

Some Thoughts on Walking with God

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Would you please open in God's Word to 1 John 1:1. 1 John 1:1. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us- that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

Brothers and sisters, when we read John's Gospel - not this first epistle, but his Gospel - John is pretty plain to tell us who he's addressing. Let me just quote John. John 20:30. You don't need to turn there but listen. This comes from John's Gospel. It gives us John's own reason for writing the Gospel. "Now Jesus," he says, "did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book." The book is the Gospel of John. "But these are written," here he is going to tell us the reason why, "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

John writes his Gospel to the lost, so that they might believe. But when we come to John's first epistle, John is not seeking to convince the lost in hopes that they will believe. John distinctly writes this letter to those who are already Christian and I want to show you this. Let your eyes go down to 1 John 2:1. "My little children," he's writing to Christians, "I'm writing these things--" what "these things"? All of chapter one. "To you so that," well all of chapter one and all of the epistle. "But I'm writing these things to you..." to who? To "little children." 1 John 2:7: "Beloved." You use beloved because they're beloved of God. "I'm writing you," that's who he is writing too. 1 John 2:12: "I'm writing to you little children..." who are these little children? Well, they're the ones whose sins are forgiven for His namesake. He says in verse 13, "I'm writing to you fathers because you know Him." These are people that know God. If you go to 1 John 2:18: "Children." 1 John 2:21: "I write to you," who? "Not because you do not know the truth but because you know it." These are people that know the truth. 1 John 3:1: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us." John's including himself with his audience. That what? "We should be called the children of God." That's who this is to and for. And so we are. We're the children of God. If you go to 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children..." That's who this is written to. 1 John 3:7, "Little children;" 1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers..." 1 John 3:18, "Little children." 1 John 3:21, "Beloved;" 1 John 4:1, "Beloved." I mean what you see is: "Little children," "beloved," "God's children." You see this kind of terminology literally every few verses. 1 John 4:11, "Beloved." 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe." That's who he's writing to. 1 John 5:21, the book ends: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." I think you get the idea.

1 John is not written for the same purpose as John's Gospel. It's not written to unbelievers that they might believe. This epistle is specifically targeting God's children. It's not like James You remember when David went through James? I mean when I read James I try to follow, "Ok, is he talking to a believer here?" "Is he talking to an unbeliever?" When you were

going through it, I always thought, "How's David going to handle this?" Because with James, you're just not certain a lot of the times. But there is no doubt with John in this epistle who he's writing to. There's no doubt whatsoever. Now that doesn't mean the lost can't read it and even, you know, perhaps get saved through exposure to its truths. But the principle audience John has in mind are Christians.

Now there is a reason I am emphasizing this. I emphasize this because it helps us recognize what's going on back up in 1 John 1:3. When you hear this, "So that you too--" he's saying we "proclaim this truth about this Christ whom we felt, and heard, and saw. We proclaimed this to you so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." We don't want to imagine that these words are aimed primarily at unbelievers. Listen. 1 John 2:13 "I am writing to you, fathers." Why? "Because you know Him." These are people that do know Him. They do have some intimacy with Him. Again in verse 13. of chapter 2. "I write to you children because you know the Father." There's some level of intimacy there. Verse 14, "I write to you fathers because you know Him who is from the beginning." Look, John speaks about fellowship to these people much the same way and in much the same manner as he speaks to them about abiding in Christ. You go to 1 John 2:28, What does it say? "Little children, abide in Him."

Now let's think about that truth, "abiding in Christ". Do you know that John tells us in John 15 that if you don't abide in Christ what happens to you? "If anyone does not abide in Christ he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned." Here's the truth: does every Christian abide in Christ? Yeah! Well if they do, I mean if that's part of the essence of what it is to be a Christian, why do you tell the little children to abide in Him? Brethren, that's just consistent with the way Scripture operates. Scripture all over the place, gives us these indicatives, these truths. This is the way it is. And then it comes right around and gives us the imperatives. And it commands us to do the very things that over here it tells us will always be true of the Christian. Over here it tells us to do those things that are always true of the Christian. That's the way it is. "Little children, abide in Him." And it's the same with fellowship. John presses us into the inner circle of this fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Why? Not because he thinks we are on the outside of those windows out there looking in, wishing, well, you know we could have a part with the people of God. That's not it. But because we, as Christians, need to be pressed. We need to be pressed to continue more and more in this fellowship and to dive further and further in!

