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And He Walked With God

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"And He Walked With God"
Project Title and Completion Date

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NOVEMBER 30, 2001

PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THE SENIOR PROJECT TO THIS SHEET AND RETURN BOTH TO THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR. THIS PAGE SHOULD BE DATED AND COMPLETED ON THE DATE THAT YOUR DEFENSE IS HELD.

DATE COMPLETED

11/30/01

And He Walked With God

Section 1: Senior Project Overview

And He Walked With God

Senior Project Overview

When I began my senior project over twelve months ago, I set out to create a response to a need that I recognized within the Christian community. It seems that there has been a general neglect among orthodox Christians (those confessing the historic Christian faith) of something that has traditionally been called *private devotion*, *fellowship with God*, or *communion with God*. In the contemporary Christian subculture, this practice often bears the name *Quiet Time*, which might be defined as the meeting between God and a believer that is rooted in the believer's faith. While most individuals who practice Quiet Times would not profess that they actually see God or hear His voice on an audible level, they would affirm that God communicates to them in a certain way and that they in turn offer communication back to Him. Communication would be identified as the foundational component of this exercise.

My frustration arose out of the realization that while communication with God is of the utmost importance to a believer attempting to live according to Biblical authority, there are really very few effective learning tools that deal specifically with this particular subject. As I searched for books, articles, and systematic approaches to teaching others about the dynamics of a Quiet Time, I discovered more questions than answers. I continued to find quotes like the following:

Modern Christian books and magazines contain much about Christian doctrine, Christian standards, problems of Christian conduct, techniques of Christian service – but little about the inner realities of fellowship with God. Our sermons contain much about

sound doctrine – but little relating between the soul and the Savior. We do not spend much time, alone or together, in dwelling on the wonder of the fact that God and sinners have communion at all; no, we just take that for granted, and give our minds to other matters. Thus we make it plain that communion with God is a small thing to us.¹

Only a few organized systems of teaching spirituality exist; many of these are for new Christians, and are in the form of courses to nurture them in the early stages of their Christian lives in the follow-up their conversions.²

Analysis of the nature and process of Christian growth has been a fertile ground for Evangelical disagreement. Whether sanctification should be instantaneous or gradual, by faith, discipline, or both, and whether the ideal of the Christian spiritual life should be peace which is the rest of faith or strength in the midst of conflict, are several key questions over which many prayers for understanding and blessing have been offered, and much time, paper and ink expended.³

Why has communion with God become such a small thing to us? Why do we not talk about it or emphasize it with greater passion? Why do only a few organized systems of teaching spirituality exist? If a systematic way of teaching communion with God were created, would it create any denominational tensions, and, more importantly, what rules should be followed and boundaries observed?

All of these questions flooded my mind, and the thought of creating a organized learning system became overwhelming. But my conviction remained, and though the

¹ J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*

² David Parker, *Evangelical Spirituality Reviewed*, p. 138

³ *Evangelical Spirituality*, p. 316-317.

work of learning the issues, studying historic trends, and then creating a new system seemed daunting, I moved forward.

To begin, I simply listened to how Evangelical⁴ teachers today encourage their students to *seek God*, or how they themselves explain the Quiet Time in light of their own personal experiences. Though there are few learning tools that deal with the matter in a direct sense, there is no shortage of advocates. Those learning tools consist of such things as books, journals, and personally guided studies, material that asks the investigator to formulate conclusions based on certain Biblical texts. However, the way in which this subject is expounded usually amounts to no more than the promotion of a list of spiritual disciplines, i.e., prayer, Bible study, meditation, silence, solitude, etc. Of course, I am not opposed to the promotion of spiritual disciplines if they are taught in the right context, not as means to earning favor with God but as manifestations of an intense love for God. I find that simply to offer these as the foundation for a Quiet Time is to misguide the student into imagining that a progressive relationship with God is built upon his/ her own activities. Instead, a system must be formed around the scope of the doctrine of *sanctification*, the process whereby God changes His child into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The type of system built around spiritual disciplines endangers a theocentric view of life and the Quiet Time, and is often too weighted on the side of spiritual humanism. It places an unwarranted emphasis on man and his work rather than on God and His work. I agree with the assessment of spiritual disciplines written by Donald Bloesch,

Biblical faith does not deny the place for the spiritual disciplines but stresses that those have no value apart from the secret inward work of the Holy Spirit, and that they are designed to bring our actions into conformity... with the will of God, which is perceptible only to the eyes of faith.⁵

Those who teach the spiritual disciplines without teaching them in the context of the Gospel (God's grace appropriated through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ alone) are in danger of inadvertently teaching sanctification from a different Gospel. Spiritual activities are opposed to the Gospel when they involve reliance on the activity itself as the means for maturity.

