

1 | **The Need to Spend Time with the Lord**

“I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished.”

– George Müller

The Sense of Need

The sense of need is always at the base of our making progress in the Christian life. This is a spiritual principle stated by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” To be poor in spirit means we sense our need for God, realizing we have absolutely nothing in ourselves. Accordingly, what often motivates us to spend more time with the Lord is an ever deepening realization of our need of Him. Thus, the sense of need becomes the very factor of our spiritual progress. It causes us to seek Him and spend time with Him.

To be without a sense of need in our Christian life is a sure sign of spiritual decay. The Lord's diagnosis of the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-20 reveals that lukewarmness, pride, and self-sufficiency are all directly related to a lack of spending time with the Lord.

When the Lord said to the church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me," He was virtually saying to them that they had not opened the door of their hearts to spend time with Him in fellowship. Yet, it also shows Him patiently standing at the door and knocking, seeking to get His believers to find time to "dine" with Him.

The Greek verb *δειπνέω*, translated "dine" or "sup" in Revelation 3:20, refers to the daily time that was set apart to eat the main meal. In Luke 14:17 it is called "the dinner hour." In other words, the Lord's supreme desire for us is that we would sense the need to have a daily "dinner hour" spending time with Him.

The Need to Be Supplied

The very nature of the Christian life requires that we spend time with the Lord, because the Christian life is a supplied life. It is a life that is supplied to us. It has nothing to do with our own resources or potential in ourselves. It has everything to do with our opening up to

another life and being supplied by that life from beginning to end. The Christian life is a life that has been prepared for us and then is furnished to us by God. He intends to continually supply Himself to us. It is for this reason that we need to spend time with the Lord—to receive the supply.

Sometimes, when we hear the truth from the Scriptures or from others, and take it as a personal demand upon us, we feel threatened with thoughts like, “I’m not like that. I could never do that.” Or, “I can’t imagine that I could ever feel that way. I just cannot live up to that.” With these kinds of thoughts and feelings, if we don’t realize that the Christian life is a supplied life, we may conclude that this life is not for us and give up.

But, listen to this. Every word that God has spoken in the Bible, whatever it is, whatever apparent demand it brings, God wants to supply that very thing into our being. It’s not that we are expected to measure up, or come up with the ability to perform in ourselves. No, God intends to continually supply Himself to us. We must understand the Christian life in this way—it is a supplied life. From beginning to end, it is supplied to us. And this supply comes to us and is dispensed into us in a very special and enjoyable way—*spending time with the Lord*.

The penetrating words in Hebrews 4:12-16, where the word of God divides soul and spirit, discerns the

thoughts and intents of our heart, and tells us that we are naked and laid bare before His eyes, are enough to sink one into despair. Yet, these very words are specifically intended to bring us to our sympathizing High Priest to receive our constant supply at the throne of grace. Being exposed in God's light is always a signal to us to once again draw our supply from Him. The Christian life is a life that has already been lived for us. And now this life that has already been lived is *continuously* being supplied to us.

The Greek word ἐπιχορηγία —*epichoregia* in the New Testament depicts the Christian life as a supplied life. For example, Philippians 1:19 says, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” In the ancient Greek world ἐπιχορηγία was used to describe the person who was responsible for a chorus of singers or dancers. In brief, this person was responsible for supplying all the needs of all the members of the chorus. He was “the supplier” (χορηγία). The Greek word meant that he was both a leader and a provider of all the needs of the chorus. Whether it was clothing, food, or money, he supplied everything; and he supplied it lavishly and abundantly without rationing or restriction.

This New Testament word for “supply” can be likened to students at a university on full scholarships. They are very relaxed. They are free from anxiety over

their needs. They don't have to work their way through school; they just receive all the benefits of their scholarships. All their practical needs are cared for. Their tuition is cared for. Their research needs are cared for. Everything is fully supplied.

This is the thought behind the word ἐπιχορηγία. When the Apostle Paul applied this word to the Christian life, he meant to convey that everything in the Christian life is provided for. Thus, the proper Christian life is like being on a full spiritual scholarship with everything provided for us. Paul surely had this in mind when he declared in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

When you see your shortness and realize you don't have a fervent love for the Lord, your heart is not inclined toward Him and His Word that much, let me say again, God's desire at that point is to supply Himself to you. He wants to be your love for Him, and to be that necessary desire for His Word. So, never be troubled, never be fearful.

Every new juncture in our Christian life, no matter what it is, is simply another occasion for fresh supplies from the throne of grace. For example, you may be reacting toward your husband. Thus, what you need supplied to you is Christ to be lived out toward your husband. Or you may be anxious about your financial

situation. Thus, you need supplied to you a life of trusting the Lord, taking one day at a time, and seeking first the kingdom of God. That very life is equally supplied. Or you may be exposed to a sinful and worldly environment, and you need the power to resist temptation. The life that overcomes sin and the world will also be supplied to you.

We must continually realize that we are vessels receiving the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Our whole understanding of the Christian life must be renewed in this way. The Christian life is a supplied life. Thus, spending time with the Lord is prime time in our daily life to get connected with the supply.

The Purpose

Spending time with the Lord not only supplies us to live our daily Christian life, but it is also the means for us to experience transformation. From the moment we receive Christ and are regenerated, we are ushered into a life-long process of transformation.

Second Corinthians 3:18, describing this process, shows that we are being transformed into the image of Christ Himself: “And we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” By this process of transformation, our natural being undergoes a kind of

metabolic change. This means that a new element is replacing the old. And just as our eating and drinking cause our physical body to undergo a process of metabolism in which new elements enter our body and replace the old, so also our beholding the Lord causes our natural being to undergo a process of spiritual metabolism. This means the faculties of our mind, emotion, and will receive the new element of Christ Himself and are thereby transformed into His image. According to 2 Corinthians 3:18 this process takes place *while* we spend time beholding the glory of the Lord.

By daily spending time with the Lord, we are putting ourselves in a position for transformation to take place. In *eternity past*, according to Romans 8:29, God's purpose over our being was that we be "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." In *creation*, according to Genesis 1:26-27, God made man "in His own image." In *redemption*, according to Colossians 1:13-15, we have been transferred into the kingdom in which Christ "is the image of the invisible God, First-born of all creation." In our *daily life*, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, we are existing to be transformed into the image of our glorified Lord. In *resurrection*, according to 1 Corinthians 15:49, we shall all one day "bear the image of the heavenly." In *eternity future*, according to Revelation 22:4, we will be those who see His face and bear His image, even as it says, "His name shall be on their forehead."

In light of God's revealed purpose in eternity past, in creation, in redemption, in daily life, in resurrection, and in eternity future, should we not spend time with Him for the fulfillment of this all-encompassing purpose? If we truly see that we are presently under the process of God's eternal purpose of transformation, we will be strongly motivated to spend time with the Lord for this to take place. We are transformed into His image not by self-effort or by imitation, but by spending time genuinely beholding Him. This kind of beholding requires that we set aside specific blocks of time regularly in which we, like Mary (Luke 10:38-42), cease from all other activities and preoccupations to give our undivided attention to behold Him.

The Nature of Transformation

The need for spending time with the Lord must also be considered from the viewpoint of the nature of transformation. The verb "transformed" is used exactly four times in the New Testament: in Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2; Romans 12:2; and 2 Corinthians 3:18. Every time this word is used, without exception, it is in the passive voice. When the Lord was on the mountain being "transfigured" or "transformed," on His part it was passive, that is, it happened to Him. In Romans 12:2, which says, "Be transformed by the renewing of the

mind,” again the word “transformed” is in the passive voice. This means that our transformation is something happening to us. Again, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “being transformed” is also in the passive voice.

On our part, the nature of transformation is passive. It is something that happens to us. We as the subject, are being acted upon, not doing the acting. For example, the statement, “I am baptizing,” is in the active voice (the subject is acting); whereas, “I am being baptized” is in the passive voice (the subject is being acted upon). When we are beholding the glory of the Lord we are being acted upon—we are *being* transformed—by the Lord Spirit. It is this passive process of being transformed that requires spending special time in the Lord’s presence beholding Him.

The fact that the nature of transformation is passive reveals that there is no need to attempt to correct oneself, improve oneself, or change oneself in a religious way. Transformation is a process that happens to us. It is the spontaneous and automatic working of the Lord Spirit within us and upon us.

For the Lord to be able to do this transforming work upon us, there is the need for us to spend time with Him, exercising our spirit to behold Him. Thus, in our daily life we need to pay more attention to spending time with Him beholding His glory, rather than spending time being occupied with our own efforts and energy.

2 | Beholding the Lord Requires Time

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun.” Eccl. 3:1.

“This is literally true, there is a time for everything. Can it be true, as so many maintain, that there is no time for communion with God? Is not the most important matter for which we must find time, fellowship with God, in which we may experience His love and His power? Give God time, I beseech you. . . . Dear child of God, it is of little use to speak of the deeper, more abundant life of Christ as our life, if we do not daily, above all things, take time for intercourse with our Father in heaven. The life and love and holiness of God cannot be ours amidst the distractions and temptations of the world, unless we give God time to reveal Himself to us and to take possession of our hearts.

– Andrew Murray

Beholding and Reflecting

The word “beholding” in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is used only one time in the entire New Testament and has no counterpart in the Old Testament. The depth of this Greek word is seen in its literal translation, which

includes not only the activity of beholding but also that of reflecting. This means that we always reflect what we behold.

For example, if a person spends hours watching television, eventually he begins to reflect the things he has been beholding. He starts thinking, feeling, and reacting according to what he has been looking at. Reading novels is another example. People who spend time reading novels actually begin to reflect in their thinking what they read. Beholding such things automatically affects your inner being. You can't help but be involved in what you're reading and be influenced by it. Statistics indicate that murders and rapes have occurred as a result of someone's watching violence and immorality on television or reading about such things in novels.

