

## The Practice of Fellowship (2)

### THE EFFECT, TIME AND PLACE OF FELLOWSHIP

*Scripture Reading:*

*2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thes. 5:17; Dan 6:10; Lam. 3.22; Mark. 1:35*

In Jeremiah chapter 17, verses 7-8 we read, “*Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah / And whose trust Jehovah is.*”<sup>8</sup> *And he will be like a tree transplanted beside water, / Which sends out its roots by a stream, / And will not be afraid when heat comes; / For its leaves remain flourishing, / And it will not be anxious in the year of drought / And will not cease to bear fruit.*” Aren’t these verses inspiring? Don’t you want to be like the tree that is transplanted beside the waters that sends out its roots and is not afraid? It is not afraid when the heat comes and not anxious in the year of drought, in the year of dryness, in the year of suffering. Hasn’t this year, 2020, been such a year for all of us? All the inhabitants of the earth are facing things that we have never gone through before, new challenges and even a kind of wearing down. It’s very possible that the enemy, Satan, has used all the things that are around us in our environment to wear down the saints as it says in the Book of Daniel. That this is one of his tactics; on one hand, he’s the accuser of the brethren; he’s always accusing us trying to put us down. But another tactic is to wear us down little by little. How much the environment affects us is actually dependent on how deep our fellowship is with the Lord. If we have a deep fellowship with the Lord, then we have the reality of this verse; we have sent out our roots to the stream, to the flow of living water.

In Jeremiah 2:13 the Lord rebukes His people: “*For My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water.*” This means, “I was the supply to you. I wanted to be the source of living water to you.” Psalm 36:9 says, “*For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.*” The Lord wants to be such a supply, but it’s very possible that unconsciously we have turned away from Him, that we turn away from Him in our daily life. It’s very possible that in our morning time with the Lord, we come to Him; and then as soon as we leave our prayer room we forsake Him and go to other sources, other wells, which are the replacements of Christ in our heart. If we do, then when the environment rises up against us, just very spontaneously we will have natural reactions independent of the Lord. But how good it would be if in our daily living, in the midst of all the current restrictions, all the changes, even the limitation in our meetings, we could still be enjoying the Lord. Not being able to be together and see one another in person is a real suffering to many saints. And again, this kind of wears on you, but how good it would be that in spite of all the outward situations, there is an inner flow, there is an inner peace, there is an inner satisfaction. All of this is possible by the deepening of our fellowship with the Lord.

Isaiah says that the Lord Jesus was a root out of dry ground, He grew up as a root out of dry ground. That means that the Lord is like a tender plant; everything around Him is dry, yet He continues to grow. That means He did not look to His environment at all for any encouragement, for any comfort, and for any supply. If we look to the things around us, if we depend on our environment for our inner peace, we will be greatly disappointed. So many things in our environment, but sometimes even our family life, sometimes our church life, sometimes our professional life, and sometimes our work life bring no satisfaction. If we look to those things for satisfaction, we will be dry. But the Lord Jesus had another source; He said, “I live because of the Father.” On the earth He was always facing situations which were so contrary to Him as we can see when we read the Gospels, yet He had another source. The complete verse is, “*As the living Father has sent Me and*

*I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me*” (John 6:57). We can have the same experience as the Lord Jesus of being like a root out of dry ground, but we are still growing. We are like a transplanted tree, which means that we don’t find the source of our supply here in this environment. Our source is somewhere else; our source is hidden.

We need to send forth our roots, or as Jeremiah says, to go back to the fountain of living waters. How do we do that practically saints? It depends so much on our personal time with the Lord, our personal fellowship with the Lord. But you might say, “Brother Ricky, I have the time with the Lord. As some of the saints mentioned last night, I spend the time using The Holy Word for Morning Revival. I read those verses, but I still don’t have the experience of the flow of the living waters.” Oh, that we could have this prayer that we had last night: “Oh Lord, deepen the sweet flow of life.” Remember, God is faithful through whom you were called into the fellowship, It tells us in Thessalonians, “*Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it*” (5:24). So He’s not only calling us into the fellowship, He actually comes to lead us into the fellowship. He wants to be our shepherd, even to hold our hand to guide us into fellowship with Himself.