I do not here wish to give the impression that all teaching I found on this subject was bad; rather, I just found that it was incomplete and disorderly, lacking continuity with the message of the Gospel. There were always great truths swimming around for the student to seize, but I witnessed teachers exerting little effort to bring those truths together in any cohesive form. And maybe that was the extent of the problem: the lack of cohesion among the various principles being taught.

Having a firm grasp (or, so I thought) on the contemporary trends concerning my subject, I then turned my attention to study and research. I spent hours walking through articles and books on Evangelical spirituality, but those resources were not precise enough. Spirituality was just the field under which my subject rested, and time spent in study was like going over resources on science in an attempt to research the cellular membrane. These articles and books did, however, provide some quality leads. Names

⁴ I use this term to narrow the field a bit regarding the targeted audience that I had in mind. *Evangelicalism* might be described as a branch of the Christian faith that holds firmly to the historicity and mandate of the Biblical account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

of men like Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, and J. I. Packer kept surfacing, and so I began on a tentative basis to study their theology.

What I found was that the men who had done the most to influence Evangelical spirituality and private communion with God were men who were either Puritans or who identified themselves strongly with the Puritan movement. Though this movement has a bad connotation among people in general today, I noticed that it was not necessarily the Puritans' civil agendas (for which they are continually criticized) that identified their brilliance. Instead, it was the way in which they viewed the Christian life, and especially the way in which they viewed the practice of theology. As J.I. Packer has noted,

Thus, to the Puritans, communion between God and man is the end to which both creation and redemption are the means; it is the goal to which both theology and preaching must ever point; it is the essence of true religion, it is indeed the definition of Christianity.⁶

The following text by John Owen, a leading Puritan pastor and theologian, summarizes well the passion that many of the Puritans exuded and thus implies that their lives were marked by the reality of regular communion with God:

What am I the better if I can dispute that Christ is God, but have no sense of sweetness in my heart from hence that he is a God in covenant with my soul? What will it avail me to evince, by testimonies and arguments, that he hath made satisfaction for sin, if, through my unbelief, the wrath of God abideth on me, and I have no experience of my

⁵ Donald Bloesch, *Essential of Evangelical Theology* vol. 2 (New York, Harper and Row, 1979), p.64.

own being made the righteousness of God in him... Will it be any advantage to me, in the issue, to profess and dispute that God worketh the conversion of a sinner by the irresistible grace of his Spirit, if I was never acquainted experimentally with the deadness with the deadness and utter impotency to good, that opposition to the law of God, which is in my own soul by nature, (and) with the efficacy of the exceeding greatness of the power of God in quickening, enlightening, and bringing forth the fruits of obedience in me... Let us, then, not think, that we are any thing the better for our conviction of the truths of the great doctrines of the gospel... unless we find the power of the truths abiding in our own hearts and have a continual experience of their necessity and excellency in our standing before God and our communion with him.⁷

The Puritans, I learned, were strong believers in the fact that authentic spirituality engaged the whole of the individual's soul – the intellect, emotions, and will. Thus, communication with God, or Quiet Time, should not be a time in which the person involved simply learns new facts about God. Rather, in accordance with the Puritan vision, it should be a time in which a person receives revelation from God in the context of a relationship, responds appropriately with his/her affections, and then exercises his/her will unto the glory of God. This seemed like such a deeper cry than the normal contemporary exhortation of "Read your Bible daily and pray in solitude and silence."