Of course, the above examples illustrate the negative side. But we must see the principle is the same on the positive side—what we behold is what we reflect. When we spend time with the Lord beholding Him, we will automatically reflect Him. It is by this divinely-appointed way that we are being transformed into His image. We will spontaneously beam out Christ when we spend time beholding Him.

A Lengthy Period of Time

Although the word “beholding” occurs only once in the Bible, the context of its occurrence in 2 Corinthians

3 supplies us with a full picture of what this beholding includes. To begin with, the background of the word “beholding” is found in Exodus 33 and 34, which describes Moses’ stay of forty days and forty nights with the Lord on the mountain. At that time, Moses had taken up the second set of stone tablets for the Lord to write the ten commandments on. Due to this lengthy period of time spent with God on the mountain, Moses came down not only with the tablets written upon, but also with the skin of his face shining with God’s glory. He experienced a transformation as a result of spending a lengthy period of time with the Lord.

Paul identifies Moses’ shining face as the glory of the old covenant ministry (2 Cor. 3:7, 9). Even though it was a passing glory, it did have its glory. When Moses stayed on the mountain in God’s presence for such a lengthy period of time, a transforming glory was infused into him.

Because of the glory shining on Moses’ face, he put a veil over it to cover the fading glory of the old covenant. But now, under the new covenant, whenever the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16). All the New Testament believers have an unveiled face so that they may behold the glory of the Lord.

Moses had prayed to the Lord in Exodus 33:18, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.” Then he spent time in God’s glory with an unveiled face (Exo. 34:34), and he was changed. In Deuteronomy 10:10 when Moses refers

to his time with God, he says, “I stayed in the mount.” The original Hebrew word for stayed implies “I *lingered* in the mount.” This indicates that Moses realized the necessity of staying and even lingering with God on the mount.

Again, Exodus 33 and 34 provide the entire background of this one word “beholding.” Thus, for us to know what this beholding is, we need to be impressed with Moses’ stay with the Lord. What stands out in Moses’ experience of beholding the Lord and talking to Him, even face-to-face as an intimate friend (Exo. 33:11), is the time he spent—forty days and forty nights. It took this specific length of time for Moses to soak in the glory of God and to come down transformed. Of course, this transformation was only to the degree of the Old Testament glory. Nevertheless, there was a glory.

It is significant that Moses’ record includes the amount of time he spent with the Lord on the mountain. This helps us to see that time is involved in the “beholding” mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3:18. We must realize that beholding the Lord to be transformed takes time. Being a person that makes time to be with the Lord is the sure way to be transformed into His image. Transformation does not happen superficially. It takes time. And not only so, it takes the right kind of time—spending quality time with the Lord in a proper way.

When Moses went up to the mountain, he took empty

tablets. Therefore, he needed a certain amount of time for God to do some writing. Writing takes time. It took time for God to write upon those tablets. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 3:3 Paul says, “Being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart.” This is the New Testament writing. In this context, time is being spent for the writing of the Spirit to take place. And while we are spending time under this writing upon our hearts, we are being transformed into the very image of our glorified Lord.

A Private Time

Without spending time with the Lord, there is no possibility for us to experience a solid transformation. And this time must be a private time with the Lord. The Lord makes this clear in Matthew 6. Beginning in verse 5 He says, “And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners that they may appear to men.” The Lord points out here that the Pharisees were hypocrites because the motivation behind their kind of praying was to be seen of men. Then in verse 6 He says, “But you, when you pray, enter into your private room.” The Greek word for private room can also be translated

“inner chamber.” The King James Version renders it “closet.” All these translations—the private room, the inner chamber, and the closet—signify a personal, private time in a private place.

In verse 6 the Lord gives still further detailed instruction. After you enter your private room, “shut your door.” Shutting our door is a reinforcement of privacy, of aloneness with the Lord. And then He says, “pray to your Father who is in secret.”

There is a deep significance in having a private time in a private place, and that is, that our transformation would be genuine and not something hypocritical. It should not be a performance. In our private time with the Lord, no one else is there. We open ourself to the Lord deeply, without any pretense, without any hypocrisy, without being motivated by any onlookers. There is no one else there saying anything or knowing anything. This means our Christian life is taken out of the realm of man-pleasing and mere outward behavior, and it is brought into the reality of an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord.

You are in a room with the Lord by yourself—four walls, a ceiling—what are you doing there? There must be reality in our contact with God. In Matthew 6, we see how crucial it is to spend “private” time beholding the glory of the Lord. It takes this kind of time to be transformed.

Simply to spend two or three minutes reading some

verses is not adequate for solid transformation. It takes time for the writing of the Spirit in our being. Let me give a practical example. When we want to write on a tablet, the tablet has to consent, so to speak, and spend some time in a fixed position. Then we can settle down and do some writing. However, if the tablet does not remain stationary, there is no way to write on it. The tablet has to consent by spending time there in one spot so that we can write. The tablet is an inanimate object. Our heart, on the other hand, is a moving object that needs to truly consent to remaining stationary before the Lord.

David's testimony in the Old Testament indicates that he had a heart that could remain fixed before the Lord. In Psalm 57:7 he said, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." Like David, we can also fix our heart. When our heart turns to the Lord the veil is taken away! A turned heart then becomes a fixed heart. As we spend time before Him, with our heart fixed and stationary, He can write His transforming life and nature into us.

To turn our heart means to stop our heart from all its preoccupations, from its endless stream of activity, and fix it on the Lord. Just as Moses brought the tablets of stone up to the mountain and spent time there in God's presence so that God could write on them, we too can turn our heart to the Lord and spend time being written upon by the Spirit of the Living God.

When we turn our heart to the Lord, the writing Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3) is activated in us. This turning should not

merely be a partial or shallow turn, but a deep turn that opens us up to the Lord and causes us to linger longer with the Lord for the Spirit to do His inner writing. It is this Spirit-writing that transforms us. As the Spirit writes upon us, we are transformed into the same image. And this image is the image of Christ Himself.

May the Lord give to us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see God's eternal purpose of transforming us into the image of His Son, and may we realize that this purpose can only be fulfilled in us by our spending time beholding the Lord's glory. Let us, therefore, pay the price in our daily life to spend adequate time with Him. This is our greatest need.

3 | How to Behold the Lord

“I never have seen a man or woman who spent fifteen or twenty minutes alone with God every day that didn’t have the dew all the while. I have never known one to backslide, either. You never get more than one day’s journey from Christ if you come to Him every morning. Shut the world out. Get closeted with God and you will learn His secrets. I like to get up at five o’clock in the morning and turn the key and be alone, and let God talk with me.

– D.L. Moody

The secret of spending time with the Lord is to learn how to behold the glory of the Lord. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” Our greatest need is this—to spend time with the Lord beholding His glory. God’s purpose of reproducing the very image of Christ in us is fulfilled by beholding the Lord. Our being transformed and changed from within is realized by beholding the Lord. Everything we need will be supplied to us from the Lord Spirit by beholding Him.

If as a believer you are discouraged with yourself and frustrated in going on with the Lord, let me encourage you to lay aside everything and simply open to the Lord and say, “Lord, open my eyes and show me how to behold You. This is my greatest need.” Indeed, the God-ordained way to proceed in the Christian life is to be a person restricted and reduced to beholding the glory of the Lord. Therefore, we need to consider some practical points on *how* to behold the glory of the Lord. These points are like handles to take hold of in order to experientially behold Him. If we take hold of these handles it can spiritually revolutionize our entire being.

Take the Initiative

The first handle is to take the initiative. We have seen in a previous chapter that the nature of transformation is passive. It is a process that happens to us. The Lord Spirit changes us; we don’t change ourselves. Paul makes this clear in 2 Corinthians 3:18 when he uses the passive voice “being transformed.”

However, the beholding in this verse is not a passive matter. The unique thing about the Greek word for “beholding” here is that it is in the middle voice. In the Greek language a verb has three different voices—active, middle, and passive. The active and passive voices are common to the English language, but the middle voice is not. Thus, we need to understand the

middle voice and why Paul uses it for “beholding” in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

In Greek the active voice emphasizes the action, whereas the middle stresses the subject involved in the action. The writer’s use of the middle voice shows his intention to emphasize that the subject is involved and participates in the action in a special way. This all indicates one thing in relation to beholding—it means we take the initiative. We as the subject are involved and participate in this spiritual action. We don’t sit back and wait to be transformed by some sudden or mysterious power. No! We take the initiative to behold the glory of the Lord. Yet our initiative is not, strictly speaking, apart from God’s divine operation within us.

When we understand taking the initiative from God’s point of view, we see that in reality it is our response to and cooperation with God’s operation within our being. Let me say that if you’re born-again and Christ is living in you, then there is present within your being a divine working that is one-hundred percent for beholding the Lord. There is something already in you that matches this word on spending time to behold Him. You don’t have to produce something in yourself in order to take the initiative. Check with your inner man. Look for the hidden desire within you and see if there is not a corresponding burden and feeling regarding your spending time with the Lord.

If you’re honest with your deepest sense, you will

realize there is a still small voice within you day by day speaking to you about spending time with the Lord, enjoying and beholding Him. In fact, on the negative side, it feels like something nagging you. When you live neglecting your time with the Lord, there is something within you that spontaneously feels dissatisfied. You sense an incompleteness in your daily life even to the point of an inner protesting. On the positive side, however, there is a desire and a longing to be with the Lord in a definite way—to wait upon Him, behold Him, and enjoy Him. This desire and longing is God working in you.

