prophetic words of others
- Experiences with God

2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 16-18 - We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Chronicles 15:7-8 - But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." <sup>8</sup> As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 17:6 - His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

**Ezra 7:28** - and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. **I took courage**, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Acts 6:5 - they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit

**Psalm 78:10-11** - They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. <sup>11</sup> They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.

American Christians have indeed forgotten God's works and wonders He has shown us. With probably the best Christian history of the world, we know almost none of it, and so our faith stays low.

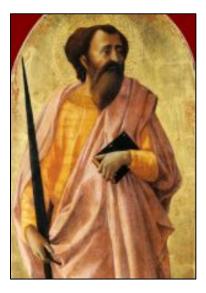


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**The Tragedy of Today's Weakness -** When the work is hard, difficult, unpleasant, and challenging, so many just give up, and in some cases, completely break their word to the Lord and others. Many ministers in the U.S. today do not have grit or self-discipline. There is a plague of ungodly weakness in American Christian ministers today.

There is great need for ministers today to embrace the mindset of a suffering servant of the Lord, just as Jesus and the apostles did. Our work will be difficult and involve much self-sacrifice, but the Lord is faithful and will strengthen us.



1 Corinthians 15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

*Paul*, 1426 Masaccio

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2 Timothy 2:1-7 - You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup> Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. <sup>5</sup> An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

John 12:24-26 - Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him

Paying the price of self-sacrifice to see the kingdom of light advance

**Rejecting Spiritual Stupor** - Adopting this mindset involves confronting a spirit of stupor, slumber, and complacency in seeking God. Even when it is known that it takes diligence to seek the Lord, a spirit of stupor can quench the Spirit's work inside of Christians.

Break the spirit of stupor by repenting of:

- False theologies and unbelief in God's promises
- Not caring for God's kingdom more than our own selves
- Laziness in taking time and effort to seek God and His kingdom.



Zephaniah 1:12 - "At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill."

False theologies lead to complacency.

**Ezekiel 34:2-4** - "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: **Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves!** Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup> The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

Self-centeredness and self-indulgence leads to complacency.

**Haggai 1:3-6** - Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, <sup>4</sup> "**Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?** <sup>5</sup> Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. <sup>6</sup> You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

**Malachi 1:6-8** - "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'<sup>7</sup> By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. <sup>8</sup> When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.

Laziness leads to complacency.



#### **Components of Perseverance**

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# 3. Handling Opposition

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**Promised Pushback** - Remember that Jesus promised oppositions from both believers and non-believers. Opposition may come in the form of threats, wrong theologies, disparagement, discrimination, persecution, and death.

Theological Opposition Includes:

- "We don't need to seek the Lord. It's legalistic."
- "It's not about rules, but about freedom in Christ!"
- "Christianity isn't declining!"
- "But, we ARE seeking the Lord."
- "We have to remember the 'Abundant Life' Jesus promised."

Mark 13:9-13 - "But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. <sup>11</sup> And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup> And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

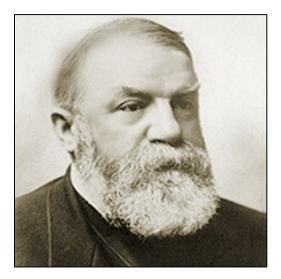
John 16:1-4 - "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.<sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.<sup>3</sup> And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.<sup>4</sup> But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

Acts 14:21-23 - When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Nehemiah 4:7-9** - But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, **they were very angry**. <sup>8</sup> **And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.** <sup>9</sup> And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

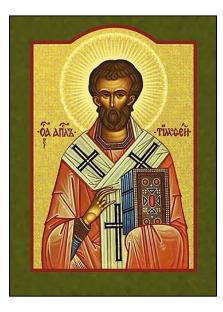
2 Chronicles 30:10 - So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but others laughed them to scorn and mocked them.





"It is clear you don't like my way of doing evangelism. You raise some good points. Frankly, I sometimes do not like my way of doing evangelism. But I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."

Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) American Evangelist



2 Timothy 2:24-26 – And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Timothy of Ephesus (17AD-97AD)

**2 Timothy 3:1-5** – But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. **Avoid such people**.

**Titus 1:10-14** – For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. <sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. <sup>12</sup> One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, <sup>14</sup> not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.



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## Component 4: Mastering Obstacles, Distractions, Temptations



These could include:

- Sports, movies, TV, hobbies, theatre
- Family and friends
- Work
- Vain amusements
- Human passions
- Worldly pleasures
- Success, even ministry success and fame

Vanity Fair Scene from *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan

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## Component 4: Mastering Obstacles, Distractions, Temptations

Hebrews 12:1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

Luke 21:34 - "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap."

## Component 4: Mastering Obstacles, Distractions, Temptations

**Matthew 13:20-23** - As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and **when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.** <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but **the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.** <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."



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# **Component 5: Power of Intentionality**

#### **Community and Accountability**

- Making commitments, especially with others, greatly helps one persevere by reinforcing good choices.
- Also helps to hold accountable for bad choices

#### **Premeditated Mindset**

- Determining beforehand how one is going to live and act instead of deciding in the moment.
- Putting times of seeking God in one's schedule, just like any other important matter.