As I continued to study, I began developing my project. I set a few rules that were intended to provide me with a compass for direction, and one particular fence that was intended to prevent me from going too far. The rules for the project were as follows:

⁶ J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, p. 202

⁷ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, XII: 52

1. The project should have as its concentration the subject of private communion with God, or the Quiet Time.
2. The project should provide a systematic approach to understanding and practicing the Quiet Time.
3. The project should provide a practical way in which to teach this systematic approach, and in which to reproduce that teaching.
4. The content of the project should have the cannon of Scripture as its authority.
5. The content of the project should mirror the historical orthodoxy of the Christian faith in all doctrinal matters such as the Trinity and Incarnation, and should mirror the Reformed concepts of justification by faith alone and the necessity of Scripture for divine revelation.

The only boundary I set was to prevent me from being too specific in regards to “imposing a specific pattern of experience.”⁸ I recognized, as the theologian Dr. R.C. Sproul commented, that,

... we have to be careful not to impose upon the Christian community a set pattern for Bible study or prayer. We can't set up personal systems of devotion as tests of spirituality for other people. This has done a lot of harm to people who don't function well in a highly structured approach to prayer and study.⁹

⁸ *Evangelical Spirituality*, p. 312

⁹ R.C. Sproul, *Now That's a Good Question*, p. 228.

So, in order to respect the individuality and creativity of God's work in forming each personality, I decided to be firm where Scripture was firm (on the necessity of communion, the construct of sanctification, the order of renewal, the retaining of the Word, the priority of prayer, etc.), and to be open where Scripture was more open (the experience of worship, amount of daily time invested, etc.)

My first idea for creating this learning tool as my project was to write a study in book form composed of around eight chapters, fifteen pages per chapter. The outline for this book is included in the packet as Section 2. Because there were simply no books or studies available that detailed with depth the practice of a Quiet Time, I thought that such a choice was most profitable according to my aforementioned guidelines. I wrote the first chapter almost twenty times (see Section 3), and the amount of effort that I had expended on just one chapter was a sign indicating an unanticipated problem. I was attempting to write a study that generally requires intense theological training, which I lacked. In fact, depth of theology was to be a primary characteristic of this work. In order to do this, I was spending an enormous amount of time wrestling with issues, and every time I thought I had "nailed down" what I wanted to write, the outline changed. I was trying to wrap my arms around something that demanded more time, and thus I feared that the finished work would not even be profitable for my audience. According to the rules I set, this initial idea would fail, so I abandoned the book for a more practical approach that had the potential to be even more effective.

I gave much thought to creating a learning tool that would be more than just words with ideas. I wanted something a bit more concise than the original book-length project that would provide direction for the practice and time itself. I decided to create a

journal that would contain an introduction which dealt with relevant doctrines and Biblical teaching, accompanied with a systematic approach constructed from those doctrines for the practice of daily Quiet Times. The most exciting part, however, was the blank recording pages themselves where the system would be put to use. I wanted the writing pages to act as a compass in the fewest distracting words and ways possible.

I composed the first journal (see Section 4) after synthesizing all the material that I had been learning. It was simple in its form, containing an introduction discussing the contemporary needs, the connection between fellowship with God and the Gospel, and a Biblical model for understanding the Quiet Time. I had even worked diligently on putting the model into picture form, and had simplified the model into a short statement serving as a kind of slogan for the writing pages. The journal itself was good, but after more contemplating and testing, I was not satisfied with the system. It still left many questions unanswered and showed little in the way of spiritual theology with depth. I was also dangerously close to imposing a specific pattern of experience, which was unacceptable under my own rules.

In June, I went to Oxford University to study under Dr. J.I. Packer, the theologian I have mentioned several times earlier. I also took a class on Biblical spirituality under Dr. Eugene Peterson, which proved to be very educational. As a result of the new ideas I formed while at Oxford, I decided to discard the first journal altogether.

When I went back to my workshop, so to speak, I finally felt as if I had a clear picture of the finished product, and it seemed to be a good combination of theological depth, practical insight, and easily accessible information. I was still intent on making a journal the primary learning tool, but the introduction had been transformed in my mind

to an essay of sorts, along with a short devotional component, and more information on using the new system on a daily level. I was also going to add small devotional cards that the student could carry as a summary device in a wallet or pocket for easy access during the day. In addition, I wanted an appendix in the back of the journal explaining the intention and creation of the journal, and then a few historical quotes, hymns, prayers, etc. for the student's use.