Taking the initiative simply means to cooperate with what God has already put within you. The Apostle Paul indicates this in Philippians 2:12b-13: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” The Greek word translated “work out” is similar to the word “beholding” in 2 Corinthians 3:18; that is, it is also in the middle voice. This means Paul intended to emphasize the need for the believers to take the initiative to actively be involved and participate in the working out of their own salvation. However, the basis for taking this initiative is clearly defined by the following words: “For it is God who operates in you.” This means that the initiative we take is actually our going along with the operating God within us. This is a crucial point in all our experiences of the Lord. God

works and operates in us up to a certain extent; then we need to take the initiative to complete and finish what He is working in us.

For example, we may live for years having desires to spend time with the Lord in a regular way. We may experience these desires to a greater or lesser degree, depending upon our spiritual situation. Nevertheless, we may not be aware of the fact that the very existence of these desires stirring within us *is* God operating in us. God will work in your will to incline your being to spend time with Him. God does operate to that extent. But He does not take us over and obliterate our faculties and human responsibility and force us to spend time with Him. He works in us to a point, and then it is up to us to take the initiative to follow through and cooperate with His worked-in inclinations and desires. In other words, God's part is to supply the desire and the inclination. Our part is to find a private place to be with the Lord, set the alarm, rise up from our bed, wash our face, get our Bible, hymnal, and other spiritual books, and begin to wait upon the Lord by reading, praying, singing, and just quietly being in His presence to enjoy Him and behold Him.

We need to realize that our desires to be with the Lord *are* God Himself. It's not just you. It's not just your desire. It's not merely your own thought that you should spend time with the Lord. It is God! God is in *your* desire! God is in *your* inclination! God is in *your*

thought! Now you must work out what God has worked in. Just go along with that little still small voice, that slight sensation that you should withdraw yourself to pray and spend time with Him. If you obey those small nudges, you are obeying the very operating God within you (Phil. 2:12b-13).

Take the initiative every day. Go along with that little feeling within you. It may seem like it's merely you. But when you identify that feeling according to the Word, you discover that it's not you. It is God operating in you. Yet neither can you say that it's not you, because the desire is your desire. Thus, we can say it is a mingled desire issuing from the divine life operating within the human life. The Apostle Paul expressed this principle in 1 Corinthians 15:10 when he said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Paul admits that he labored, yet in reflecting on his own statement, he has to equally say, "yet not I, but the grace of God with me." By this we can see that, ultimately, taking the initiative means cooperating with God's operation.

The first step in learning how to behold the glory of the Lord is that we must take the initiative to do it. The Lord desires to do His work of transformation within us, but He is waiting for our beholding of Him in order to accomplish it. Therefore, let us take the initiative with our whole heart to spend time with Him.

Make Time to Do It

The second handle in learning how to behold the glory of the Lord is simply to make time to do it. The Apostle Paul indicates in Romans 12:2 that being “transformed by the renewing of the mind” is vitally related to not being conformed to this age. We have to admit that most of us have been conformed to this age in regard to how we spend our time. This age has so systematized our living and put us into its mold that it seems we can hardly squeeze in even five or ten minutes to spend time with the Lord. We’re just too busy. Yet, when something appeals to our natural life, we seem to find time to do it. For example, we may talk on the phone for thirty minutes to an hour, or we somehow find time to read the newspaper or newsmagazine for forty-five minutes and do not think much about it. But when it comes to spending time with the Lord, we may go for days, weeks, months, or even years and make little effort to set apart even a small amount of time to be with Him. It is no wonder that we’re not transformed into His image and that we have so many problems.

Making time to be with the Father was one of the most marked features of the Lord’s life. As we read the Gospels, we see that He not only lived in the Father (John 14:10) and had continuous fellowship with the Father (John 8:29), but He practiced in a regular way

setting aside special time to be with the Father and pray.

The following verses reveal the Lord's own habits in spending time with the Father: "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a desolate place, and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35); "But He Himself was withdrawing in the wilderness and praying" (Luke 5:16); "And it came about in these days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12); "And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. And having sent the crowds away, He went up into the mountain privately to pray. And when evening came, He was there alone" (Matt. 14:22-23); "And it came about that as He was praying alone the disciples were with Him; and He questioned them, saying, Who do the crowds say that I am?" (Luke 9:18); "And about eight days after these words, it came about that He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And it came about that as He prayed the appearance of His face became different, and His garment dazzling white" (Luke 9:28-29); "And it came about that when He was praying in a certain place, as He ceased, a certain one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1); "And He came out and went according to His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed

Him. . . . And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed" (Luke 22:39, 41).

By prayerfully considering all the above examples of the Lord's prayer life we are deeply impressed that the Lord not only felt the need to spend time with the Father, but that He also, in His busy schedule and ministry, made time to do it. Especially from Matthew 14:22-23 we can see how the Lord took control of His environment for the sake of spending time in prayer. He compelled His disciples to go to the other side, and He sent the crowds away in order to make time to be with the Father to pray in a private way.

Unless we take control of our daily schedules and environments for the sake of spending time with Him, our daily environments will take control of us! There is no easy, automatic way that we will fall into a habit of making time to be with the Lord. We must at times "compel" and "send away" in order to make time to be with Him.

Transformation depends upon our spending time with the Lord beholding His glory. Therefore, we must cooperate with those mingled desires by taking the initiative to make the time to do it. Every effort spent in this direction will be greatly rewarded. The Lord Himself promises a reward to those who exercise themselves to make time to be with Him. He says in Matthew 6:6, "But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who is in

secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall repay you.”

Position Your Heart

The third handle that we can lay hold of in learning how to behold the glory of the Lord is to position our heart. Once we take the initiative to cooperate with the Lord and actually make time to be with Him, we discover what kind of person we are. We find out what the real condition of our heart is. How distracted we are. How prone we are to be filled with wandering thoughts while we are spending time with the Lord. We fall into morbid introspection about our sinful condition. The Devil injects his suggestive thoughts. And on top of all this, our body is weak and we find ourselves falling asleep or dulled and dazed. So, after we win the battle over making the time to be with the Lord, then we find out that during our time with Him there is another battle to be won. What shall we do in light of all this?

In facing the battle during our time with the Lord, we need to position our heart by turning it to the Lord. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:16, “But whenever it [the heart] turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Then he continues in verse 18, “And we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord . . .” These verses show us that to behold the Lord with an unveiled face we need a turned heart. This is a heart

positioned toward the Lord. In other words, our heart has been turned in another direction, away from the Lord, and we need to turn it toward the Lord. Our heart may be distracted by many things, but our one and only need is to turn it toward the Lord.

Our tendency is to have our heart turned toward our problems or turned toward our defeated condition or turned toward what we see in ourselves that is still not subdued by Him. But let me say that the most important thing in spending time with the Lord is to get our eyes off ourselves and onto the Lord. Regardless of how we feel or what we see in ourselves, we still need to keep our heart focused on the Lord.

Hebrews 2:8-9a makes this clear: “You have subjected all things under His feet. For in subjecting all things to Him, He left nothing unsubject to Him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him, *but we see Jesus . . .*” There are two things to take note of in these verses. First, the fact that “we do not yet see all things subjected to Him,” and second, “but we see Jesus.” These two things are going on at the same time. That means we may see many things in us that are not yet subjected to Him—things that are not under His feet, under His ruling. But even in such an unfinished state, we still see Jesus! Our heart can be positioned and focused on Christ, despite the existence of the unsubjected things. Don’t be distracted by what you see in yourself. Keep your eyes upon Jesus and trust Him to subdue

every unruly thing.

Position your heart by using your spirit and say, “Lord, with my spirit and with the eyes of my heart I want to behold You. Lord, I don’t care for all the distractions and all the things that are not yet subjected under Your feet. Lord, I just care for You. Show me Yourself. Let me see Your glory.” It is not by our striving or human effort that we get transformed into the image of Christ, but by positioning our heart before Him with the deliberate exercise of our spirit. If we will daily take the initiative, make time to do it, and position our hearts, we will keep ourselves in the place where God Himself can change us.

***Let the Glory of His Person and Work
Pass before You***

When Moses was on the mountain in Exodus 33:18-19, he said to the Lord, “show me Your glory.” The Lord’s reply to this request was simply, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.” The Lord further responded to Moses in verse 22 by saying, “So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.” Then following this speaking, the very morning Moses presented himself to the Lord to see His glory,

Exodus 34:5-7a says, “Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ ”

The Lord’s answer to Moses’ request, “show me Your glory,” consisted of a wonderful heavenly scenery passing before him. Four times in these verses the Lord emphasized the matter of Moses seeing something pass before him: “I will make all My goodness *pass* before you,” “My glory *passes* by,” “I *pass* by,” and “the Lord *passed* before him and proclaimed.” From this we can see that to behold the Lord’s glory means to see the scenery of His Person and His work pass before us. It was beholding this scenery that transformed Moses so that “the skin of his face shone” (Exo. 34:30).