In the next message we will get into more details of the procedures of fellowship, but I would like to bring in some of those points now, even before we touch today’s outline. A key verse in the matter of having the personal fellowship with the Lord is Psalm 27, verse 4: “*One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.*” Actually, there are quite a number of principles here; I want to mention a couple now and we’ll get into this more deeply tomorrow. “*One thing I have asked from Jehovah...*” In our fellowship with the Lord, we should have just one goal and that is the person of the Lord Himself. When we come to the Lord, particularly in the morning when we have a new beginning with Him, our goal should be not to just get some supply from Him. I think very often when we come to the Lord, we have this feeling, “Oh Lord, I really need You for today. It’s going to be a rough day at work, or I have lots of things scheduled with the family, or maybe even I have conference hospitality.” When we have some responsibilities we realize, “Lord, I need you. I need the supply.” Then it is very possible that we miss aim even in a time when we are coming to be with the Lord. But we’re aiming at a supply, something apart from Him. We need to tell Him, “Lord, You are my only goal. I want you, Lord. I need you, Lord.”

We also should not come to the Lord in the morning and have our time with him with a kind of side goal of getting some revelation, some speaking for our prophesying on the Lord’s Day. It’s very possible for even this to come in a subtle, subtle way. We might be having some time with the Lord; maybe we’re praying over these verses: “For My people have committed two evils” and then something comes to light. You see something and you start to think, “Oh, this might be good for me to share on the Lord’s Day.” Has this never happened to you? It’s almost like you start to develop your prophecy for the Lord’s Day; you have miss aimed. We got sidetracked from the one thing we were seeking after.

Psalm 27, verse 4 continues, “To dwell in the house of Jehovah.” We know that the house of Jehovah is both the church and our spirit. If we talk about the fellowship with the Lord, we must talk about our spirit. We should say, “Lord, I just want to be in my spirit with You in Your house to behold the beauty of Jehovah, Lord, I want to see You. Lord, I don’t need anything from You. I just want You. I just want to see You, Lord. Draw me and I’ll run after You.” It’s so easy that when we’re spending the private, personal time with the Lord, that we just wander off. In Ephesians 6 it talks about the armour of God. We need the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation.

I have been paying attention to this matter of the personal fellowship with the Lord, of the

practice of fellowship, and even what Brother Lee calls the procedures of fellowship. I've been studying this matter for some time, and I really want to recommend this publication to you: *Lessons for New Believers*. Actually, the four outlines that you received for this conference are all based on this book, chapters 21 to 24. Chapter 25 is also on the same point. In his fellowship Brother Lee shares that with everything there are procedures and principles. It's kind of like a science; practising fellowship with the Lord is a science. It has procedures, and if we follow the proper procedures, we will have a "success".

One of the principles is this one thing: we focus on the Lord and we tell Him we want to behold Him, His beauty. This, this brings us to a very key principle saints, and that is that maybe the first thing that we need is to be quiet before the Lord. When I say quiet, I don't mean that we don't speak, because it's very good when we are with the Lord, especially early in the morning, that we speak with our voice. If we are too silent with our mouth, it's very possible, in some cases probable, that we will fall back into sleep. Have you never fallen asleep when spending time with the Lord? It's good to speak with our voice.

Actually, the key is that our inner being needs to be quiet, our inner being needs to be still. Psalm 46 says, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" Psalm 62 says, "*My soul waits in silence for God alone.*" What we need is our mind to be quiet; we need our emotion to calm down; we even need our will to settle down and get into peace. Psalm 131, verse 2 says, "*Surely I have calmed / And quieted my soul.*" Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul. We need to exercise and we need to practice when we are with the Lord to just have our inner being present and calm.

But I found in my experience and checking the experience of hundreds of saints what may be the key point of disturbance when we're trying to spend time before the Lord: our interrupted thoughts, our wandering mind. I mentioned Ephesians 6, verse 16 earlier. There it says that we need the shield of faith with which we will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. For this word *darts* there is a wonderful note in our Recovery Version of the New Testament. It says, "The flaming darts are Satan's temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks. Flaming darts were used by fighters in the apostles time. The apostle used this term to illustrate Satan's attacks on us."