Theological Framework

The new systematic approach to the Quiet Time was established on a few foundational theological principles. These were the principles that I would be discussing in the journal introduction, and applying to the student's devotional life:

1. The canon of Scripture provides the authority for creating a systematic approach to a Quiet Time.
2. The Creator God can be known as He chooses to reveal Himself. He is not obligated to do so, but chooses to for at least two primary reasons:
 - a. **He is *personal*.** This is evident in the core of God's Being as Trinity (perfect unity and distinction among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and through His actions relating to mankind (covenants, personal communication, etc.).
 - b. **His glory is made manifest.** As is implied in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the chief end of all that God does is for the demonstration of His glory. God reveals Himself because it brings Him great delight, and serves His final end.

3. Man was created in the image of God and thus possesses the capacity for communion. The core of man's capacity is his soul (the source of human intellect, emotions, and volition).
4. A union must first exist for there to be progressive communion. A natural union between God and man no longer exists because of sin, and thus the need first for redemption. God and man are only reunited by the sacrificial, historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. The pattern of salvation, as presented by the Gospel that the apostles preached, provides the foundational pattern for the Quiet Time. Some elements that remain the same include:
 - a. Characters: Triune God and man
 - b. Content: Revelation and response
 - c. Construct: Grace and faith (the saving faith that is marked by repentance).
6. The way that God has chosen to communicate today is through Scripture and the inward illumination of His Holy Spirit. Both are necessary for properly understanding revelation, and then properly responding to such revelation.
7. The Quiet Time, or *intimacy with God*, is both one of the ends to which sanctification points, and one of the means by which sanctification occurs. Sanctification can be viewed as God's work in renewing His image within an individual. Renewal occurs in the whole soul of man – his intellect, emotions, and volition.

Organization of the Project

This project is organized and presented in five sections. Section One, “Senior Project Overview” is an overview of the project as a whole. This section explains the need for the project, the inadequate methods that have already attempted to meet this need, and approaches to presenting a solution.

Section Two describes the book-length study that was my initial attempt to provide a solution to understanding and practicing fellowship with God. Originally, the book was intended to cover such topics as the Gospel, private devotion, the dynamics of fellowship with God, knowing God, faith, communication with God, sin, and the end to which communion with God points. However, the book-length study was eventually abandoned due to the amount of theological research and training it would require to be launched as an effective tool. Section Two includes the title of each chapter in the terminated book and a brief summary of each chapter’s primary principles.

Section Three contains the first chapter in the book-length outline presented in Section Two. Specifically, it deals with the need to understand the Gospel as the foundation and framework for communion with God. It discusses such modern pitfalls as legalism (doing things in an attempt to earn God’s favor) and formalism (patterns of experience that are not advocated in Scripture), and how the Gospel is opposed to both of them.

Section Four includes the first journal created to provide a compass for understanding and actually practicing communion with God. It connects fellowship with God and the Gospel, provides a model for understanding the experience of fellowship with God, and gives instruction on using the pages within the journal. The model

advocated within its pages was eventually discarded because of its inability to represent the truth presented in Scripture accurately.

Section Five includes the final journal called the *Intimacy Journal*, containing an introduction to the journal, an essay on theological theory, instructions for private communion with God, the journal pages intended for directing and recording, and an appendix with various other leaning tools and reference material. It is the conclusive learning tool that blends thoughtful theory with applicable practice. This final journal represents the product of the process demonstrated in all the other sections combined.



And He Walked With God

Section 2: Contents of Book Study



And He Walked With God

*Understanding the Dynamics of Fellowship
with God*

“Only a few organized systems of teaching spirituality exist; many of these are for new Christians, and are in the form of courses to nurture them in the early stages of their Christian lives in the follow-up of their conversions... What may be needed is a refinement of these practices and a more profound understanding of the processes to enable them to serve current needs more adequately.”

David Parker, Evangelical Quarterly

Many Christian books and magazines contain much about Christian doctrine, Christian standards, problems of Christian conduct, techniques of Christian service – but little about the inner realities of fellowship with God... We do not spend much time, alone or together, in dwelling on the wonder of the fact that God and sinners have communion at all; no, we just take that for granted, and give our minds to other matters. Thus we make it plain that communion with God is a small thing to us.”