In fact I want you to notice what John says in 1 John 2:1. Now we looked at it but I want you to look at it more closely. "My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin." Now notice three things about this verse. First, again, who's John specifically writing to? Believers! "My little children." Second. What's his purpose for writing to them? That they may not sin. But third, what are "these things?" that he writes to them that they may not sin. I mean if someone just got done writing to you, and they just wrote a couple paragraphs and you're reading through the letter from them to you and you've read a couple paragraphs and then you come to where it says, "I'm writing these things so that you may not sin;" it's pretty normal and naturally intuitive to think that "these things" are the things he just got done writing to you. Now that doesn't mean that there's not application to the whole letter. But certainly he's talking about chapter 1! Chapter one is in view here. And chapter one is about fellowship.

Listen, fellowship gets mentioned four times in chapter one. Fellowship with God is certainly a major incentive to not sin, is it not? Isn't fellowship with God an incentive not to sin? Maybe you're not making the connection. Why is fellowship with God an incentive not to sin? Well, obviously because sin is the major disturber of fellowship with God. But again, my point that I'm making to you is that I want you to see that John is addressing Christians in chapter 1. He tells us that by the very thing that he says in 1 John 2:1. You know what John's doing? He's coming alongside us believers, in 1 John 2:1, and he's encouraging purity. I mean he's saying, "I'm writing these things..." the encouragement to purity is in the things that he's writing. But he says, "I write these things to you that you might not sin." Now yes, there may be failure, and if so we have an advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous. But we're to be pressing towards more and more purity. I'll tell you this, fellowship with God and purity go hand and in hand. There's a real connection there. Now, if we fail, there's blood. If we fail, we can confess. But they go hand in hand, and he's encouraging purity and progress. He's pressing us onward and inward fighting to maintain fellowship, striving to abide in Christ.

And so, I come to the question of the hour. How is your fellowship with God? That's the question that I want us to think about. Every Christian ought to be able to say - doesn't John say it so boldly? He says, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." I mean are we all able to say that? Can we say that boldly? Can you come in here today and say that, "Yes! I know it!" "That is my life!" "My life is one of fellowship with the Father and with His Son. I know it!" "Since I've been saved, that is true!" That is normative of my life. That is descriptive of my life. That is true! I see it! Oh it's not where I want it to be! Some days, I can't find Him the way that I want to find Him. But as a rule, I have walked with the Lord, and I know what that is. And it's heaven on earth. It's as best as it gets here. And the little bit that I've tasted I would not turn back from the world." Can you say that? Can you say that dogmatically like he says it? Or are you seized by hesitation? Does conscience hold back? And look, you know what I'm talking about here. John hit on it. We're not talking doctrine here. We're not talking just the knowledge, a head knowledge. I'm not talking about whether you made it to church on Sunday. I'm talking about this, can you say "I walk with the Lord"? Can you say that? Are you walking with Him? Jesus Christ died to purchase us the privilege to walk with God. That's what He died for. That's what this is all about.

So let's think about this relationship with God. Let's put our minds there. Let's think about how we nurture this. And I want to give you some thoughts this morning. Maybe that's what we'll call it, "Some Thoughts on Walking with God." That's the title.

Here's the first point that I want to make. Fellowship with God takes effort. Look if I were to ask you this, "Does God want your love?" I mean you can think about the chiefest of all commandments. Are we to love the Father? Are we to love the Son? Well, any of you that are married for any amount of time, you're past your honeymoon, is love always easy? I mean, fellowship with the Father and with the Son is not automatic. And it is not effortless. Any relationship in this world that has any sort of real depth or value takes time. And it takes effort.