Don't you have this experience when you're spending time with the Lord? Maybe you are just praying over the verse in Psalm 27: "One thing I have asked Lord; I just want one thing" and a thought comes, an attack from Satan. Maybe it's not a temptation or a doubt; maybe it's just "I forgot to call brother Ralph. Oh oh, he's going to be upset with me. What time is it? Let me see. Should I call him?" No, you shouldn't call him at six in the morning; you would disturb his time with the Lord. But we have a thought of needing to do something right away, or an anxious thought like this, when we were praying. We were just saying, "Lord, I want to be helped", then, "Oh, no. I have this appointment. I have a doctor's appointment today, but I have an important work appointment. I can't go to... OH NO, WHAT AM I...?" Have you never said or thought something like this in the middle of your personal time with the Lord, "Oh no!" because of a thought that came in saints that was an attack from the enemy? The nature of the thought doesn't matter. It could be a very neutral thought; it doesn't have to be a sinful thought, although that happens sometimes. We get bombarded with something we saw in the media, or in some show, or in some movie. Maybe it was 20 years ago and the enemy will bring that back. Why now? Why at this juncture; why at this moment in time? Why not yesterday afternoon while you were at work or while you were home last night? Why at this juncture? Because the enemy wants to attack the foundation of our Christian life.

In the previous message we mentioned that fellowship with the Lord is the foundation of our growth and service. The enemy wants to frustrate these transactions with the Lord that we're having. Maybe in the next five minutes the Lord was going to perform something wonderful within our being to release us from a certain sin, to release us from an aspect of the world, or to release us from an idol that's been binding us for years. And just at that juncture a little thought disturbs our fellowship.

We have to exercise to bring every thought captive, every thought unto the obedience of Christ. Second Corinthians 10:5 says that we need to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ. Verses three, four and five first talk about warfare and the weapons of our warfare. Then as they talk about warfare, they bring us to the matter of taking captive the thoughts. This shows us that in the warfare between God and Satan, the battleground is, of course, man, but more specifically our minds. So we need the helmet of salvation in a practical way. How do we apply the helmet of salvation? We need to exercise our will. Remember, I'm not just talking about willpower, but the will is very much related to faith, or faith is very much related to our will. You can't exercise faith, even the initial faith, without the exercise of your will. You have to choose to believe in the Lord in salvation and every day thereafter.

Second Timothy 1:7 says that God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power. Did you know you have a spirit of power? Right now let's declare, "I have a spirit of power!" You do have a spirit of power and of love and of sober mindedness. We have a spirit of three things. Very interesting. It's our spirit, but the characteristics of our spirit match the functions of our soul. The spirit of power is related to our will. The spirit of love, of course, is related to our emotion. And the spirit of sober mindedness is related to our mind. So when those thoughts come, we need to exercise our spirit of power to say to Satan, "Not now. Not today. You got me with that thought yesterday, not today." We exercise our spirit of sober mindedness to block the wandering thoughts.

The attacks of Satan are so subtle. It doesn't have to be something of sin or the world. I have four grandchildren. They live in Orange County in California. So when I go to the training in Anaheim, I know that I'm going to stay with them. It's very possible that the morning of my flights I'm praying, "Oh Lord, one thing I have desired" and just then I think of my littlest granddaughter. I just get a thought of the little one, and it could be that I start thinking about her. "I'm going to see her tonight." Just that thought could carry me away for two minutes. Has this never happened to you? You get carried away for three minutes and then you realize, "Oh Lord, oh Lord, yes, amen." We get distracted from the Lord; then what do we do? Usually we repent: "Lord, forgive me." Don't do that. Don't confess Satan's thoughts; those are not your thoughts. Even at that juncture that thought about my granddaughter is not my thought; that Satan's thought. I don't want to think about that now; I want to be with the Lord.

Second Corinthians 2:11 says, "*That we may not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*" The word *schemes* could also be translated *stratagems* or *devices*. The root of that word *schemes*, *devices*, *stratagems* is actually in Greek a word for thoughts or mind. So you could loosely translate it as, "That we may not be taken advantage of by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his thoughts." His thoughts are like a dart that comes, and because we're so closely connected with Satan, we are even mingled with him, his thought gets injected into my thought. I think it's my thought. First he attacks me by putting the thought into my mind; then I get attacked by being condemned that I had the thought and say, "Oh Lord, forgive me." Don't do that; just return and continue. The more we exercise our spirit of sobermindedness and our spirit of power, we are exercising our spirit of faith to stand with the Word of God, to stand with the reality. Then Satan has no choice but to leave us. This is what it means to resist the devil and he will flee from you. Every

time we come to fellowship with the Lord, we are in a battle. Satan would like to undo or weaken the foundation of our Christian life, which is our fellowship with the Lord.