For Moses to behold the scenery of God’s glory passing by, the Lord told him that He would put him in the cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand (Exo. 33:22). In typology this signifies being hid in the crucified Christ, who died for us on the cross and shed His precious blood so that we can approach God directly and behold His glory. Thus, because of the blood, because of Christ’s finished work, because of that once-and-for-all sacrifice, because He entered into the Holiest of All and

made a way for us to be there and live there, now we can fully enjoy the glory of the Lord by letting this redemptive scenery pass before our spiritual eyes. Only the blood of Jesus ushers us into the glory. Growth does not get us into the glory. Being a believer for twenty-five or fifty years does not merit our getting into the glory. Only one thing qualifies us to enjoy the glory of the Lord—the precious blood of the Lamb. That’s all. Just the blood. We can declare, “I’m forgiven, I’m washed, I’m cleansed, and now I’m qualified to behold the Lord face-to-face.” Paul describes this privilege in 2 Corinthians 4:6 as our having “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Moses wasn’t doing anything. He wasn’t analyzing his own situation. He wasn’t looking at himself. He was simply there watching the scenery, watching everything pass by him. Moses was just there and God passed by proclaiming His name, His goodness, His mercy, and His forgiveness. It was after seeing all of this that Moses came down from the mountain shining.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul says, “And we all with unveiled face, beholding . . . the glory of the Lord.” So, to behold this glory we need to exercise ourselves to let the glory of Christ’s Person and work pass before us. Paul practiced this in his preaching of the gospel. Thus, he could write to the Galatians about how the Lord Jesus had been openly portrayed crucified before their eyes (Gal. 3:1). By such a gospel scenery they came under

“the hearing of faith” and received the Spirit (Gal. 3:2). In other words, they received the Spirit by letting the crucified Christ pass before them by means of hearing the gospel. They beheld His Person and work and were infused with the Holy Spirit.

There are many other verses in the New Testament that talk about beholding the Lord, such as beholding the glory as of an only begotten from the Father in John 1:14, seeing Jesus in Hebrews 2:9, seeing the ascended Son of Man in John 6:62, beholding His glory in John 17:24, and looking away unto Jesus in Hebrews 12:2. All these kinds of verses stress the importance in our daily life of allowing the Lord’s entire redemptive process to pass before us, including His incarnation, His human living, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, and His enthronement. We also need to behold all that His wonderful Person is, including all His attributes. Thus, what transforms us is seeing His mercy, His kindness, His goodness, His righteousness, His holiness, and His worthiness. All that Jesus is and all that He has passed through in His redemptive process needs to become our daily scenery. To be transformed, we just need to spend time with the Lord and let this scenery pass before us. Every day, even every hour, we can behold the glory of the Lord.

With the eyes of our heart and with our spirit, we can cultivate our beholding of the Lord with songs, with the Word, and with prayer, both individually and with

others. This is the way to enjoy and behold the glory of the Lord passing before our spiritual vision. We need to nurture this kind of spiritual exercise. We have our home life, our family life, our social life, our school life, and our work life. We meet people, we talk to people, we are occupied daily with many things. Although we have this kind of life outwardly, we also need to preserve a secret life in a private room with the door shut, spending time with the Lord (Matt. 6:6). Here there's no one else but ourself and the Lord. Here we can behold His glory by praying, by singing, and by reading the Word.

Spending time with the Lord is revolutionary in our experience. We may think our need is a little more gritting of our teeth to say, "Lord, this time I'm going to make it through as a victorious believer." This kind of resolution, no matter how sincere, is nothing but our own energy and effort. Actually, we only need one thing—time with the Lord in a private place. Take the initiative and reschedule your life to go along with that "still small voice" prodding you to spend time with the Lord. And then just position your heart before the glory of the Lord. Don't worry about what's not yet under His feet (Heb. 2:8-9). Just let the Lord pass by. You can behold Him because you're in the cleft of the rock, in the Crucified One. You're under the precious blood. So you and I can enjoy all that the Lord is. Then we will be transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

This is how beholding the glory of the Lord transforms us into the same image. It's very simple. It's just a matter of doing it. Take the initiative. Take time, find a private place, position your heart, and then just expose yourself to this transforming element, which is the glory of the Lord passing before our eyes. We see Jesus, hallelujah!

Find a hymnal and sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord. Take the verses of the Bible and pray with them and over them. Then at other times just open yourself to the Lord and tell Him you love Him. Get acquainted with the blood of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation and how they're singing about it in the heavens (Rev. 5:9-12; 7:9-14; 12:10-11; 14:2-4). Join in with the heavens and sing about His precious blood. Speak to the Lord about His wonderful Person and work. Your beholding and enjoying of Him in this kind of way will become your transformation.

Oh, may the Lord give us such a personal, secret, intimate life with Him. Then we will be solid, then we will grow, then the Devil will be defeated, then we'll discover that the Lord will take us up into His own intercessory life to carry out His purpose and His plan. All of this issues from our spending time daily with the Lord and letting the glory of the Lord's Person and work pass before us.

4 | The Life Christ Lives in Us

“Receiving Christ and through Him united to God, there comes to us the stupendous blessing expressed in these words ‘that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Him may be in them.’ We become the objects of the very same love which the Father has for His Son. We are recognized as part of Him even as the bride is taken into her husband’s family and loved even as her husband. This is, indeed, the mystery of mysteries: that we are permitted to share the intimate and exclusive affection of the eternal Father toward His only begotten Son. He loves us now, not for ourselves, nor in proportion to our personal claims upon His affection, but precisely as He loves Jesus Christ, with infinite complacency and unlimited measure.”

– A. B. Simpson

The Lord’s Life in the Gospels and in Us

By observing the Lord’s life on the earth we can become more familiar with the Lord’s life within us. The one unique life which is described in the four Gospels is the very same life which is now living in us. Thus, by studying the Lord’s life in the Gospels, we are not merely considering something objective to us but some-

thing that is also subjective in our spirit. His life lived out in the Gospels is what is now being reproduced in us by His indwelling.

As Christians we can have the assurance that the same Christ who was once outside of us is now inside of us. Furthermore, the way Christ lived on the earth is precisely the same way He is living in us. We must see that the kind of life He lived in the flesh is not something different from the life He now lives in us. This is a basic biblical principle—learning how to apply the Lord’s life in the flesh to our own experience of Him in the spirit.

The Apostle Paul spoke according to this principle in Ephesians 4:20-21 when he said to the believers, “But you did not so learn Christ, since indeed you have heard Him and been taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus.” To “learn Christ” is to learn Him by His example in the four Gospels, and “the truth . . . in Jesus” means that Jesus lived a life of truth or reality by always doing things *in* the Father, *with* the Father, and *for* the Father. This was the truth in Jesus demonstrated and recorded in the Gospels. Now as believers with Christ as our life and being taught in the realm of our union with Him, we learn that the relationship He had with the Father in the flesh is the same kind of experience being repeated in us in the spirit. We “have heard Him and been taught in Him.” Thus, to adequately learn the indwelling Christ in our experience we need two things. We need to study the Lord’s example in the Gospels and we also need to have

an experiential realization of our union with Him.

Another passage that reveals this same principle is Philippians 2:5, where Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Following this statement Paul continues to describe the Lord’s attitude of humility in His incarnation and human living, setting it forth as an example of what believers are to expect God to work in them. In other words, the mind and disposition that was “in Christ Jesus” in the four Gospels is the same mind and disposition that is to be wrought into us as a result of the indwelling Christ.

By applying this principle to our spending time with the Lord, we observe one of the most striking features of the Lord’s life recorded in the Gospels—how He spent time with the Father. The following passages reveal this: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 22:39, 41; and Matthew 14:22-23. In the midst of His ministry, He was always slipping away to spend time alone with the Father to pray. This aspect of the Lord’s earthly life teaches us that the same Christ now living within us still needs time for fellowship and prayer with the Father. If we follow the Lord in His prayer life in the Gospels, we discover many helpful points regarding how the Lord spent time with the Father. What was true of Him then is still true of Him now as He continues to live His life in us. Thus, we can learn Christ in us and how to spend time with Him by considering how He spent time with the Father.

***The Lord's Love Relationship
with the Father***

In considering the Lord's prayer life, the first question we must look into is, what motivated Him to spend so much time with the Father? The answer is simply—love. Indeed, the outstanding feature that characterized the Lord's earthly life was His love relationship with the Father. This can be seen in John 1:18, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The preposition "in" in this verse is better translated "into" (Gk. εἰς). It should read, "the only begotten Son, who is *into* the bosom of the Father." There is a difference between "in" and "into." "In" implies a stationary position, whereas "into" implies motion and movement into something. Thus, the preposition "into" in John 1:18 describes the motion and movement of the intimate love relationship the Son had with the Father.

Frederick L. Godet in his classic commentary on the Gospel of John makes the following comment on this love relationship: "This present participle ὁ ὢν, *who is*, refers to the permanent relation of the Son to the Father through all the stages of His divine, human, and divine-human existence. He ever presses anew with an equal intimacy into the bosom of the Father, who reveals Himself to Him in a manner suitable to His position and

His work at every moment. The form εἰς κόλπον [into the bosom], instead of ἐν κόλπῳ [in the bosom] (the preposition of motion, instead of that of rest), expresses precisely this active and living relation. The bosom of the Father is not a place, but a life; one *is there* only in virtue of a continual moral act.” Thus, to say the Lord was “into the bosom of the Father” is a very descriptive and intimate way of revealing the Lord’s love relationship with the Father.

The secret of the Lord’s life of expressing the Father, of being so one with the Father, and of always pleasing the Father was His love-life *into* the bosom of the Father. The Lord’s human life consisted of His habit of continually spending time pressing anew into the bosom of the Father and allowing the Father’s love to saturate Him. The Lord said in John 15:9-10, “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” This was the key to the Lord’s daily life. He knew how to spend time with the Father, abiding in His love. Now, the Lord’s indwelling life in us is exactly the same as it was in the Gospels. It is still a love-life pressing ever anew into the bosom of the Father. That’s why the Lord commands all His believers to abide in His love.

In spending time with the Lord, this is our greatest need—just to abide in His love. However, with so many of us, the problem is that we abide in our present condition; we abide in our failures; we abide in our past record; we abide in our concepts; and we abide in our anxieties about the future. In other words, we abide in everything but His love. We know all about ourselves and can dissect our problems accurately, but we know very little about spending time with the Lord, basking in the sunshine of His love.