I mean you answer this, do good marriages happen spontaneously? I hear "no's." I mean does anybody raise their hand and says, "yes mine happens spontaneously." Della. She's laughing, so I take that as a no. There's effort there. Effort! Look, you know what you know. if you look over and you see a good marriage - I mean it's good. You can see, they are happily

married. You can be certain about this. You can be certain that somewhere in that good marriage, you're going to find somebody who's doing something to keep that marriage close, warm, healthy. Are you not? I mean somebody in there is working to communicate. Somebody is working to keep the kind of words and actions that tend to cause distance. They're working at that. They're working to keep those things out of there. They're going after them. Somebody is committed to battling through hard situations and hurt feelings and suspicion and anger that crops up and distrust and hostility and grudges and resentment and offenses. I mean somebody there is making an effort.

And look, the thing is God regards Himself as our Husband. This is a relationship that we're in. The Lord is our Husband. Is this any different? Yes. In some ways it is different. He is invisible to my naked eye. He is high and He is holy. And He is lifted up. And that is true. But you remember this, we have a personal God. Scripture tells us He feels. Scripture tells us He is sensitive. That's what it tells us. And I recognize that this is different about the relationship too, one of us - one of us is perfect. And it's not me. That's different. And you know what that means. It means that whenever my relationship with Him becomes strained or there's distance, it's never His fault. It's mine. That I know. It's always my fault. But it is a relationship. And it's one that we have to work at and make time for. Listen, any relationship in your life that's healthy, you need to work at it. And we need to work. There's priorities. This walk with the Lord needs to be a priority. It needs to be something that we are giving thought to, that we are giving our mind, our heart to. There has to be a prioritization. We must make choices that nurture this relationship. We must turn away from the things that create distance between us and God. Priority! Priority! This takes effort! This takes time! There's going to be an exertion. It doesn't happen for free. Oh yeah you get into it for free. But there's effort. That's the thing we need to recognize. There is effort. Did James not say, "draw near to God." God says that to us, "draw near to Me and I will draw near to you."

When you think about fighting the good fight of faith, fighting the good fight of faith, I mean one of the points of that fight is just staying where we trust God. That's what faith is all about. We're fighting to trust Him. We're fighting to keep our hope in Him. We're fighting for that. There's a battle in this. You have all manner of enemies that are moving at you to distract you away. And to take your time away. And to take your eyes off. To move you away from this relationship. You've got to fight for this relationship. A man will fight for his marriage. We've got to fight for this. This is the chiefest of all relationships. We've got to fight for it! That means priorities in your life! Is it a priority in your life? You know, if you hesitated, your conscience wouldn't let you say, "Yes, I can boldly say my fellowship is with the Father and with His Son!" One of the reasons you may have hesitated is because you don't have your priorities right. And your conscience knows it. Your walk with God is not what it ought to be because your priorities are not what they ought to be. Effort brethren! Effort!

The second thing. Worship and honor are essential to this relationship. Now John was telling us in the Sunday school about missions. And he's calling us, you know, to give ourselves to one another in love and help encourage one another so that we might see this church grow and people being able to be launched forth. But you just remember this, missions is never the end. Missions is not the goal. What does God want most? He wants our heart. He wants our love. He wants our worship. This thing is about worship, by and large. That's the chief thing.

Piper said it in his book on missions. You know the reason we launch off to those foreign coasts is because there isn't worship there. That's what we're after. That's what we're longing for.

Now look, I want you to all turn over to Malachi 1. Some of you, you're familiar with this. But I want you to see this, I want you to feel this. We're talking about some thoughts on walking with God and we're going to let the Lord Himself speak to us about some things that, to Him, are of chief importance in this walk that we have with Him. If you go to Malachi 1:6. Watch this. Last book in the Old Testament, if you're looking for it. Right before Matthew. "A son honors his Father and a servant his master. If then, I am a Father, where is My honor?" God wants honor. God deserves honor. God is worthy of honor! "If I am a master, where is my fear?" Now you see, intimacy - yes. But you need to remember this, the one that we are in relationship with here is God Almighty. And there needs to be a fear on our part and there needs to be an honor. We are not equals. "'Where is My fear?' says the Lord of Hosts, 'To you, O priests who despise My name.' But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"