J. I. Packer, A Quest For Godliness

Abstract

According to the message of the Christian Gospel, reconciliation can occur between God and an individual, and so making it possible for such an individual to realize his/her intended purpose, that is, communion with God. Fellowship with God, on a daily level, is the manner in which this communal relationship is developed, and there exists certain dynamics which serve to help us understand the nature of this activity. The first relates to the purpose of the activity itself, and that involves the relational knowledge of God. The second is the means by which the knowledge is apprehended – through faith. Then, intimacy is the dynamic that describes the reality of the activity as God reveals Himself and the individual thus responds. The ultimate end of fellowship with God is renewal, whereby the heart is transformed with spiritual truth and the affections are ignited unto worship. This model was developed through a careful study of principles presented throughout the older and newer Testaments of the Bible, and should serve as a foundation on which to develop and evaluate what has become known as a Quiet Time.

Contents

- Chapter 1: *No Other Gospel*
- Chapter 2: *Private Devotion*
- Chapter 3: *Dynamics of Divine Fellowship*
- Chapter 4: *That They May Know You*
- Chapter 5: *The Vehicle of Faith*
- Chapter 6: *Revelation and Response*
- Chapter 7: *The Problem with Sin*
- Chapter 8: *From Discipline to Desire*

No Other Gospel

The Foundation of Christian Maturity

Major Assertions

- Spiritual maturity is set forth in the Gospel message, and is parallel to the manner in which an individual is justified through Christ.
- Integrating the Gospel message into daily living is made visible through intentional fellowship with God.
- Fellowship with God (a Quiet Time) is an experience of grace appropriated through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Private Devotion

Integrating God's Message into Daily Experience

Major Assertions

- Most Christians do not value fellowship with God as is evident by the way in which they chose to spend their time.
- Private devotion is the underpinning of public religion because it promotes sincerity of heart.
- Private devotion should be Trinitarian in nature, that is, it should incorporate devotion to all three persons of the Trinity in respect to their various unifying roles.

Dynamics of Divine Fellowship

Exploring Biblical Elements of a Quiet Time

Major Assertions

- Knowing God is the purpose of spending time with Him daily; the purpose is not the completion of a set of spiritual disciplines.
- The knowledge of God is apprehended through faith, or dependent relationship.
- Intimacy with God is the visible reality of active faith and the expressed desire to know God.
- A Quiet Time may very well begin as an act of discipline, but should progress into an act of devotion.

That They May Know You

Apprehending Spiritual Truth

Major Assertions

- There is a difference between knowing about God (description), and being acquainted with God (relationship).
- God only becomes known as He chooses to reveal Himself, and such knowledge is not something that can be earned.
- It is the apprehension of spiritual truth through relationship that describes the purpose of fellowship with God.

The Vehicle of Faith

Developing a Dependent and Expectant Spirit

Major Assertions

- Faith is the eye through which God becomes known, the path through which He has chosen to reveal Himself.
- Simply stated, faith is dependence on the character of God as well as His personal benevolence towards those who wait upon Him.
- Faith is never inert, rather, it is always accompanied by some outworking that reflects the substance on which it rests.

Revelation and Response

Cultivating Intimacy with the Lord

Major Assertions

- God initiates intimacy by making Himself know to us through the joint cooperation of His Spirit and Word.
- The first step in understanding God's Word is to establish meaning through careful interpretative principles.
- Response, in the context of fellowship with God, is the outpouring of an individual's heart through prayer and worship.

The Problem with Sin

When Desire is Lost

Major Assertions

- Struggling with sin is a reality, and its affects dissolve natural desire to commune with God.
- Authentic spirituality is functioning under the power of the Spirit, and often this involves submission out of discipline and not desire.

From Discipline to Desire

Inflaming the Heart Towards Adoration

Major Assertions

- The ultimate end of fellowship with God is a changed heart which results in true worship and obedience.
- It is the knowledge of God apprehended through faith and made evident through intimacy that ignites the affections of an individual.
- Volition, or choice, is primarily a manifestation of that which is endeared to the heart.