I hope that the Lord could use these few words to cause us to come to Him and deal with Him in this matter, that the Lord would have a way for each of us to deepen our personal fellowship with Him.

Now I'd like to reinforce a couple of the points that we had in last night's fellowship from the first outline. I'm just going to read through some of the Roman numerals.

### **The Meaning and Life of Fellowship**

#### **I. Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life and is actually the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possessed the divine life—1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:6-7:**

Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life and it's actually the flowing of that life in a practical sense. Fellowship is just life in motion; fellowship is just life in action. Fellowship is the Triune God Himself who has been dispensed into us, moving and acting and flowing in our being. When we have the fellowship, the flow of life, we have the presence of the Lord in a practical sense.

#### **II. Fellowship is carried on by the Spirit in our regenerated spirit; hence, it is called "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14) and "fellowship of [our] spirit"—(Phil. 2:1):**

When we're talking about fellowship with the Lord, we must know our spirit, we must exercise our spirit. Praise the Lord! Our spirit is a spirit of power and a spirit of love and a spirit of sobermindedness. Remember, our spirit has these three functions which are key in the in the practical experience of fellowship with the Lord. Those three functions are tTo bring us into a deeper fellowship with Him.

#### **III. The Christian life is a life of fellowship—Acts 2:42; Phil. 2:1:**

I appreciated in some of the testimonies last night that some of the saints picked up on this point. Yes, what we are talking about or we will be talking about, is mostly focused on our fellowship with the Lord at a set time. Actually, today's lesson talks about this distinction: fellowship at a set time and then fellowship all the time. This point is talking about the second part: all the time. The two work together. How can we have a life of fellowship with the Lord, where all day long we are in this fellowship? It depends on having a good set time fellowship with the Lord. The two go hand in hand, and we cannot have one without the other. It's important for us to have a set time of fellowship with the Lord so that He can do things that He's not able to do during the day.

We come back to this point about being quiet or being still. When a surgeon is going to perform something on his or her patient, the patient must be still. The patient must be calm. If you are not calm, the surgeon can't do anything with you. In the same way, if we're not calm before the Lord, it is very difficult for the Lord to do some things within us, to get into the deepest part of our being. We say, "Lord, make home in our hearts." This may even be a daily prayer, but we never give the Lord the chance to go deep down into our hearts. The prayer in Ephesians 3:17 is that Christ may make home in your hearts. That word make home has a particular meaning in Greek of not just home, but make home deep down in our hearts. Maybe we don't give the Lord the chance to go deep down. But saints, our entire life is a life or should be a life of this flow and fellowship with Him.

#### **IV. Fellowship is the foundation for our growth and service:**

#### **V. Learning to fellowship with the Lord is the most important lesson for the Lord's serving ones:**

- C. The Lord always demands something of us in our fellowship with Him because there are too many matters and things within us, in our living and in our environment that replace Him; hence we do not express much of His element—Matt. 12:33-34.

Point C. connects with what we're going to fellowship in the next outline. Why is it that it's possible we could be in the Lord 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years, and in some areas of our life we don't progress. In some ways we do, in some areas we do, but it could be that in other areas of our life there is no breakthrough; there's no advance; we are just the same or have very little advance and growth. It could just be this: we need to deepen our fellowship with the Lord. We haven't allowed Him the time, the opportunity to operate within us.

Isaiah 30, verse 15 says, "*In returning and rest you will be saved; / In quietness and in trust will be your strength.*" It mentions four things here: returning and rest, quietness and trust. We need to return to the Lord all the time, but especially in our time with Him in the morning. Sometimes we have to keep returning because when we are with Him we get carried off. Maybe when we spend 10 minutes with Him, one thought could carry us off for 2 minutes. Then we return, but we return only for 30 seconds and we get carried off again for a minute and a half; then we return. We have to return all the time to Him and we have to rest in Him.