And you know what that happens to many of us. If God could speak to you right now - well, He can. But if He did speak to you audibly or in written word through a prophet just like this, He may say the same things about you. "You despise Me." And for many of you who do despise Him, you would say, "Where do I despise Him?" "Well, by offering polluted food upon My altar." Now look, we offer sacrifices as New Testament believers. Our sacrifices are good works. Our sacrifices are sharing what we have. Our sacrifices are the praise of our lips. You get many texts in the New Testament that talk about the sacrifices that we offer. But you say, "How have we polluted you?" "By saying that the Lord's table may be despised." Now watch this, "When you offer blind animals in sacrifice is that not evil?" Now here's the thing. Here's a thing that I want you to see. These priests were making the offering. You say, you know, I do this. I do that. I'm at church! Right? I mean I'm there. God looks at the quality because the quality has a lot to do with where your heart is. He says, when you're offering substandard sacrifices God says, "Is that not evil?" And He's looking for an answer that you all know. Yes, it is evil when you offer substandard sacrifices to God. "When you offer those that are lame or sick is that not evil?" Present that to your governor.

You know when I think about worship, I think, oh, I want to be in my seat when God's word begins to be preached. I want to be in my seat when they begin to sing His-- I want to hear from Him. I want to be ready. You know, the problem with this whole setup here is everybody that walks in late you all see it. And you know, the thing is would you guys walk into work like that? Offer it to your governor! Offer it to your boss! Will he accept it? And I'm not saying that whether you make it on time is the pinnacle of all this. But I can tell you this, when somebody's walking with the Lord and their heart - their heart is hungry, Oh, I want to be there when the Word's opened up. I don't want to miss any of it. I want to be there when they sing. I don't want to miss any of it. Where are your priorities?

You see this has to do with walking with God, not just appeasing those who are watching. But as what are you offering to Him? What are you offering? Are you giving? And I know some are. There's sacrifice. But when you walk with the Lord, He watches to see the quality. Why? Because the quality matters. Men, you come to this woman and you say, "will you marry me?" And then she finds out you got the ring from a pawn shop, Is she going to be affected by that? Well, some might not be. But some might just be prudent, "Well I'm glad he did

that." He saved a bunch of money, now we can get into a house sooner. Ask her first if that's ok. But look, the reality is, I mean he might as well say not just your governor, would your wife accept that? I mean the truth is, that we become negligent with the way that we serve God. We give Him the leftovers. You wake up in the morning and boy, the best part of your day, and what do you do with it? Well you wake up fifteen minutes before you got to be at work, and so the best part of your day, those first hours you give to your employer. Or you hit the weights. Or you turn on the news. Not all of you do that. But are you giving God the best? I mean when you walk with Him, He's mindful of that. You can see it right here in the Scriptures. I mean He says, "Present that to your governor, will he accept you or show you favor?" says the Lord of Hosts. I mean, come on! Don't give to God what you wouldn't give to your parents! Don't give to God what you wouldn't give to your spouse. Don't give to God what you wouldn't give to your boss. Or to your governor. Don't do that! God is worthy of your best. Walk with Him this way. He says, "For from the rising of the sun to its setting My name will be great among the nations."

Do you all remember when David - remember David did a foolish thing, and he went and he numbered the people. And you remember the prophet came to him and said, "Well God sent me with a message. David, you got to pick one of three bad things. I mean you're either going to get three days, three months, or three years of some really horrible stuff." And David said, "I don't want God to turn me over into the hands of men; let God do it." And He brought three days of pestilence. And you may remember what happened there. In the end of that whole scenario, he was to go to this man Araunah. To his threshing floor. Araunah saw him coming and said, "I am coming and I have to build an altar and make a sacrifice here." And Araunah said, "David, it's all yours." Do you remember what David said? He said, "I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing." Are you giving to the Lord that which costs you nothing. The lame thing, You see when they brought the blind thing, what did that say? Well, it was the lamb they didn't want! Don't do that to God? David wouldn't do it. He was a man after God's own heart. Imitate David in this. You remember what was said in the days of Eli? That God honors those who honor Him. Just that's the second thing. Worship and honor are essential to this relationship.