Let me ask, how is your love relationship with the Lord? Is He sweet? (Song of Solomon 5:16). Is He intimate? (Song of Solomon 1:2-4). Do you enjoy Him as the One who loves you and shed His blood for you? (Rev. 1:5). If you don't enjoy the Lord in this way, then you need to reevaluate your whole Christian life. Are you trying to live an overcoming life in your own strength? Have you fallen into the Galatian error of beginning by the Spirit but now endeavoring to be perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:3). Are you struggling to improve your behavior? Are you even serving and working for the Lord but still lacking a sweet and intimate love relationship with Him? Perhaps your entire Christian life is one defeat after another simply because you have neglected to spend the time fellowshiping with Him, abiding in His love.

***Cultivating a Love Relationship
with the Lord***

We must be clear concerning this matter. It takes time to cultivate a love relationship with the Lord. This was demonstrated by the Lord's own earthly life. He repeatedly spent time with the Father, enjoying the Father's love (Luke 5:16). In Mark 14:36 we find Him in the garden of Gethsemane, where it was His habit to go and be with the Father (Luke 22:39); and He is once again pressing anew into the bosom of the Father, as He was facing the critical hour of crucifixion. Mark records in verse 36 that He was saying repeatedly, "Abba Father." This means that even when He became obedient unto death, the death of the cross, He was doing it by enjoying the Father's love. To say "Abba" is to call upon the Father in the most sweet and intimate way.

Now we must see that this same "Abba Father" love-life that is demonstrated in Mark 14:36 has been sent into our hearts in Galatians 4:6. Thus, Paul declares, "And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" What a joy! What a hope! The very prayer life of God's Son is in our hearts. The intimate love-life between the Father and the Son has been put into us. We have it! It's not a matter of trying to find it or longing to possess it. We have the

Triune God's love-life within us. And just by virtue of our being a born-again Christian, we are entitled to merge in our hearts with the love flowing between the Father and the Son in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

The Lord's love-life with the Father simply needs to be cultivated and released in us. That life is in us twenty-four hours a day. The same life that cried "Abba Father," the same life that withdrew so many times into the wilderness to pray, the same life that wanted to be with the Father alone—that life is in us. And this life in us needs time. The same life that took time to pray in the Gospels still needs time to pray in us. The Spirit of His Son is located within our hearts, waiting for us to join in and cry "Abba Father." What an indescribable enjoyment—that we could mingle with the Son's life which is ever pressing anew with equal intimacy into the bosom of the Father.

Spending time with the Lord in this way will supply us, deliver us, save us, and transform us. We don't need human effort, religion, improvement of behavior, or adjusting ourselves with our natural energy. We just need time to be with the Lord and allow ourselves to abide in His love. The Lord further described our participation in this love-life of the Triune God in John 17:26 by saying to the Father, "And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in

them.” This means exactly what it says. The very same love that Jesus enjoyed from the Father is in us, not imitated by us or worked up by us but experienced by us. The Triune God’s love-life dwelling in us is experienced by allowing it to pass through our being from our spirit (Rom. 8:15) into our heart (Gal. 4:6). In light of this, who would be so foolish as to neglect spending time with the Lord enjoying this flow of liquid love!

Who can fathom the intensity of the Father’s love and delight in His beloved Son? Step out of yourself for a moment. Don’t consider your condition. Stop your struggle for victory. Cease from all your preoccupations. Just stop and consider one thing—the Father’s love to the Son! The Father declared from the heavens at Jesus’ baptism, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I delight” (Matt. 3:17). The Son is the Father’s delight! Not you! Not me! Not our condition! But the Son! The flow of the Father’s love is all channeled to the Son. Now listen to John 17:26b once more: “That the love with which You have loved Me **MAY BE IN THEM, AND I IN THEM.**” What you need and what I need is not to find out how to solve our problems, but rather to place ourselves before the Lord and simply give Him some time for His love-life to pass through us. The flow of the divine love is conveyed to us by the Spirit (John 7:37-39) and not only solves our problems, but brings us everything we need. The love-life of the Triune God Himself

is our portion and enjoyment. We just need to spend time cultivating it.

Putting Himself Aside

Another related point in observing how the Lord spent time with the Father is how He put Himself aside. In Luke 3:21 it says, “Now it came about that, when all the people were baptized, and as Jesus was baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened.” Here we can see the Lord’s prayer life in a unique way, that is, in its relationship to the meaning of baptism. Baptism means to put oneself aside. Thus, while He was putting Himself aside in the death waters of baptism, He was praying. This implies that in spending time with the Father to pray on this occasion He was putting Himself aside. All that He was as a man in the flesh (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3) He put aside in baptism by prayer. Following this act, Luke 3:22 says, “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove upon Him; and a voice came out of heaven, You are My beloved Son, in You I delight.” In other words, putting Himself aside with prayer made a way for the Spirit to come in with God’s speaking.

The same principle must apply to our experience of the Lord. In spending time with Him we must put ourselves aside. We have to say, “Lord, I just put myself aside—all my distractions, all my fears, all my anxieties, all my condemnation, all my preoccupation with my-

self. Lord, I just come to You to put myself aside.” This is the practical significance of baptism and praying. And in spending time with the Lord, this is an important factor. We have to learn to put aside the intruding thoughts that pop into our mind, such as, “I don’t know how to spend time with the Lord. I have failed in the past. I don’t think this is going to work for me.” These kinds of thoughts must be put aside. Every single distracting thought that enters into our mind must be put aside.

During the initial period of spending time with the Lord, it is good to have a little time just to put yourself aside. Put yourself aside in every dimension—put aside your feelings of failure, put aside your natural life, put aside your environment, put aside your present dealings, put aside what *you* think the Lord is speaking to you. Many times we imagine the Lord is saying something and doing something. Yet, it may not be Him at all. That may be our own thought. It’s much better to remain in the principle of baptism. It’s much better to bury everything, that is, to put aside our natural life, our religious life, and even our “spiritual life.” Just bury it. Absolutely put ourself aside. Tell Him, “Lord, I really don’t know You that well. I know the doctrines of Christianity, I know many things about You, and I know what I’m supposed to be. But Lord, I want to get to know *You*. So, Lord, I just put myself aside.”

In Colossians chapter two, the Apostle Paul applied

the principle of baptism to the believers at the very time they were being distracted by so many religious ordinances. The Colossians had been influenced by certain heretical teachings that caused them to focus on themselves rather than putting themselves aside. Such dogmatic slogans as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” (Col. 2:21) all tended to turn the believers in on themselves. They were caught up in “self-imposed worship and humility and severe treatment of the body” (Col. 2:23), so they were all entangled in the knots of their own self-effort. Apparently they were spending time seeking the Lord, but they were doing it from the source of themselves. Instead of causing the self to be put aside, the heretical teachings caused them to rely and depend upon the self.

In this distracted situation, Paul brings them back to the meaning of their baptism by saying in Colossians 2:11-12a: “In whom [Christ] also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, buried together with Him in baptism . . .” In essence he was saying, “You have been terminated! You have been put aside!” Now, “seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth” (Col. 3:1b-2). In other words, the proper way to spend time with the Lord, seeking Him, is to do so as a terminated person. This means we can put

ourselves aside in order to fully enjoy our union with the love-life of the Triune God. Paul puts it plainly, “For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

To put ourselves aside is to just go along with the real significance of our baptism in which we were terminated. This termination has in view our being a person that is reduced to the love-life of the Triune God. Indeed, God’s eternal counsel concerning us is that we would share in the continuous flow of love between the Father and the Son (Eph. 1:4-5). Thus, we must put ourselves aside in order to cultivate this love which flows in the Triune God and reaches out to take us up into Himself by making us organically the Body of Christ (Eph. 5:25, 28-30).

From eternity past to eternity future God’s love is over us and with us. In fact, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Principalities, powers, death, life—whatever realm—nothing can separate us. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, not through our condition, not through our potential, but through Him who loved us. However, if we don’t spend time with the Lord and put ourselves aside, we may be cheated from the daily enjoyment of this mighty flowing love.

Paul lived in the enjoyment of this love. And that was the realm whereby Christ lived in him. In Galatians 2:20 he said, “I have been crucified with Christ.” That

means I'm put out of the way, I'm terminated. "It is no longer I." I've been put aside. Now it is Christ who lives in me; "and the life which I now live in the flesh," that is, in the environment of my flesh—the strivings of my flesh, the anxieties of my flesh, the depression of my flesh, all the things of my flesh—the life that I now live in this environment, I'll tell you how I live. "I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Not loved us, but "loved me." That's how personal and intimate the Lord's love was to Paul, and this was what motivated him to enjoy this living Person.

So, in spending time with the Lord to cultivate a love relationship with Him, we must put ourselves aside to hear God's voice speaking about His Son: "In Him I delight." Forget about yourself. Just let the Lord speak that word to you, "I delight in Him," and then tell Him, "Lord, You're the Father's delight. Lord, I just treasure this time that I could spend stimulating my spirit in prayer to enjoy You, the One who is the Father's delight." It is in this loving interchange between our spirit and the Lord, with the eyes of our heart gazing upon Him, that we are spontaneously being transformed.

In observing the Lord's life and how He spent time with the Father, first we see His love relationship with the Father and second we see how He put Himself aside. So, regardless of where you are or how you feel when you spend time with the Lord, every feeling and every

condition is just good for one thing—to be put aside. It's just good to put it aside. Stay in the reality of your baptism. That's all. And pray. Just turn away from all the distractions and merge with the love-life of the Triune God. This is what we need. This is what we desperately need. We just need to spend time enjoying God.