In Psalm 23, verses 1 and 2, rest is also mentioned: "Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures; / He leads me beside waters of rest." Our inner being needs to be at rest before the Lord. We need to practice to exercise our spirit of power, our spirit of sobermindedness, to quell the flaming darts of Satan. That really is to have the shield of faith, to exercise our spirit of faith. We want the Lord in just five or 10 minutes in the morning to operate a kind of spiritual surgery to undo the replacements that have been in our lives for many years. We need Him to expose a certain sin, maybe to expose pride in our heart. It could even be spiritual pride, something lurking there, and the Lord has never had a way. But today, He would like to do this with just 5 or 10 more minutes that were with Him in quietness.

Again, I don't mean quietness by our not speaking. We might be praying, we might be calling. Actually, just calling on the Lord is a good way to quiet down our inner being. Singing is also a good way to quiet our being. This morning I practised this; I woke up with the hymn from last night. It was just there. It's not that I was trying to, to think of it or remember it. But this prayer: "Lord, I treasure the sweet flow of life." Even before going to my place where I have my personal time with the Lord, even just in washing up, the hymn was with me. I was singing as I was brushing my teeth. It's as if my time with the Lord started from the time I awoke; He was calling me into fellowship through this hymn. Have you never experienced that? I think we have all experienced that we wake up with a hymn in our heart; the hymns help us to quiet our being before the Lord.

- D. The experience of being touched by God in our fellowship with Him and surrendering to Him is very precious; this experience will not only enable us to be used by the Lord; it will also keep us fresh and living—John 7:38b.
- E. When we sense that our experiences testimonies, or messages are old, there must be a problem in our fellowship with the Lord; we have either lost this fellowship, or we do not fellowship as much; as a result, we do not have new experiences, and we are not useful.

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### THE EFFECT, TIME AND PLACE OF FELLOWSHIP

*Scripture Reading:*

*2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thes. 5:17; Dan 6:10; Lam. 3.22; Mark. 1:35*

Now we come to outline number 2. This is entitled *The Effect, Time and Place of Fellowship*. We will spend most of our time on the effect of fellowship; we can go very quickly through the time and the place. We really are looking forward to your speaking in your overflow and how the Lord has just been touching you and impressing you with all these points.

Another key verse when we're talking about spending the personal time with the Lord is 2 Corinthians 3:18: "*But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.*" Of course, this ties to verse 16 where it says, "*But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*" How we need our heart to turn and turn again, to continually turn to the Lord. Then here it says "with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror". This matter of beholding brings us back to Psalm 27:4: "*One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.*" It says we are like a mirror, but I'd like you to consider the picture of a lake, not a river. In a lake when it's very still and you have a scene, maybe a forest or a mountain on the other side, you see the reflection exactly That's the kind of beholding and reflecting that we need. But what would happen if I would take a stone and toss it into the middle of the lake. Of course, the ripples distort the view, distort the reflection. That's what the enemy is trying to do when we are spending time with the Lord. While we are beholding, the enemy is peppering us, throwing stone after stone. How we need to practice taking captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

#### **I. The effect of fellowship with God:**

- A. According to the evidence in the Bible and our experience, the effect of fellowship has a negative and a positive aspect—John 3:30:

Have you ever considered that when we have fellowship with God, there should be something negative and something positive happening? The verse that we have here is John 3:30: "*He must increase, and I must decrease.*" On the negative side, fellowship with God continually removes the undesirable elements within us. On the positive side, the more a person fellowships with God, the more the element of God will be increased within him. In the first message we used the illustration of the human body with our metabolism with the circulation of the blood. We need the flow of the blood and spontaneously, what is happening is not just that positive things such as oxygen are being dispensed and infused into our being. It's also that negative things are being discharged out of our being.

I think that all of us would admit that there are things within us still today that we know are hindrances to the Lord within us. We still have other loves, other desires; they might be small things. First John 2 talks about the things in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. There are many things in the world that disrupt and interrupt our love for the Father. Those verses say that if anyone has love for the world, love for the Father is not in him. What are those things? There are too many to enumerate, and with each of us is something different. How do you remove that? We sometimes get discouraged: "Lord, what can I do? I can't change myself." Actually, we need to just have more fellowship with the Lord. In the fellowship with the Lord He

can spontaneously remove those things. He can replace the replacements with Himself so that He can have His proper place in our being.