The third thing I would say. Sin wrecks intimacy. And here we might go back to 1 John 2:1 where it says, "My little children I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." Remember one of the things he's written to them or he's mentioned four times in that first chapter which is clearly an emphasis to him is he's talking to Christians about fellowship with God. It's the perfect thing to talk to God's children about, who you want to encourage not to sin. And why? Is the danger that they're going to go to hell? Perish forever? Well, not for God's true children who are trusting in Christ alone. Who are clinging to His cross work as their only hope. For the true Christian, sin - there's no condemnation. And we have an Advocate. That's what he's assuring us of. But it ruins close fellowship and intimacy. Brethren! Throughout history, the men and the women who have, among God's children, who have had the privileges to ascend that hill of the Lord into the secret places of God's most glorious manifest presence. Brethren, throughout the age of man, there have been those that had been invited most closely into manifestations of God. And I'll guarantee you this, you're hard pressed to find that it's ever been the spiritually sloppy. We have too many professing Christians who sin cheap! You just sell it for a song! Walking with Him.

Some of you need to stop and think before you do and say the things you do and say! You need to count the cost of the intimacy with God that's going to be lost for doing those very things that some of you do and some of you say. Brethren, we have to walk recognizing God is sensitive. Our sin hurts closeness. And I know, the Lord is gracious. And I know that there are times that when we do stupid and foolish things, and we are expecting Him to turn His back on us or to take the rod to us, and He just lavishes us with hugs and kisses. I know that, but listen, the innermost regions of fellowship with God goes beyond anything in this world. It's glorious without description. Those that have tasted of it can barely put words together to describe to other people. But it's a very sensitive place to walk. Very delicate.

Martin Lloyd-Jones, I came across this, I don't even know where I got this from, but he said, "The air here in this region--" these innermost regions, he said, "it's very pure and very rarified and slight changes are immediately felt." You know we can grieve God. Ephesians chapter four warns us against grieving the Holy Spirit. Brethren you think about grieving the Spirit We don't have a God who is cold and indifferent and distant and disinterested.

Brethren, grief. You think about grief. Who has the greatest ability to cause you grief? I mean, you think about it. If John happens to be walking over somewhere in Mozambique or in Nepal, and somebody, you know, somebody just said, "I hate you Christians!" Well, John just shakes that off. If his wife said that to him... Who has the greatest ability to cause you grief? And here we have God, He's bidding us not to grieve Him. The more one person loves another the more the person doing the loving is affected by any coldness or any distance or any failure on the part of the one who they're extending their love to. Brother. Sister. Would you suppose that your sins don't grieve God? I mean do read that text and say, "Well, that's for somebody else it's certainly not for me when I sin." Brethren, that's given to common brothers and sisters at Ephesus. People just like you and just like me.

I mean did Jesus not say - speaking of His manifest presence - He said this, "I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Who is that? Well, "whoever has My commandments." You see this is a person that's walking in truth. This a person walking in righteousness. They are walking in obedience. "Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Look, are you going to forsake a closer walk with Him for some cheap sin? Is Jesus not making it clear that our fellowship with God is clearly impacted by our obedience? I mean look, the doctrine of justification is a wonderful doctrine. But the reason some of you walk around with a cloud hanging over your head all the time is because you sin way too easily. Yeah, the doctrine of justification is wonderful, but if you're living an impure life - you're regularly giving God the off-scouring, the leftovers; if you're walking like that, brethren, it's not surprising that you're not enjoying the manifestations of God the way others are. I mean the more we humbly obey Him, empowered by His Spirit, helped by His grace, the more intimate is our fellowship with the Father and the Son.

I mean ask yourself this, (incomplete thought) Choices. Sin. Intimacy. Do I want this empty, fleeting pleasure of this sin, or do I want the unsearchable riches of what this fellowship with the Father and with His Son is going to be. John tells in chapter 1 how this deeper walk with God can become a reality. What did he say? He said, "Walk in God's light." Bring all your words, bring all your actions into the light. Bring your sin into the light. Be honest about your

sins. Confess them to God for forgiveness and cleansing. But press on brethren. Walking in the light. Walk in the light. That's where your fellowship with God is. It's in the light. And he says, "I write these things to you that you sin not." Well, that's the third thing. Sin wrecks intimacy.