5 | Spending Time with the Lord in the Word

“My mind being now more open and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the Book of God in one month, than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men. In one word, I found it profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, every way sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.”

– George Whitefield

Feeding upon the Word

To learn how to spend time with the Lord in a profitable way, we need to consider how the Lord Himself spent time with the Father. By doing this we will discover that the same principles that governed His earthly life also govern His indwelling life in us. How He lived on the earth is how He now lives in us (Heb. 13:8).

We have seen that one of the secrets of the Lord's spending time with the Father was how He cultivated His love relationship with the Father (John 1:18; 15:9-10). We have also seen how the Lord practiced putting Himself aside as He prayed (Luke 3:21). This was another secret in how He spent time with the Father. Now we must observe another crucial secret out of the Lord's life that should also govern our spending time with the Lord. This is the Lord's practice and habit of feeding upon the Word.

In Matthew 4:4 the Lord declared to the Devil, "It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." These words quoted by the Lord from Deuteronomy 8:3 not only reveal how He handled the Devil's attacks, but they also unveil the secret of His inner life. It is clear that the strength of the Lord's inner life was maintained by His regular feeding upon the Word. He was not living on bread alone, but on every word proceeding out through the mouth of God.

If the Lord felt the need to spend time with the Father, feeding upon the Word, how much more do we need this kind of practice. The Lord Jesus was intrinsically the living Word (Gk. λόγος), yet He took time to feed on the written Word; and He could testify to the Devil that this was the way He was living. He was living on every word proceeding out through the mouth of God.

Now we must see that our inner life is constituted with the same inner life that was in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 6:17: “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Our human spirit which has been regenerated through the new birth is now mingled with the Lord Himself who is the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Thus, what was true of the Lord’s life in the flesh is still true of His life in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit dwelling in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). Now we must come to know in our experience how our inner man needs and requires regular times to feed upon the Word (1 Pet. 2:2-3). This was one of the Lord’s secrets in maintaining His supply to live out the Father’s life, and it must become our secret as well (John 6:57).

A Personal Testimony

As a believer, many years ago I began to learn this secret. After being a Christian for about nine years, I came to a point where I felt dry, discouraged, and defeated. I tried to overcome my failing self in many areas, but found that I lacked the necessary strength. This went on for several weeks, and then somehow it occurred to me that I should begin reading my Bible three times a day in a regular way. So I began reading the Old Testament in the morning, Psalms and Proverbs at noon, and the New Testament in the evening. It was amazing to see what happened to me within one week.

I discovered that the Word of God was food! At that time the Lord impressed me with Jeremiah 15:16, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.” This verse became my experience and testimony.

Formerly, my time with the Lord in the Word was mainly an exercise of my eyes and my mind. But when I discovered that the nature of God’s Word was food, I began to read the Word with a praying spirit, and the Bible became a new book in my hands. It became a book of enjoyment, a book from which I could feed upon the living God. I found myself reading and praying simultaneously and then taking up a verse or a phrase and beginning to fellowship with the Lord with the very words of Scripture. I found I didn’t have to strive to find what to pray. The Word of God itself became the content of my prayer. While doing this I found a mysterious yet real supply spontaneously infusing my inner man. No longer was I merely looking at black and white letters on a page or trying to mentally understand things, which had often left me spiritually deadened. For the first time in my Christian life, I began to enjoy God Himself in the pages of the Bible.

Eating three square meals a day by feeding upon the Word taught me experientially that my inner man requires food just as my physical body does. The reason for my defeated Christian life, I discovered, was simply

lack of nourishment. Even though I had been studying the Bible for seven years in Bible college and seminary, it had become to me a book of theology, sermons, and outlines, rather than a book of enjoyment and supply. I realized that the mere knowledge of the Bible could not change me. It was only when the Bible was translated into food by my using my spirit with prayer over the verses that it turned into enjoyment rather than mere thought. I began to experience a living supply that automatically filled me with God. I realized then as I do today, many years later, that one of the secrets of spending time with the Lord is to feed upon the Word.

Our View of the Bible

What does it mean to feed upon the Word? First, we must see that to the Lord it meant having a living and fresh relationship with the written Scriptures. For example, in Matthew 4:4 when the Lord said, “It is written,” He used the perfect tense in Greek (γέγραπται), which can be literally translated “It stands written.” He didn’t say, “It was written,” as though the Word was something merely recorded in the past without any present reality. The force of the perfect tense, “It stands written,” indicates that the Lord’s attitude toward the Word was that it was God’s present speaking—living and fresh, not dead and old.

In fact, the written Scriptures were identified by Him as being the very word that “proceeds out through the mouth of God.” In saying “proceeds,” the Lord again used a tense that reveals His attitude toward the written Scriptures. “Proceeds” is a present participle (ἐκπορευομένῳ), which denotes that “every word” was presently proceeding out through the mouth of God. He didn’t use the past tense “proceeded,” as though He were articulating a theory on the inspiration of Scripture. He used the present tense “proceeds” to reveal that the written Scriptures are living and fresh, even proceeding “out through the mouth of God.” This proceeding word, according to the Lord’s view, is good for man not just to study and read, but to feed upon as bread and to live on. This was the Lord’s realization concerning the Scriptures; consequently, in His experience His relationship to them was characterized by His feeding upon the Word to be nourished and strengthened.

In the same way, our view of the Bible will determine how we handle it and come to it. If our view is that the Bible is a book of knowledge and doctrines, then the time we spend with it will be characterized by study and research with no life (John 5:38-40). However, if our realization of the Bible is that it is living and fresh, proceeding out through God’s mouth for us to be nourished, then the time we spend with it will be characterized by enjoyment and feeding with much life supply (Job 23:12; Psa. 119:103; Heb. 6:5a).

When we spend time with the Lord, often a number of things transpire. To begin, we may feel burdened to put ourselves aside, with all of our preoccupations and anxieties. Then we may be touched to spend some time just feeding upon the Word by actually pray-reading some verse or phrase. Following this we may just sense the need to wait upon the Lord quietly, allowing the love-life of the Triune God to be cultivated within our hearts (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 5:5). Thus, spending time with the Lord may include a blend of several different ways we contact the Lord. The main point during this time is that nothing should become a mere routine and ritual. Whatever we may practice while spending time with the Lord, the purpose is to bring us into God Himself, to have direct contact with Him in our spirit (John 4:24). It is this contact that nourishes us, supplies us, and transforms us.

6 | Spending Time with the Lord Early in the Morning

“It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business in the morning and the last in the evening. Guard yourself against such false and deceitful thoughts that keep whispering: Wait a while. In an hour or so I will pray. I must first finish this or that. Thinking such thoughts we get away from prayer into other things that will hold us and involve us till the prayer of the day comes to naught.”

– Martin Luther

Rising up Early in the Morning

Another important area to observe in spending time with the Lord is how the Lord practiced rising up early in the morning to be alone with the Father. In considering this we must read Mark 1:35, “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a desolate place, and there He prayed.” The context of this verse indicates that at this particular time the Lord’s responsibilities and ministry demands were quite heavy. Even His living situation was somewhat inconvenient. The night before, He had ministered to

virtually the entire city after the sun had gone down (Mark 1:32-34). He was under the pressure of caring for others' needs and sicknesses. There was also the presence of demonic activity in the ones coming to Him. Besides this, He was not in His own home where He could have more easily found a private place to pray. Yet, despite His environment and unsettled circumstances, He rose up very early to spend time with the Father in prayer.

The Lord's earthly example of rising early to make time to be with the Father, despite His full schedule, should help us to discern the still small voice in our spirit. That voice, morning by morning, calls us to rise up and spend time with the Lord (Isa. 50:4). That voice is none other than the same life that in the Gospels practiced early rising to fellowship with the Father. Now that life is in our spirit still needing to spend time with the Father. The Lord was so definite concerning His time with the Father early in the morning. We also need to be definite in this matter if we want to be persons who satisfy the inner requirement of the Lord's life in us.

It is so encouraging to realize that the early rising life has been installed into us with much grace (1 Cor. 15:10). This means that spending time with the Lord by rising early is a matter of depending upon the energizing work of the resurrected Christ within us and then cooperating with that grace by choosing morning by morning to rise up earlier to spend time with Him.

Watchman Nee's testimony is very helpful concerning this matter. In one of his books, in a chapter on early rising he says, "Let me quote the words of Miss Groves, a co-worker of Miss M. E. Barber, who has helped us greatly. She stated that the first choice giving evidence of one's love towards the Lord is the choice between one's bed and the Lord. If one chooses to love his bed more, he sleeps longer; but if he chooses to love his Lord more, he will rise up a little earlier. She spoke these words to me in 1921, but I still sense the freshness of them today. Yes, a man has to choose between the bed and the Lord. If you love your bed more, sleep on longer; but if you love the Lord more, you must rise up earlier."

We must accept the fact that the Lord's life within us is stated as being "our life" according to Colossians 3:4. Regardless of how we feel about it, when we received Christ we received an early-rising life (Mark 1:35), a prayer life (Heb. 7:16, 25), a love-life (Gal. 4:6), a fellowshiping life (1 John 1:3), and a feasting-upon-the-Word life (1 Pet. 2:2-3). These are the main features of this life which has now become "our life." If we follow this life every morning by rising a little earlier, we will discover that there is a special capacity early in the morning to enjoy the Lord.

In the same way that the children of Israel experienced a special capacity to collect and enjoy manna early in the morning (Exo. 16:12) before the sun became hot (Exo. 16:21), so in our experience of the Lord's life,

there is a special capacity to experience and know the Lord, who is the true manna (John 6:32-35), early in the morning. I can't fully explain it or tell you why, but according to my experience there is a capacity to hear His voice and receive His impressions early in the morning. I have found that there is a special portion of the enjoyment of the Lord in the early morning that is different than at any other time.