Today we started with Jeremiah chapter 17, verses 7-8 we read, “*Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah / And whose trust Jehovah is. And he will be like a tree transplanted beside water, / Which sends out its roots by a stream, / And will not be afraid when heat comes; / For its leaves remain flourishing, / And it will not be anxious in the year of drought / And will not cease to bear fruit.*” Then verse nine says, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, / And it is incurable; / Who can know it?*” The heart is incurable. Why are these verses next to each other, something so positive followed by something so negative? Do you see that as we are in the fellowship with the Lord and sending down our roots and we are just focusing on Him, we are allowing Him the opportunity to expose our deceitful heart. He will expose the sin that has entangled us maybe for our entire Christian life and to finally uproot that in us. Don’t try to deal directly with all the things, whether sin or the world. We need to just behold Him and allow Him the ground to operate within us.

B. We can identify at least three categories of things that should not be in us—sins, the world, and the self—1 John 1:8; 2:15; Matt. 16:24

1. Whether or not we have genuine fellowship with God can be seen by whether this function of removal is manifested in us.

This is what I was alluding to in the first message. Actually our journey with the Lord can be measured, not by how much we’ve gained, but by how much we’ve lost. How much have we decreased? Then we will know how much He has increased. Some things are easy to let go, other things not so easy, still other things we didn’t even realize that they are within us, and yet other things we didn’t realize that we are holding on to them. Don’t try to figure yourself out. Just be with the Lord and allow Him to operate, to shine, to speak. God is faithful. “*Faithful is he who calls you, who also will do it*” (1 Thes. 5:24). Just yield yourself totally, surrender yourself to Him in fellowship. Do you realize that in our times with the Lord, 5 minutes with the Lord in this kind of fellowship can accomplish so much? In 10 minutes the Lord might be able to do something He hasn’t been able to do in the last 10 years. Imagine if we take 30 minutes to spend time with the Lord in this kind of uninterrupted fellowship where we are stopping the thoughts. It doesn’t mean that you will stop the attack; Satan will always keep trying. But if we exercise to have the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, the attacks will be futile and we will continue in the fellowship. Then the Lord can do more within us. But the enemy will be attacking; if we are taking 10 minutes to be with the Lord, it is very possible that eight and a half minutes were spent in interrupting thoughts. Then maybe we only had a minute and a half in the spirit. Now we all come to the Lord’s Day meeting and I spent one minute and a half that day, three minutes in the Lord’s presence the other day, and we all come together. No wonder at times the gatherings of the church, we have to admit, are not so rich. We all had morning time with the Lord. We all got into the word, but maybe the enemy weakened all of these practices. Oh how important it is for us to realize what the Lord wants to do in us and to exercise in this way to deepen our fellowship with Him.

2. If it has been a long time since something has been removed from us, our fellowship with God has diminished or even ceased.

3. Any dealing produced through fellowship is not accomplished once for all saints.

We need to remain in the fellowship. Maybe we’ve had a little victory and the Lord has been able to do something within us. Don’t be passive and don’t let your guard down. It’s very easy that



we give the ground back to the enemy. We just need to be in a state of dependence on the Lord all the time.

4. There is no regulation related to our dealing with things; rather, this is an effect produced spontaneously through fellowship.

This is why we cannot tell you what to deal with. Actually, it could be that that some saints are in either some practice or involved with some things, but it's not the world to them; it's not a distraction to them; but with me it might be. So the Lord may deal with me and not with that person. We shouldn't compare ourselves to others in this matter, but rather just stay in the fellowship with the Lord and make ourselves available to Him, "Lord, here I am. I'm not looking at others. I don't care about others in this regard. Lord, I just care for you. You have my full undivided attention. Just me and You. Here I am Lord." Especially in the Old Testament, you can see that when people like Samuel or Abraham were called by the Lord, they responded simply, "Here I am. Here I am." Just make ourselves available to Him

- C. Even things given to us by God must be removed; He will require us at a certain point to offer to Him all our spiritual experiences, our spiritual gifts, and the fruit of our work, that is, what we have received from Him—Gen. 22:2.