Let's move on even into the realm where we're not talking specifically about sin. I would say fourthly, beware of distractions. Of course sin always hinders fellowship. But so often our problem is not with sin. It's with the things that are permissible. And you remember how Paul said it. He said, "All things are lawful," but what? He said it various ways. But what? Not all things are profitable. Not all things edify. Not all things build up. Beware! Beware of the things that pull you away from the Lord! I'll tell you this, the devil will happily have you doing lawful things if it keeps you away from intimacy with God. Be sure of it. Be sure! How many professing Christians squander precious time? O brethren! If we could have all the time from every one of you that has been spent foolishly in social media! And we can just put it together that precious time like gold and take it back from Facebook and whatever other things they got out there now. They're just inviting new ones one after another. They're just time absorbers for Christians. How many professing Christians squander that precious time spent with the Lord not just on social media but laying in bed! Or, TV. Or movies, music, and clothes, and houses and gardens and yards, and hobbies. There's all this stuff that just chews up. If you live a life where you regularly make choices allowing other things, it just becomes a pattern. You're making these choices. Constantly making choices that crowd out time spent with the living God and in His Word, and talking with Him, and in meditation; You're not going to grow closer. You're not going to grow more intimate. Brethren, the place where the glory comes; the place of transformation, Paul tells us is when you behold His glory.

And that doesn't mean, oh, you wake up in the morning and five minutes you're there and then you're out. That's all you gave God. The best of your time you've given to the world. You've given to other stuff. You think that is just going to emblazon the image of Christ on you? No! You do not have a quality walk with God, any less then you can have a quality walk with a wife if it's just five minutes. That doesn't work. Beware of the distractions. Beware! Beware! Beware!

Brethren, if you can put on spiritual glasses and but see and look with me at the Song of Solomon. Go back there. Right after the Proverbs. You have this Song of Solomon after the Psalms and after the Proverbs. Like I say if you can put the spiritual glasses on, did Christ not tell us that Scripture is all about Him and I believe the Song of Solomon is not just a story about Solomon and one of his earthly wives. I believe that this is a picture, as many of the forefathers have down through history believed that this is a picture of Christ and His Church. And if you look at the Song of Solomon 5:2 the church is saying this, "I slept, but my heart was awake." I mean this is a person who's thinking on Christ. "...the sound; my Beloved is knocking." Christ has come knocking. "Open to Me, My sister." This is Christ calling out to the church. My sister, open. I want even a greater closeness. "My love, My dove, My perfect one, for My head is wet with dew, My locks with the drops of the night."

How the church responded: with an excuse. That's all this is. "Well, I've put off my garment, how can I put it on again?" I've bathed my feet; I'm going to get them dirty if I go on the floor. And do you know what this moment of hesitation cost her? My Beloved put His hand to the latch and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my Beloved, and my hands dripped

with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned and gone.

Brethren, there are times when the Lord is bidding us to come. You feel prompted to pray. You feel prompted to get alone. And you don't do it. You know what? It's not even that she didn't do it. She did it. She just took too much time thinking about it. Give yourself freely to Christ. Oh, be ready when He prompts, to go.

To you who are young, you're full of health and strength. We need to stop and think. What are all those things that you're trading for time with Christ? What are they? You tell me! What real rest have they brought to your soul? What real joy have they brought to you? What quietness in your spirit? What true satisfaction? You know it. You know it as well as I do. Their pleasures are fleeting and they're quickly hollow. But Christ is never that way. He's truly satisfying. Do those things that you trade, I mean are they really fit objects for your highest love? Think about what you're giving your life to? You're walking with God. Christ bought us the privilege! Don't squander this in idleness and foolishness, wasting your precious time!

I can remember reading - I think Spurgeon tells this story about a man who was in his eighties, and he got converted. Yeah, I think he got converted in a meeting, and in the very same meeting he just wailed. Seeking to console him, "You've been saved." He just wailed because he had wasted his life. It was gone. I mean Isaiah says it, "Why spend your money for that which is not bread?"