And He Walked With God

Section 3: Initial Chapter in Book Study

No Other Gospel

The Foundation of Christian Maturity

In the book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul addresses a region that was having difficulty in the area of Christian maturity. Specifically, the believers in Galatia were adding certain principles to the original message they had received about Christ. Instead of simply trusting in the finished work of Christ for every aspect of their spiritual development, they had begun to rely on their own efforts to attain the righteousness for which they hoped. Paul knew that such a practice was incredibly dangerous; so much so, that he accused the Galatian Christians of deserting God and turning to a different message. These are just a few of his observations, admonitions, and warnings:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all” (Galatians 1:6-7b).

“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort” (Galatians 3:3).

“But now that you know God – or rather are known by God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?” (Galatians 4:9).

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

While reading through the book of Galatians, it is difficult for one to do anything but sympathize with the frustrations that exasperated Paul. You see, the Galatian

Christians knew better than to act in the manner that they were acting, for they had begun with foundations that authentically reflected the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. As author F. F. Bruce notes, “The beginning of their Christian life had been attended by manifestations of the presence and power of the Spirit: were they now to seek the perfection of Christian life in ordinances of an outmoded regime, related not to the Spirit but to the flesh?”ⁱ

Many Christians already know that they cannot please God on their own accord. But this lesson is easily forgotten in our daily lives. We also oftentimes have a tendency to think that we already have an understanding of the Gospel and, therefore do not need to be reminded of it. However, if you read Paul’s letter farther into Chapter 2 you will discover a man by the name of Peter who was making these same assumptions. Yes, this is the same Peter who was designated the leader of the Apostles, and the same Peter who taught the true Gospel of Jesus Christ to around three thousand people who received this message in one day (Acts 2:1-41). He had walked with Christ, talked with Christ, and been personally commissioned by Christ to take that message to all peoples. He was a guy we would all expect to stand firm in the practices he was teaching. He was a guy who, after extensive experience, should have had a handle on the Gospel message.

We will never come to a point in our spiritual lives in which we no longer need to be reminded of the Gospel.

But, in the second chapter of Galatians we find Paul rebuking him for his hypocrisy; that while he knew the message clearly, he too was guilty of deserting it. In fact, Paul declares the nature of his sin as just this: “not acting in line with the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:14). Even the heroic Peter had fallen prey to trusting in something other than the work of Christ for the completion of the project that the Lord had begun several years earlier – the project of changing Peter into the likeness of His son. So, as we can gather from the shortcomings of Peter, experience does not eliminate the possibility and reality of failure in this arena. We will never come to a point in our spiritual lives in which we no longer need to be reminded of the Gospel.

Paul spent much of his ministry refuting spurious principles for spiritual maturity; principles that had somehow permeated the membrane of truth presented in the Gospel message, infusing themselves into both doctrine and practice. Besides the Galatians, the

believers in the city of Colosse also had problems consistently living in faith. Paul explains his solution for those problems in a very straightforward manner, summarized by this exhortation in Colossians: “So, then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him...” (Colossians 2:6). As theologian H. Wayne House notes,

Paul wanted the Colossians to be established in Christ Jesus and to grow in Him. Christ was to be the basis of every aspect of life. The only way to ensure this was to beseech the Colossians to reject any doctrine that did not have Christ as its bedrock. In addition the teaching concerning Christ had to do with what they had originally received.ⁱⁱ

The Colossians and the Galatians were not much different than the Church is today (not excluding you and I). They struggled with counterfeit ideas that they added to the Gospel message, and those ideas involved practices that were intended to be a catalyst for spiritual growth. There is no quicker way to extinguish the fire of the soul than by drowning God’s perfect, grace-driven plan with a hint of human glory. Add a pinch of spiritual ceremony mixed with a dash of self-reliance, and, no matter the sincerity, the finished product will severely lack divine flavor.

What makes the situation even more difficult is the quality of the things that we trust in to grow spiritually. It is not usually the innately harmful activities that stunt spiritual maturity, but it is often those activities that are by nature “spiritual” that service as the detriments? Disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, Scripture memorization, and others that adorn the devotional life are not always sure indicators of spiritual growth.ⁱⁱⁱ

On the surface it doesn’t seem possible that something such as prayer could stunt your growth. Jesus assures us, though, that not all spiritual disciplines are really “spiritual” all of the time, and that they can even be deceitful if they are not done in an attitude of humility. Remember this statement and deposit it in a place that is easily accessible: Spiritual activities are opposed to the Gospel when they involve reliance on the activity itself as the means for maturity.