Practicing Withdrawing

Another marked feature of how the Lord spent time with the Father was that He practiced withdrawing into the wilderness to pray. The Lord not only rose up early in the morning to be with the Father, but on many occasions during the day and night He withdrew from the crowds privately to pray. Luke 5:15-16 and 17b say, "But the word concerning Him spread abroad all the more, and great crowds came together to hear Him and to be healed from their infirmities. But He Himself *was* withdrawing in the wilderness and (*was*) praying. . . . And the power of the Lord *was* with Him to heal." The repetition of the Greek imperfect tense (continuous action in past time), translated as "was" in verses 16 and 17b, clearly shows that the Lord's power to heal was in direct proportion to the time He was spending withdrawing to pray. A paraphrase of this portion might help to grasp the sense of the passage: "He Himself was con-

tinuously withdrawing in the wilderness and was continuously praying, . . . and as a result, the power of the Lord was continuously with Him to heal.”

The Lord’s practice of withdrawing reveals how much He was actually dependent upon continuous supply to meet His present needs. Even the Lord Jesus Himself needed fresh supply, fresh infusion, and fresh energy imparted into His humanity in order to live a life expressing God. The way He received these fresh supplies was by His practice of withdrawing to spend time with the Father in prayer. By this we can see that the Lord did not live trusting simply in His divinity to carry Him through His human existence. In His humanity, He needed to withdraw to spend time with the Father for His daily life. Needless to say, if He as the very Son of God depended upon this time, how much more do we need to practice withdrawing in order to be continuously supplied by the divine life.

We must realize that all of the pressures we face in our environments are like continuous calls to us to spend more time with the Lord. Even our fleshly disposition with its negative reactions, lusts, and moods is another call and a sign that we need to withdraw and pray.

The Apostle Paul also faced many difficult situations, such as the one described in 2 Corinthians 1:8. Here he said, “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, as to our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power,

so that we despaired even of living.” Here, not only did he face a desperate environment, but he also had to handle his reactions of despair to the environment. Yet in the following verses (2 Cor. 1:9-11), he could testify that God would deliver him by means of prayer and petition. Brothers and sisters, we must see that the practice of withdrawing to pray and spend time with the Lord should increasingly become a normal part of our Christian life.

The Greek word withdraw (ὑποχωρέω) in Luke 5:16 is a compound word made up of one preposition meaning *under* and another preposition meaning *apart*. The combination of these two words indicates that He withdrew into privacy. He separated Himself “apart” in privacy to be with the Father. If we desire to cultivate our love-life with the Lord, then we will surely discover the Lord Himself moving in us prodding us to withdraw from all the empty talk and looseness in our living in order to spend more time with Him.

To practice withdrawing we need a vision, and this simply means having before us a vision of the kind of life the Lord Jesus lived on this earth spending time with the Father. He was continuously withdrawing to cultivate and nourish His life with the Father. This is how He expressed God. And this is the life that is now within us. It’s a life of withdrawing.

This life is a life feeding upon the Word. This life is a life that gets up early to be with the Father. It’s a life

that practices withdrawing. This is the life that dwells within us. So, we need to pay attention to the Lord's speaking to us about our schedules, our daily living, and our priorities. We will never be a satisfied person unless we satisfy the inner demand of Christ "our life" to spend time enjoying God. We need to spend time for this love-life and relationship between the Father and the Son to be cultivated within our hearts until we are a reproduction of Christ. The Spirit of His Son is in our hearts crying Abba Father, loving the Father. And it is in this triune flow of love that we spend time with Him and enjoy Him. Don't mourn over yourself. Don't waste time taking condemnation and looking at your condition. Enjoy the Person in whom the Father delights. Just say, "O Father, You delight in Your Son! Look at His blood! Look at His righteousness! Look at His worthiness! Look at what He's attained and accomplished! Father, You cannot turn away the presence of Your Son. Nothing can separate me from Your love which is in Christ Jesus my Lord" (Rom. 8:39). We just need to leave our preoccupation with ourself and enjoy this Person. Praise the Lord!

7 | Spending Time with the Lord in Prayer

“Prayer is a great mystery. For here we see a principle of God’s working, which is, that God’s people must pray before God Himself will rise up and work: His will is only to be realized through the prayers of those who belong to Him: the prayers of the believers are to accomplish His will: God will not fulfill His will alone: He will perform only after His people show their sympathy in prayers.

Such being the case, it can therefore be said that prayer is none other than an act of the believer working together with God. Prayer is the union of the believer’s thought with the will of God. The prayer which a believer utters on earth is but the voicing of the Lord’s will in heaven. Prayer is not the expressing of our wish for God to yield to our petition and fill up our selfish desire. It is not a forcing of the Lord to change His will and perform what He is unwilling to do. No, prayer is simply speaking out the will of God through the mouth of the believer. Before God, the believer asks in prayer for the Lord’s will to be done.”

– Watchman Nee

One of the most striking examples in the Gospels showing *how* the Lord Jesus spent time with the Father is the record of His spending a whole night in prayer. In Luke 6:12 we read, “And it came about in these days that

He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.” The last phrase, “in prayer to God,” may be translated more literally, “in the prayer *of* God.” Although most versions of the Bible translate the phrase as an objective genitive – “in prayer *to* God,” it is equally proper to translate it as a subjective genitive – “in the prayer *of* God.” This simply means that in the prayer, God is not only the object to pray to, “*to* God,” but He is also the source of the prayer itself, “*of* God.”

Concerning the more literal translation of Luke 6:12, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Frederick L. Godet remarks, “The term προσευχή τοῦ θεοῦ, literally, *prayer of God*, is also a unique expression in the New Testament. It does not denote any special request, but a state of wrapt contemplation of God’s presence, a prayer arising out of the most profound communion with Him.” Such a unique description of the Lord’s all-night vigil in prayer discloses something of what transpired during His prolonged and concentrated time with the Father. The prayer of God indicates that in and as a result of His “profound communion” with the Father, He merged with the burden and prayer of God; that is, He so allowed the Father to pass through Him during His communion and fellowship with Him that He became perfectly one with God. He merged with God. This meant God could pass through Him unhindered. He was emptied of self and completely open to the flow of

prayer coming directly from God. Such a time with the Father, of spending “the whole night in the prayer of God,” reveals several crucial points concerning how to spend time with the Lord.

Allow God Himself to Pass through Us

First, it reveals that in spending time with the Lord, in order to merge with “the prayer of God,” we need to learn to allow God Himself to pass through us. This is fundamental in our fellowship with the Lord. It implies an opening of our entire being to God for Him to flow and pass through us. In the Bible, God is described as a flow; so the nature of our fellowship with Him must be like a flow of “living water” (John 4:10). In Revelation 22:1 the Triune God is described as a flow: “And he showed me a river of water of life [the Holy Spirit], bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . .” Jesus declared in John 7:38 and 39a, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive.” These verses make it clear that to know God is to know Him as a flow.

When we spend time with the Lord, our one need is simply to allow ourselves to be a channel for the Triune God to pass through us. Hallelujah! What a vision of prayer! Spending time with the Lord is a release of our

spirit where we consciously merge with God and allow Him to pass through us. God is a flow! He wants to flow Himself out into our hearts. It is this flow that the Apostle Paul describes in Galatians 4:6: “And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” In our experience the reality of this flow is directly related to our merging with it by the active exercise of *our spirit*. The sister verse to Galatians 4:6 is Romans 8:15, which shows us the need to cooperate with this flow by opening our mouth to contact God: “For you have not received a spirit of slavery to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which *we cry*, Abba, Father.” It is in this “cry” that God flows in us. “The Spirit Himself witnesses with our [crying] spirit” (Rom. 8:16a).

When we merge with God in this way and allow Him to flow and pass through us, the first benefit we receive is that He imparts His life into our being. Romans 8:11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” This indwelling implies an intensive saturation of the Spirit throughout our being, which results in life being imparted into us. Although prayer has its answer, even if there were no answer, by our allowing the Triune God to pass through us we obtain the greatest benefit—the divine life is imparted into us. Thus, when we exercise

our spirit to cry “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15), two things take place in us—the Triune God passes through us, and while passing through He imparts life into our being.

The second benefit of allowing the Triune God to pass through us is that we get cleansed and purified. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-souled!” This means that in our drawing near, God Himself draws near to us and begins to pass through us. This has the effect of cleansing and purifying our being. However, we should not think that such an effect is merely an automatic thing that happens without our cooperation. “Cleanse” and “purify” are both in the imperative mood, indicating our responsibility to confess and deal with the Lord as God passes through us in an inward way. As we merge with God flowing in us, our sins get exposed and cleansed, and our double heart is exposed and purified. If you want to get into the Lord’s light, just spend time with the Lord and draw near to Him. Your hands will be cleansed and your heart will be purified. This is the effect of allowing the passing-through of the Triune God.

