

PROCEDURES FOR PRACTICING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND THE EFFECT OF FELLOWSHIP

- We should consider several procedures to help us in practicing fellowship with God including when, where, how, and what may help us in practicing this fellowship
- The effect of our fellowship should produce a continuous and gradual discharge of the old elements and addition of God's new element

PROCEDURES FOR PRACTICING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD Anytime and Anywhere

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

Setting Aside a Specific Place

We must admit that it is difficult to pray in crowded living quarters. In order to pray properly, however, a quiet place is needed. Therefore, we still need to try our best to find a suitable place.

We should not say that since fellowshiping with God is a matter in spirit, the outward environment does not matter. Even the Lord Jesus was not this spiritual. The Bible clearly says that He sometimes needed to go up to the mountain to pray. There is much to consider regarding the place for fellowshiping with God. We will learn more as we experience this ourselves.

Needing to Be Quiet

A person who fellowships with God must learn to be quiet. Being quiet is not merely to be freed from the entanglements of outward matters but also to let go of all the things that should not be in our mind, our thoughts. In other words, we need to quiet our mind.

The mind is the most difficult part of a person's inner being to quiet. The young ones and the older ones have many thoughts in the morning when they rise. When a Christian desires to learn to fellowship with God, Satan will work very hard to inject many thoughts into his mind. Therefore, we must first learn the lesson of being quiet so that we can have good

fellowship with God. Whenever we come before God, we should not immediately pray, read the Bible, or sing hymns. Rather, we need to settle our being both inwardly and outwardly. However, we cannot be quiet for too long; otherwise, many scattered thoughts will begin to come in. This will not produce the desired result. Doing anything prior to our time of fellowship will be a distraction, and also being quiet for too long will not be profitable; we need to be balanced.

Praying

After settling down, some people prefer to read the Bible first, but most people prefer to pray. We also feel that it is best to pray first. When we pray, however, we should not pray too long, we should not pray wordy prayers, and we should not pray concerning many different matters. Our prayer should be focused on touching God and contacting Him. Of course, this prayer should include confession and dealing. When we are calm in our contact with God, we will spontaneously sense our mistakes and filthiness. Once we have this sense, we will spontaneously confess them and deal with them before God. However, we should be careful not to pour out all of our prayer burdens before God at this time. We should simply pray until we sense that we have contacted and touched God. Then we can stop.

Reading the Bible

Once we contact and touch God, we should turn to read the Lord's Word, the Bible. We should be careful not to exercise our mind merely to analyze while reading the Scriptures. This can be done at another time. This time is for eating. Studying about nutrition is one thing, whereas eating is another. Reading the Word in fellowship is not for studying God's Word but for eating it. When we come before the Lord and open His Word, we should spontaneously exercise our spirit to absorb His Word and thus eat spiritual food. It is good when we understand, but we do not need to strive to understand. The less we use the mind, the better. We will easily receive inspiration by reading in this way.

Reading and Praying

As soon as we receive inspiration, while reading the Bible, we should turn the inspiration into prayer. Then our reading of the Bible will be turned into prayer. As long as time allows, we can continue reading and praying, praying and reading, thereby turning the inspiration we receive into prayer. This is the central and primary section of fellowshiping with the Lord.

THE EFFECT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

What is the effect of our fellowship with God? According to the evidence in the Bible and our experience, the effect of fellowship has a negative and a positive aspect. On the negative side, fellowship with God continually removes the undesirable elements within us. We can identify at least three categories of things that should not be in us—sins, the world, and the self.

Our fellowship with God has the function of gradually removing these three things from within us. The more we fellowship with God, the more they are exposed within us. This exposure requires us to deal with them. If our fellowship with God is deep and thorough, something will be constantly removed from us. Fellowship removes negative things from within us. Whether or not we have genuine fellowship with God can be seen by whether this function of removal is manifested in us. If it has been a long time since something has been removed from us, our fellowship with God has diminished or ceased. If we have fellowship with God, we can be certain that this fellowship will function to continually remove negative things from within us. We do not deal with certain matters because there are regulations that say, “This is a sin, so you must remove it”; “this is the world, so you need to remove it”; or “this is the self, so it must be removed.” Dealing with sins, the world, and the self is not a matter of keeping regulations. It is impossible to deal with these by regulations. Although the principle of sin is defined, and the Bible explicitly says that all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17), there is no rule for dealing with sins. It all depends on the inner sense from our fellowship with God. Hence, there is no regulation related to our dealing with things; rather, this is an effect produced spontaneously through fellowship.

For example, we may not understand the Lord’s word that John came neither eating nor drinking, and people said that he had a demon, and that the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and people said that He was a gluttonous man and a drunkard (Matt. 11:18-19). John’s not eating or drinking was in fellowship, and the Lord Jesus’ eating and drinking was also in fellowship. Those who live in fellowship do not uniformly express the same thing. Consequently, if we do not live in fellowship, we will be confused by these differences. Only by living in fellowship can we touch those who live in fellowship and understand their actions.

The more we live in the fellowship, the more intensive the metabolic function will become. If this metabolism ceases, and nothing old is removed and nothing new is added, our condition will remain the same year after year; we will no longer be in fellowship, and our growth will stop. A Christian who is in fellowship should always be changing. Fellowship constantly changes a person; it continually discharges the old elements within him and replaces them with new elements. Hence, the entire Christian living should be in fellowship. If we truly live in fellowship, the things that should not be in us will be removed on the negative side, and God will be added into us on the positive side. More and more we will be delivered from the self, and God will increase within us. This is the effect of fellowship. (*Lessons for New Believers*, Chapter 22)

Fellowship Questions:

1. What things may prevent you from having fellowship with the Lord each morning? Can you fellowship with your group/companion about how to incorporate a time of revival into your daily life?
2. What is your experience of quieting your being so that you can fellowship with the Lord? What are some things that work for you? What challenges do you experience that you could fellowship with your group/companion about for help and advancement?
3. According to this excerpt, what is the central and primary section of our fellowship time with the Lord? Does your experience confirm this?
4. How does fellowship cause negative things to be removed from us? What does it mean that dealing with sin all depends on “the inner sense from our fellowship with God?” How is this different from following outward or self-made regulations for dealing with sin?
5. How may fellowship with the Lord help us to be blendable with others, while not necessarily “uniformly expressing the same thing”? Consider the example of how the Lord’s living in fellowship caused him to come eating and drinking, while it caused John the Baptist to refrain from certain eating and drinking.