

## 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*

**T**he sense of need is always at the base of our making progress in the Christian life. This is a spiritual principle given to us by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” 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. He says to the Laodiceans, “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” (v. 20). In this verse, the Lord 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 us that He is patiently standing at the door and knocking, seeking to get His believers to find time to “dine” with Him.

The Greek verb *deipneo* (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 any potential in ourselves. It has everything to do with our opening up to Another life to be supplied by that life from beginning to end. The Christian life is a life that has been prepared for us and is then 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 this supply.

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↖ **New**

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Sometimes when we hear the truth from the Scriptures or from others, we may take it as a personal demand upon us and 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 can’t live up to that.” When we have these kinds of thoughts and feelings, if we do not 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 is 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 — *by spending time with the Lord*.

The penetrating words in Hebrews 4:12-13 tell us that the word of God divides soul and spirit, discerns the thoughts and intents of our heart, and lays us naked and bare before His eyes. These words are enough to sink one into despair. Yet these very words are specifically intended to bring us to Christ, our sympathizing High Priest, to receive our constant supply at the throne of grace (vv. 14-16). 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. Christ lived the life that God intended man to live. And now this life that has already been lived is *continuously* being supplied to us.

In the New Testament the Greek word *epichoregia* (ἐπιχορηγία) 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 (epichoregia)* of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” In the ancient Greek world the root word *choregia* 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.” 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 every-

thing; and he supplied it lavishly and abundantly without rationing or restriction.

Today this New Testament word for “supply” can be likened to being on a full scholarship as a university student. You are very relaxed. You are free from anxiety over your needs. You do not have to work your way through school; you just *receive* all the benefits of your scholarship. All your practical needs are cared for. Your tuition is cared for. Your research needs are cared for. Everything is fully supplied.

This is the thought behind the word *epichoregia*. When the apostle Paul applied this word to the Christian life, he was conveying that everything in the Christian life is provided for. The normal Christian life is like being on a full spiritual scholarship with everything supplied to 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 shortages and realize that you do not have a fervent love for the Lord — your heart is not inclined toward Him and His Word that much — God’s desire at that point is to supply Himself to you. *He* wants to be your love for Him and 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, if you are reacting toward your husband, what you need supplied to you is Christ lived out toward your husband. Or if you feel anxious about your financial situation, what you need supplied to you is a life of trusting the Lord, taking one day at a time, and seeking first the kingdom of God. For every kind of lack there is a supply of life waiting to meet it. 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 process of transformation*

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 a transformation into the image of Christ Himself. From the moment we receive Christ and are regenerated, we are ushered into a lifelong *process* of transformation.

Second Corinthians 3:18 describes this process of being transformed into the image of Christ: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as in 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. 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 a new element — 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.

Throughout the Bible we see God’s purpose over our being. In *eternity past*, according to Romans 8:29, God predestinated us 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, the Firstborn 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 foreheads.”

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, cease from all other activities and preoccupations to give our undivided attention to behold Him (Luke 10:38-42).

### *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 Greek verb *metamorphoo* (μεταμορφόω), translated “transformed” or “transfigured” 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. In Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, 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, again the word “transformed” is in the passive voice: “Be transformed by the renewing of the mind.” This means that our transformation is something happening *to* us. Finally, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “being transformed” is also in the passive voice.

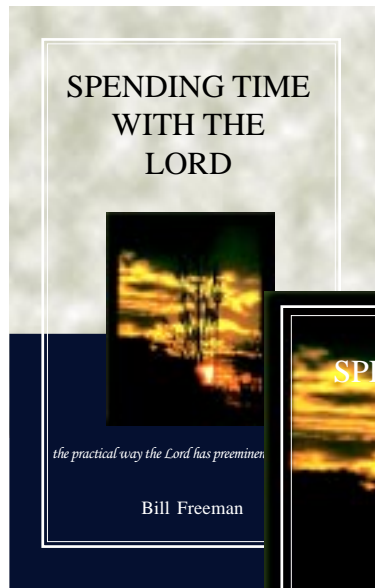
On our part, the nature of transformation is passive — it is something that happens to us. We, as the subject, are being acted upon, not doing the acting. For example, the statement “I am baptizing” is in the active voice (the subject is acting); whereas “I am being baptized” is in the passive voice (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. This passive process of being transformed 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.

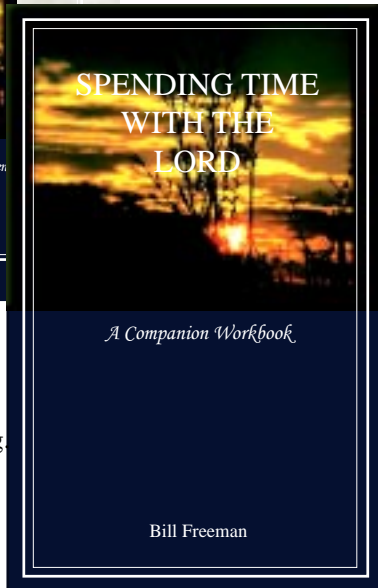
For the Lord to be able to do this transforming work upon us, there is the need for us to spend time with Him, using our spirit to behold Him. So in our daily life we need to pay more attention to spending time with Him beholding His glory, rather than spending time being occupied with our own efforts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

\*Taken from the 1st chapter of *Spending Time with the Lord* by Bill Freeman.

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#1. From Luke 10:41-42 how does the Lord feel about Martha's and Mary's priorities?

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#2. List any excuses that would hinder you from spending time with the Lord.

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4. A suggested question for group fellowship.
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**A** *Companion Workbook* for *Spending Time with the Lord* may be ordered for \$4.95, plus postage and handling. A 15% discount is given for orders of 5 copies or more. Orders may be made to **Ministry Publications** in the following ways:

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