The third benefit of allowing the Triune God to pass through us is that He sanctifies us; that is, He sets us apart and saturates us with the element of God. First Thessalonians 5:16-19 indicates this. These verses reveal how the Triune God is interwoven with the various ways of contacting the Lord: “Always rejoice; unceasingly pray;

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.” Here we see the Trinity. We have the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. All Three are related to unceasing prayer, contacting the Lord with rejoicing, and giving thanks. This all shows that whenever we exercise ourselves in the various ways of contacting the Lord, we open the way for the Triune God to pass through us. It is then, by this passing-through of the Triune God, that the Apostle Paul declares in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “And the God of peace Himself *sanctify* you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Praise the Lord! We receive life, we are cleansed, we are purified, and we are sanctified by allowing the Triune God to pass through us! Just let Him pass through. This is the benefit of prayer and of spending time with the Lord. We’re joined to the flow of the Triune God. Now when we pray we can allow the Triune God to pass through us, to take care of every one of our needs—to impart life, to cleanse us, to purify us, and to sanctify us. This is the vision we need when we spend time with the Lord. Allow God Himself to pass through you. Just say, “Lord, I want You to pass through me now. I open myself to You from the depths of my being that You may flow in me.” Stir up your spirit in this way, and the living water will flow (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Allow God's Intentions to Pass through Us

Another aspect of merging with the prayer of God is to allow God's intentions to pass through us. Not only God Himself, but God's intentions, must pass through us. In Luke 11:2 when the Lord responded to the disciples concerning prayer, He began by saying, "When you pray, say, Father . . ." Just this much in itself stops us, making us realize that the first aspect of prayer is that it is an activity in the Triune God. No one says "Father" apart from the Son and apart from the Spirit. In John 14:6 the Lord declares, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." And in Ephesians 2:18 Paul says, "For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." Thus, when the Lord instructed the disciples to say "Father," He revealed that prayer is a matter of the Trinity and of our merging with the prayer life of the Trinity.

When the Lord talked about prayer in Luke 11:2, He said, "When you pray, say, Father, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come." This means that to pray is to allow God's intentions—"Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come"—to pass through us. We must see that this is a crucial aspect concerning the prayer of God. When we pray, He passes through us, doing all His work. But also, His intentions must pass

through us. This means we must be a person who pours into our being God's intentions and is purified from other intentions, motives, and goals. Then we are persons that are filled with the intentions of the Triune God. This is the proper understanding of the prayer of God. It is simply God Himself and His intentions passing through us.

How much of God's intentions have passed through us? Do we know what it means to pray, "Lord, Your name be sanctified. Lord, Your kingdom come." For this kind of prayer we need light and revelation. Thus, when we pray, we must pray in this way: "Lord, fill me with Your intentions." This is how Paul prayed. In his praying in Ephesians 3:9-11, he opened up the vision that controlled him: "And to bring to light what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the church the multifarious wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which He made [carried out, executed] in Christ Jesus our Lord." In these verses Paul brings to light God's intention in the universe—that which had its beginning in eternity past and will be consummated in eternity future, and which is now being made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies. And what is God's intention? God's eternal purpose and intention is that His

multifarious wisdom would be made known through the church.

Immediately following the declaration of God's intention that is carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, Paul says in Ephesians 3:12, "In whom . . ." Paul knew exactly where he was. He was in the Second in the Godhead. In whom? Christ Jesus our Lord. He merged with the prayer life of the Triune God. And in this One, Christ Jesus our Lord, "we have boldness and access in confidence through the faith of Him." This means that Paul's boldness and confidence and access to pray issued from God's intentions pulsating in his being!

When Paul spoke in this way—"boldness and access in confidence through the faith of Him"—he was building one word upon another. It was as though he had mounted up to the heavens to command the whole universe to come under God's administration. And it was not by being filled with a kind of low, common thought or religious prayer. Although God does answer our personal requests, we need a higher vision so that we can pray with God's intentions in our being. This is the way Paul prayed. He fully merged in his prayer with the eternal intentions of the Triune God.

In Ephesians 3:13-21 Paul then told the believers not to be anxious about him and the trials he was passing through. He referred to what he was experiencing as "my afflictions for your sake, which are your glory."

Then in verse 14 he said, “For this *cause* I bow my knees unto the Father.” And then he proceeded right to the heart of the matter in verse 16, praying that the saints would have the kind of experience that would make them the ones fulfilling God’s intention. He prayed that they would be strengthened into the inner man in order that Christ could spread out and make His home in their hearts. Then, from such a spreading of Christ within them, they would be “rooted and grounded in love,” and would have the ability to “apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ,” that they could be “filled unto all the fullness of God.” Then he continues to ascend even higher, saying, “But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us.” And then he reaches the top: “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen.” God’s intentions just passed through that brother! Oh, that the saints could have such a dispensing of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Paul uses all Three interchangeably here: that you may be strengthened into the inner man through His *Spirit*, that *Christ* may make His home, that *God* would be all in all.

So, we can see that Paul was a brother under the light and revelation of God’s intentions. As believers, we need the same vision of prayer in order that God, with

His intentions, may pass through us. This is the vision we need in spending time with the Lord so that we could more adequately merge with “the prayer of God.”

Allowing God’s Desires to Pass through Us

Not only God’s intentions, but also God’s desires, must pass through us. This point is revealed in 1 Timothy 2:1, where Paul says, “I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men.” Then verse 4 speaks of our Savior God, “who desires all men to be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth.” This means that God’s expressed desire is for all men to be saved. So, when we pray, we not only touch the larger scale of God’s intentions for the church and the kingdom, but we also allow God’s desires for all men to pass through us. This includes God’s desires for everyone that’s in *your* life: at work, next door, at school; the mailman, the checker at the grocery store, the person you met at the bus stop, besides our family members and relatives. Paul says that first of all there need to be petitions and prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings made for all men. Thus, in spending time with the Lord we can allow God’s desires for others to pass through us.

Effectual prayer is made up of desire. For example, we may want to see someone saved. Yet, if in our prayer our own heart is not deeply moved for that one, such a

prayer will never move the heart of God. If we ourselves don't possess the desire to see someone saved, how could God's desire ever be released in our prayer? Paul illustrated this principle when he said, "On behalf of Christ, then, *we* are ambassadors, as God entreating *through us*; *we* beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). This indicates that God's desires are not merely kept within Himself. They need a human channel to pass through. God's desire to see the lost saved must be located within our very being. God's desire must become *our* desire, culminating in our persevering in prayer for them.

First Timothy 2:4 also shows us that God desires not only that all men be saved, but also that all would "come to the full knowledge of the truth." This desire is related to all believers. It is God's expressed desire that all His children come to the full knowledge of the truth. The full knowledge of the truth is found in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:17, in which he requests that believers may be given "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him." It is also found in Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9, in which he asks that believers "may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." The "full knowledge" in both prayers is related to God's full thought and purpose of obtaining a glorious church that fully expresses Him. This means that when we pray for believers, we need to allow God's desire that they come to the full knowledge

of the truth to pass through us. Spending adequate time with the Lord makes it possible for us to merge with this kind of burden for all God's children.

***Allowing God's Sovereign Designs to
Pass through Us***

Another result of spending time with the Lord is in the area of allowing God's sovereign designs for believers to pass through us. This is a definite aspect of the prayer of God. God has unique designs with every one of us, that is, to so arrange our environment and our circumstances that we would be brought on to conformity to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). Thus, in Romans 8:26-27 there is the intercession of the Spirit with groanings which cannot be uttered. Due to our weakness, we do not know how to pray as we ought. Verse 26 says, "And in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for *what*. . . ." In the original Greek, there is the definite article "the" before the word "what," meaning literally that "we do not know for *the what* we should pray as is fitting."

Now, what is *the what*? According to the context of this passage, *the what* refers to the specific things that are divinely arranged to take place in our environment. Whatever these things turn out to be, they are working together for good, that is, to cause us to be more

conformed to the image of God's Son. They may include what we would consider negative. They may be specific things and situations that are contrary to what we would choose or prefer. Hebrews 12 speaks about these environmental things as our being disciplined under the Lord's hand. The discipline may come in the form of a physical problem. It may be a family problem. It may be a job problem. It may be some pressure in your marriage relationship. It may be pressure in other relationships. The Lord knows exactly what every one of us needs.

We need a certain kind of environment, a certain kind of situation, that will affect us a certain way in order to press us to the Spirit and cause us to wash our hands from our sins, our flesh, our inertia. But, we don't know how to pray like this. You don't know how to pray for me, and I don't know how to pray for you. We don't pray, "Lord, grant some negative things to happen in the home this week to this brother. Lord, grant the loss of a job to this sister. Lord, cause this school to turn down this person's application." We don't pray this way. As we're praying, what we find in our hearts is, "Lord, take us all on with You!" Yet, within this prayer there is an unutterable groan. It's the burden and the groaning of the Spirit searching our divided and distracted hearts, searching where we are as Romans 8:26b-27 says: "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He

makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Although we don't know precisely how to pray, the Lord knows how to read the groans of the Spirit passing through His saints. We may only be able to pray, “O God.” But the Lord reads the unutterable groan in that prayer. Then Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good . . .” The “all things” in this verse turn out to be the answer to the prayers in Romans 8:26-27. This means that none of the things in our environment are accidents. Everything has happened due to the prayers of the Spirit, with His unutterable groans. He is accurately praying in us for all the believers “according to God,” not according to our idea of a good life, nor according to what we think we need.

So, whatever has been apportioned to us in our environment is not accidental. Yet, if we lack this kind of understanding, we may blame the things happening to us and blame our situations and unwittingly be in rebellion to God. If we find ourselves full of complaining and blaming, we should do one thing—draw a circle around ourselves and deal directly with God. We dare not put the blame on anything—the past, any person, whatever. Then we will get the most out of our environment and be conformed to the image of God's Son.

Our environment is under the sovereign hand of God. But even more, it is a direct answer to prayer,

because some are allowing the unutterable groans of the Spirit to pass through them, releasing the designs of God for all His saints. This is the vision we need in order to enrich the time we spend with the Lord in “the prayer of God.” It is an awesome thought that God uses us as channels and allows His intentions, desires, and designs to pass through us. The more time we spend with the Lord, the more opportunity we give God to have a way on this earth through us to accomplish His purpose.

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