Here we have the reference in Genesis to the story of God's requiring Abraham to offer Isaac who was given to him by God. Even victories, even positive things in our lives, the Lord will want to remove them because they become replacements for Him. How jealous He is! In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 2 and 3, Paul says, "*For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup> But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.*" Even here the apostle Paul brings in again the matter of the thoughts. The Lord is jealous over us; the Lord wants us all for Himself. Yet Satan could inject science to carry us away so that we are removed from the simplicity and the purity in Christ.

I hope by all this fellowship, even that I've shared today and that we're having in these messages, I'm not complicating you. What we're trying to do is strip away many things so that there's just one thing. As the psalmist David said, "One thing I've desired; Lord, I just want You. I just want You. I hope we could have such a fellowship with the Lord daily that even our Christian successes, our prior experiences, would not become hindrances for us to advance with Him today, to go on with Him today.

- D. Those who live in fellowship do not uniformly express the same thing—cf. Matt. 11:18-19.

Let us not compare ourselves with others in this regard. Let us just seek the Lord for our fellowship with Him.

- E. God's work is not to make us good, whole, or spotless; rather, it is to work Himself into us—2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Col. 2:19.

This is His central work; His central goal is to work Himself into us.

1. The increase of God's element can be compared to the process of metabolism in our body; in metabolism old elements are constantly replaced with new elements—Rom. 12:2.

But how, even in our physical body, does metabolism work? It's by our eating, by our drinking, by our breathing. The Lord made us this way purposely to show us that we need to eat Him, drink

Him, breathe Him, and enjoy Him. If we don't do this, we have no hope. Don't think, "I have to improve so that I can enjoy the Lord, so I can come to the Lord." No, if you don't come to the Lord, you will never improve, never change. We need the living, spiritual metabolism that comes by eating, drinking, breathing and exercising.

2. A person who learns to live in fellowship is constantly undergoing a metabolic change.

F. Those in religion have an outward standard, but Christians do not. The only need of a Christian is to fellowship with God—1 John 2:27.

It's true that in the in the church life there are no standards. Maybe we have developed some personal rules, regulations, which we put on ourselves and on others. But actually, from the word, the commandment in the New Testament is walk by the Spirit. To walk by the Spirit is to live Christ.

## **II. The time to fellowship with God.**

A. Constantly—1 Thes. 5:17:

The time to fellowship with God is all the time. Constantly we should have a kind of fellowship with Him.

1. Practically speaking, fellowship with God, like breathing, should be constant and not limited by time.

All the time we are breathing, even unconsciously. Now that I mentioned breathing, you will think of breathing. But this entire hour we have been fellowshiping and you didn't think about your breathing, probably not even one time because you did it spontaneously. That's how our fellowship with God should be. All the time we are just in fellowship with Him. Even telling Him talking to Him, "Lord, thank You, the sun is shining" or "Thank you, O Lord. It's getting cold. Oh Lord, it's raining. Oh, Lord." This "Oh Lord" constantly is fellowship with Him. But point 2 is very important and maybe would surprise you, but this is taken directly from Brother Lee's writing in this book *Lessons for for New Believers*.

2. We should learn to fellowship to such an extent that were even when we quarrel and are upset with others, speaking angry words to them, we would still be in fellowship with God—cf. Matt. 11:20-24, 25; Neh. 2:4-5.

Isn't that wonderful? Is that your experience or is that your aspiration. Oh, I hope, that it's all our aspiration—even when I'm upset I'm one with God. Even when I'm speaking angry words, I am one with the Father. It used to puzzle me when I would read the Gospels and I would see that the Lord Jesus got upset with people. He went into the temple and He overturned the tables and He got a whip to drive the animals out. He said, "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise." When I was young Christian, I thought, "Lord did You lose Your temper here? You didn't act like a Christian." This was my thought but one day, I was reading and I saw a key. He went into the temple and He overturned the tables of the money changers. Then it says, "And to those who were selling the doves He said, Take these things away from here." Then I saw, "Oh He overturned the table of the money changers, but He didn't overturn the table with the doves, with the birds." He told them to get these things away from here. If He had overturned that table, it could hurt the birds; He didn't do that. Do you realize that His anger was in control. He overturned the tables of money. He drove out the bigger animals with the whip, but of course, He wasn't hurting them. But He wouldn't damage the doves. Even at that time when He was expressing the righteous anger of the Father, He was one with the Father and He wasn't too much.