Spiritual activities are opposed to the Gospel when they involve reliance on the activity itself as the means for maturity.

Without going into a long explanation at this point in our study, I suggest that you take a

minute to review Christ's thoughts on the prayer lives of the Pharisees in Matthew 6:5-15.

As we began to explore the dynamics of a Biblical Quiet Time, we must not forget that such a time has deep roots in the message that first drew you to your Creator. Dr. David Parker has mentioned, "Despite the influence of other factors, ultimately it is the theology of salvation in particular that determines spirituality."^{iv} In addition to his statement, I would suggest that we cannot thoroughly enjoy fellowship with God until we begin to see that time in the greater context of God's intentional redemptive plan. That is, if we do not understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we will not understand the nature of a Biblical Quiet Time because, a Quiet Time is merely the application of that message towards a daily lifestyle of deepening relationship.

The Need for a Solid Foundation: *Building your devotional life on the rock*

If you know anything about the impact of earthquakes, then you understand the necessity of possessing a firm foundation. In fact, even the slightest movement of a foundation can send colossal structures crumbling to the ground. Presbyterian Preacher Earl Palmer tells a story about the Coalinga earthquake that occurred just a few years ago. Evidently, houses that were bolted to their foundation withstood the quake that measured 8.2 on the Richter scale. On the other hand, the houses that were built in a period before people bolted their houses down, moved six or seven inches off their foundations, resulting in the collapse of those houses. And so, a great discovery was made on account of the earthquake at Coalinga: Houses should be bolted to their foundations.^v

Christ tells a similar story in Matthew 7:24-27. But, instead of noting the importance of fastening our lives to foundations, he brings up the point of building on the correct foundation. Not only is it absolutely essential to be committed to fixed principles, but it is just as important that those principles be correct according to the truth revealed in the Word of God. Here is the message:

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the

streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

In this passage, Christ draws our attention to the distinction between knowing what is true and practicing that truth. It is the lone variable in the situation. All the other elements in the story remain the same – the hearing of his words, the building of a house, and the inconsistency of the weather. Simply stated, one man hears and practices while the other man hears and ignores.

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ is an advocate for a foundation that reflects the application of truth, and integration of that application into a habit of living. Knowledge is inconsequential if it has no hands that are active. Take the act of gossiping, for instance. So you know that gossip tears at others and is forbidden in Ephesians 5:29, Proverbs 20:19, and James 3:9-10. Who cares unless the light of that truth shines forth brightly in your ordinary conversations? What does it matter unless you are committed to using language in a way that ministers to others and is glorifying to God? The same is true of the Gospel even after you have initially entrusted your life to Christ. So you know that the Gospel is about the reconciliation of a lost relationship and the manner in which such reconciliation occurs. Who cares unless that knowledge inspires the creation and development of a genuine relationship celebrated by an attitude of faith and repentance?

If we do not endeavor to practice the Gospel message with consistency and perseverance, then the result is clear: at some point, depending on the intensity of the wind, rain, and waves, our houses will fall apart. Destruction will manifest itself in chastisement and discipline because the Lord will not forever allow, for His children, a lifestyle that stands in opposition to the plan that He has established. In addition, frustration and detachment may very well mark our paths as we expect the abundant life offered by Christ (John 10:10) to no avail.

Faulty foundations are prevalent in many Christians. By that, I mean that they are either attempting to build their spiritual lives on something other than grace through faith, or they are not applying the Gospel message in the context of daily fellowship with the Lord. They began correctly, as did the Galatians, but then deviated from the path that God has carved. Their Quiet Times are driven by the completion of a set of spiritual disciplines, and while they seem to get smarter, I can see little zeal in the actual practice of their faith. They are like tadpoles so to speak, as John Stott, author of the *Contemporary Christian*, has noted, because they possess large heads that are incongruent with the rest of their lives.^{vi} Appearing discontent, they are always searching for the next new idea to subdue their guilt and satisfy their thirst for love without condition. But the thirst continues unquenched as they rely on their performance to merit a stagnant, pseudo relationship with God. As I heard someone once suggest, “They are playing in a sandbox when the beach beckons them just around the corner.”