And I would say fifthly this, prayer is vital to this fellowship. Prayer. Listen to this again in Song of Solomon. If you're still there look at 2:14. Song of Solomon 2:14. This is Christ speaking to His church again, "O My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let Me see your face, let Me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." It's like Christ is saying to His people, "Don't go hide in the cracks and crevices. Come out and speak to Me. I want to hear your voice." I mean sometimes we feel like oh, we can hardly pray. All it is groans and sighs. But Jesus is saying, "Your voice to Me is sweet. Come out to Me in all your weakness." I mean, it's like a parent whose child struggles to get these words out. The child is not despised by his parents. Christ is saying, "Your sighing and groaning is sweet to Me. I'm not going to mock at it. I'm not going to mock at your weakness." Look, you won't enjoy the deepest of fellowship with God unless you learn to speak with your Beloved in prayer and praise. I mean, brethren, we need seasons of prayer. We need seasons where we talk.

I would say sixthly, God's Word is vital to this fellowship. I mean you know this text well, most of you, Isaiah 66:2. Don't turn there. But God says, "This is the one to whom I will look..." who does God look to? He looks to those who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at His Word. Coming to His Word. Trembling at His Word. "To them I'll look." That look of God. That means He'll look on them with favor. It means, it's a look that is very desirable. It's not only that God needs to be hearing our voice, we must hear the voice of God in our souls. You're never going to enjoy fellowship with Him unless your ear is trained to hear His voice. It's in the Word, yes. It comes from pulpits, yes. We see that the Psalmist says, "The heavens declare it." It's in the creation. God speaks to us by His Providence. He speaks to us in creation. He speaks to us through His preachers. He speaks to us in His book. He speaks to us in promptings of the Holy Spirit. He speaks to us in conscience. He's given Himself a voice through many means. We need ears, not just that are trained to hear, but take time to hear. O, when you got all the

noise coming! That's one of the things about all the technology today it just bombs us with noise!

I would say seventhly, meditation. Close, sweet communion with God is kept up by meditation. You remember there in Genesis 24. Remember what Isaac was doing? Here comes his bride-to-be. And what was he doing? He was walking in the fields. Oh, if there is a time to walk in the fields - sunrise and sunset. Especially here in hot Texas. But there's a time to get out. I don't know, maybe not all of you need to walk. But oh, walking outside is the place for me to meditate. I know you know Charles and John Wesley's mother, hers was under an apron. The place isn't what's most important. But Isaac was out there meditating. Meditation is giving real time to think and chew, to contemplate God's works, and His wonders, and His glory, and His beauty, and what He says in His word. And what our needs are, our wants, it's how He's working. Meditation just rivets the mind to biblical truths, and it brings God and the soul close together. Those of you that know something about meditation, you know that's true. Meditation tends to open our eyes to the invisible glory of God. Brethren, I'll tell you, there have been times - Yes, you go in the Word. Yes, you have some time in prayer. But you walk and you walk, and you linger in prayer, and just communing with God and meditating. And you get into that maybe a half hour, an hour, an hour and a half and suddenly God comes! If you only did that for ten minutes it wouldn't have happened. Meditation, brethren. Oh, Psalm 63:6, we read there today. "I remember You upon my bed and meditate on You in the watches of the night."

And I would end with this last point. Number 8. Christian, Scripture says that you are God's garden. That is a such a picture for fellowship. If you're still there in Song of Solomon I want you to turn to chapter 4. Scripture describes you as God's garden, which means it's a place He wants to come and delight Himself in the beauty. It's a place God delights to walk. I mean, what this is is it's God telling His people, "I want fellowship with you. I want to find the sweetness there. I want to enjoy it. I want to delight in it." If you look at the Song of Solomon 4:10. Look what Christ says. Christ says this to His church, "How beautiful is your love My sister, My bride! How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips drip nectar, My bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon." He says this in verse 12. "A garden locked is My sister, My bride." And then you go to verse 16. And the church says, "Awake, O north wind, and come O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat its choicest fruits." And then you go to 5:1 and Christ responds, "I came to My garden, My sister, My bride I gathered My myrrh with My spice. I ate My honeycomb with My honey, I drank My wine with My milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!"