## **Component 5: Power of Intentionality**

Proverbs 4:26 - Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12** – And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Luke 9:51 - When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

**Ephesians 5:15-16 - Look carefully** then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.



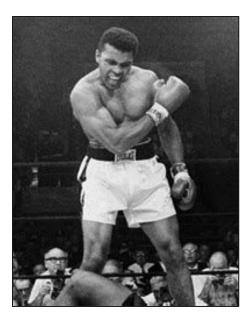
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**Follow-Through** - The greatest of intentions will not get very far without the self-discipline to carry out one's commitments.

**Required for Many Facets of Perseverance -** Perseverance takes the self-discipline to pray, fast, obey, repent, do difficult things, suffer shame, and so on, for Christ's sake and for a future reward.



**1 Corinthians 9:24** – Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Timothy 5:7-8 – Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

**1 Timothy 5:15-16** – Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

# 3. Seeking God Lifestyle: 7. Relentless Perseverance

## Component 6: Cultivating and Valuing Self-Discipline



"It was a common saying among the Christians in the primitive Church, 'The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a Christian;' implying, that none could be real Christians, without the help of Christian discipline. But if this be so, is it any wonder that we find so few Christians; for where is Christian discipline?"

John Wesley (1703-91) English Evangelist and Pastor, Founder of Methodism

Clapham was a neighborhood near the Parliament building in London in the late 1700's and early 1800's where a group of powerful, influential, and devout Christians lived. The group became known as the "Clapham Sect" and led the charge to abolish the slave trade. The prominent historian G. R. Balleine gives a short description of these Christian friends, describing their disciplined three-times-a-day pattern of seeking God in prayer.

"But little did the critics guess the almost monastic self-discipline by which these well-to-do Christians ordered each day of their lives. They moved in Society, they were given to hospitality, because they believed it a duty. 'My business is in the world,' wrote Wilberforce, 'and I must mix in the assemblies of men, or quit the part which Providence seems to have assigned to me' but every temptation to self-indulgence was rigidly held in check.

"Like all Evangelicals in those days, they were very early risers, for they realized intensely the value of time. Every hour was mapped out beforehand; some of Wilberforce's time-tables were discovered after his death – so many hours for prayer, so many for study, so many for business, so many for rest, and a column at the end in which to enter all the time that had been squandered. They made a point of setting apart three hours a day for prayer – from five to six in the morning, from twelve to one at noon, and from five to six in the evening."

G. R. Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 148-9.



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**Sober Assessment -** Desperation happens when we become deeply aware of the gap between where we are and where we need to be.

**Empty of Other Things** - Desperation comes when we are hungry for God. Fasting helps to foster hunger for God. A key to developing hunger for God is repenting and thereby emptying ourselves of selfishness, lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, and self-indulgence.

**Full of God** - Desperation also comes when we take time to immerse ourselves in seeking God for long periods of time (2 Chronicles 30-31:1).

**Four Levels of Maturity** - There are four levels of Christian maturity in regards to hunger for God and desperation for God.

- **0** This is the category who do not seek God with faith and energy even when under heavy judgment. They are stiff-necked, and hard-hearted. Revelation speaks of persons who don't repent even as they are in great pain!
- **1** This is the category of Christians who repent and seek the Lord as He requires but only when under heavy judgment.

- 2 This is the category of Christians who repent and seek the Lord as He requires, but only when surrounded by terrible sin. They see the wickedness around them, grieving them and breaking their hearts, so they begin to seek God diligently and fervently.
- 3 This is the category of the mature Christian. Christians of this maturity seek God wholeheartedly, diligently as a matter of the standing of their maturity in Him and love for Him - Even when there is not rampant sin, and even when there is no judgment. This is the level of Christian maturity.

**Philippians 3:11-12** - that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.





Resources that can help cultivate desperation:

- Desperate Prayer by John Mulinde YouTube Video (1:01:04)
- <u>The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Awakening by J. Edwin</u> <u>Orr - YouTube Video (26:15)</u>

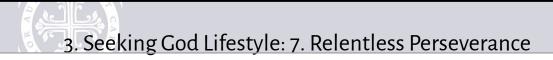
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# Seeking God Is Not Just for a Season

**The Normal Lifestyle** - Seeking God is not a temporary measure to experience short-lived revival.

- We seek God because He is worthy of our time, attention, and full devotion.
- We seek God because He requires it, and we've willingly made Him Lord.
- We seek God because we find Him more when we do.
- We seek God because there is joy and pleasure in seeking Him.
- We seek God because the lost are found and His purposes are fulfilled when we do.







"I believe that God answers prayer. And even if He doesn't, I will die seeking Him."

John Mulinde Leader of World Trumpet Mission, Uganda CHRISTIAN UNION

Seven Keys for Kingdom Advancement

We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

As Christians seek God wholeheartedly, He gives grace, power and direction to be used as His instruments in our families, communities and nation.

Help America Return to God by Becoming a Cornerstone Partner with Christian Union: <u>christianunion.org/cornerstone</u>

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# Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

Psalm 33:12