It's possible to have such a fellowship with the Lord because He told us, "As... I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). Do you believe that? Do you believe that if you eat Him, you could be like this? Now don't say, "Amen, I want this so that I can get angry with people and still be in my spirit." Forget about that. The point is, we can have a fellowship with the Lord so that no matter what happens in our daily life we are still one with Him. But how can we get there saints? It depends so much on point B.

B. Setting aside fixed times—Dan. 6:10; Psa. 119:164; 55:17; Acts 10:3:

Having set times with the Lord is especially what we're trying to strengthen in our fellowship in these messages. So we have through these verses various examples of people in the Scripture who had times with the Lord.

*Dan 6:10 "Now when Daniel came to know that the writing had been signed, he went to his house (in his upper room he had windows open toward Jerusalem) and three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously."*

*Psa. 119:164 "Seven times a day I praise You / For Your righteous ordinances."*

*Psa. 55:17 "Evening and morning and at noontime / I complain and moan, / And He hears my voice."*

*Acts 10:3 "He saw clearly in a vision around the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him and saying to him, Cornelius."*

1. If a Christian wants to learn to live before the Lord and have constant fellowship with Him, he needs to be one who touches God early in the morning.
2. According to our experience, it is best to set aside a time in the morning, before the day dawns; we have not had contact with any person or thing, and our outward environment and our inner being are quieter—Lam. 3:22-23.

Again, as I said before, we have no regulation. So don't take this as a regulation. The principle is to touch the Lord first; give Him the first place in your day. Not all of us get up before the day dawns; some nurses or doctors have rotations that don't allow them to do this. The point is, before contacting people, before contacting things, even before contacting the Lord's work, be with Him. Give Him the first place even at a set time.

3. In the Bible we find God's servants as example of rising up early in the morning: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Hannah, Samuel, David, Job, Mary, and the apostles.
4. Those who want to rise early should learn the lesson of going to bed early; God ordained that man should go to bed when the sun goes down and rise up when the sun comes up, yet the devil stimulates man to be active when the sun goes down and to sleep when the sun comes up—ct. Eph. 5:8.

So many evil things happen at the nighttime when we actually should be sleeping.

5. A new believer especially should set aside time during which he can fellowship with God.
6. We should spend at least twenty minutes fellowshiping with Him every day; the best is to have at least half an hour to one hour every morning.

This is true, but again there are no standards. We need to be where we are until the Lord brings us on. Even five or ten minutes is very valuable before the Lord.

- C. Drawing near to God in the morning and fellowshiping with Him not only causes our spirit to be fed and nourished but also causes our body to be healthy; if we touch and absorb God every morning, we will have an intelligent mind, clear thinking, and sound judgment.

I believe many of us can testify to this.

- D. It may be necessary to make some resolution and determination and to find another brother or a sister who has the heart to practice in order to remind and encourage one another.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we always have a corporate time with the Lord. We need a personal time, but we could make a pact with someone who will check with us. Have you had your time? How is your time going with the Lord? You check with me and I with you; we encourage each other to establish the habit. You could have 10 minutes with someone to call each other, pray together for 10 or 15 minutes, and then have personal time. In order to build up the habit in a very practical way, the body can help us in this regard. Then saints, just as there are two aspects to the time of fellowship, there are two aspects to the place of fellowship.

### **III. The place to fellowship with God:**

A. Anytime and anywhere:

1. There is no place where we cannot fellowship with God.
2. Whether we are traveling, working, taking a walk, or listening to a message, we can fellowship with God at all times in all places.

B. Setting aside a specific place:

1. In order to pray properly, a quiet place is needed.
2. We should not say that since fellowshiping with God is a matter in spirit, the outward environment does not matter—Matt. 14:23.

Here we have an example of the Lord. He found a place, a deserted place, where even it says that they had to hunt for Him to find Him. We need such a place that has no outward distraction. We battle enough with the inward distraction. We need to find a place that at least there is no outward distractions so that we can spend a time with the Lord.