I just ask you this, I mean this is a picture of Christ wanting to come and enjoy the delights of His garden. We really need to see the Lord desiring that. I think sometimes we have this distant, austere idea. We don't see God really wanting this fellowship. Desiring it.

So I ask you this, how would you rate your fellowship with God? We're going to move on in 1 John after this. But as we leave this topic, at least for now, how would you rate your fellowship with God? Is it distant? Is it sloppy? Disrespectful? Casual? Is it close? Is it precious to you? I mean, can you really say that? Walking with the Lord is precious. How would you rate it? Is it intimate? Are you the sort of garden where God comes looking for fruit and He finds it? Delights in it? I mean this, brethren, this is heaven on earth for the lover of God. It really

is. And no matter how long that you have been a child of God, you've got to protect this. You've got to make efforts at this. This has to be a priority. We all make choices. We all have priorities. We all get up in the morning with the same number of hours in a day. Those who walk close with God have the same number of hours. How do we spend them? What are we doing with them? You need to guard your relationship with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.

I mean brethren, ask yourself this. Ask, "When was the last time you had a sweet time with the Lord?" Where your heart jumped because He came! Oh, maybe it was overwhelming. Maybe it was just that still, small voice. He just came. He thrilled your souls. You felt your soul melt because His Word came to you personally. I mean, you know when that happens, "He spoke to me!" I mean you're in the Word and it's for me! Or you're out in prayer and He comes and He says, "I'm going to give you what you just asked." And you know it! Or you're just meditating on something and suddenly you are so blown away by His glory. And it's because His Spirit has come and opened your mind and your understanding and just swept you away. Brethren, when has that happened? Look, I'm not talking about knowing God in theory. I'm not talking about just knowing in theory that He loves you. Do you personally drink the love of the Father and the Son? Manifestly? I'm not talking about just diving into the theology book. Do you know this? Brethren! Do you know this?

I mean, we have a Husband. Didn't He give us that picture in Hosea? But we're like Gomer. What a name! Gomer. But we're like her! I always think of Gomer Pyle. It's like a ridiculous name. But, Gomer. She's unfaithful. And Hosea is like Christ. Brethren, He comes along to a bunch of prostitutes. That's what we are. That's what we were. You'd say that's what some of us are now. That's what many of us were before. Just prostitutes! Just these unfaithful - we were harlots. We just gave ourselves freely to our whoredom out there. And He comes along and He buys us off the slave block. Is that not what He did? He says, "I pay for you with My blood." And now, I want you for Me. I don't want you going and giving yourself to all your other lovers anymore. I want you for Me. Brethren, that's a picture of the gospel. That's what this is all about. He wants us for Him. He's bought us with a price. Calls us to leave our other lovers and surrender to His love. To be that garden that He delights in. If you all you ever heard is Christianity is just be saved from your sin and saved from hell. Brethren, this goes much deeper. This thing is beautiful and precious to the uttermost. Don't sell it for a song. Brethren, priorities. Priorities. Choices.

May God help us. Father, we ask for Your grace. We ask for the power of the Spirit of God. Make this a reality. Oh Lord, we know that you want us to walk with you in worship, in honor, in praise, in love. We know that this is indeed the chief thing. Giving our lives to You. Giving ourselves entirely; a sacrifice upon the altar of God to be consumed by Your fire of love for Your people. Lord, I pray for the grace for this church. That above all things no matter what you do with us, Lord, I pray, pray that you would make this church, at whatever cost necessary; whatever you have to bring, whatever fire to purify, whatever comforts to help, whatever is necessary, Lord. I pray that You would make this church what You want it to be. Fruitful, beautiful in your sight. Lord, spare us nothing that you've given to your elect people through the ages. Spare us nothing that will propel us forward into these degrees of glory. That will propel

us forward into a deeper intimacy and knowing you with that knowledge, that oh, that is so sweet and so valuable. Help us, Lord, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.