The Nature of the Solid Foundation: *Understanding the message of the Gospel*

After a short glance on how important the Gospel is for all Christians at any stage of maturity, we should now spend some time reviewing the basic content of the message itself. It would be a foolish assumption to expect that all really know the Gospel well enough to understand its implications for daily life.

For reasons that I will discuss in the next chapter, we (like the Apostle Peter) tend to lose sight of the fact that the Christian life has been laid out for us in the Gospel message. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:17, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Notice that Paul does not view the Gospel as a decision bound in a moment’s time, but as a lifestyle, with reference to the phrase “from first to last.” The *Word Biblical Commentary* summarizes Paul’s thought accurately when it explains:

What Paul wants his converts to see is that the Christian life is one that starts, is maintained, and comes to culmination only through dependence on the activity of God’s Spirit.^{vii}

This brings us to our first basic principle:

Principle I
The Gospel is a message that encompasses the entire life of a believer.

From the point at which your position in Christ was sealed and you were declared righteous before God, to the daily battle of progressing in holiness, to the moment when you will receive your inheritance as a child of God and be glorified with Christ – the Gospel outlines it all. There is no depth in the experience of a believer to which the Gospel does not swim. There is no command given to believers in Scripture which does not depend on the Gospel for its fulfillment.

Paul knew this, and just after he had described to the believers in Galatia the events surrounding Peter's struggle, he made this profound statement about the relationship between his position in Christ and the life that it must inspire:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing (Galatians 2:20-21).

The Gospel, then, is a message to be lived, and not a message that simply requires our intellectual agreement. We cannot store it on a shelf in some dark chamber of the mind and reach for it as if it is a display piece purposed for conversation. Author John Macarthur has said, "Faith, like grace, is not static. Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural longing to obey."^{viii} If we have been *crucified*, then we must *live*; and not by just any means that seem right, but by the pattern that has been designed for us. We must attempt to involve ourselves daily in a pattern of grace appropriated through our faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

In processing the teaching of others on this subject, I have noticed a disturbing trend that does much to promote a humanistic rather than a theocentric view of fellowship

with God. Such teaching does not take into account how easily we do, in fact, “set aside the grace of God.” A person will embrace the message of the Gospel, and is then told to grow their relationship with God through a number of beneficial activities, i.e. prayer, Bible study, Scripture memory, solitude, meditation, etc. It is a very confusing practice to tell someone whose whole life has been based on performance that a relationship with God is opposed to any type of earning, that spiritual birth and maturity are gifts, and then, just after they have begun to understand such a principle, to suggest that they get to know God better by doing a variety of things.

Your Quiet Time will become self-centered and powerless if you become more concerned with what you are doing and with the nature of that performance than with the God who is right there with you.

These teachers neglect to explain the Quiet Time as a part of an aspect of salvation known as sanctification, making it difficult to connect fellowship with God and the Gospel message. Sanctification is simply the process by which God transforms an individual into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Like justification, which describes the result of the initial act of trusting in Christ, sanctification is a work dependent solely on the continuing grace of God. It is a gift given through the active faith that we just discussed. The attitude that many people possess as a result of an inaccurate understanding of sanctification is manifest in ideas such as this: “If I pray for fifteen minutes

and then study Scripture or meditate for fifteen more, I will grow as a consequence.”

Growth, however, is not dependent on human activity no matter the discipline. It is dependent upon the work of God in an individual’s life through a faith that is focused heavenward. Spiritual disciplines are merely the visible marks of that faith. Your Quiet Time will become self-centered and powerless if you become more concerned with what you are doing and with the nature of that performance than with the God who is right there with you. Such is the attitude of one who is unknowingly building his house on the sand. Men and women who are constructing on the rock, however, are waiting expectantly on the knowledge of God through a relationship anchored in faith – a relationship that was purchased and is practiced through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Herein lies the next principle for examination:

Principle 2
Righteousness before God comes only through being identified with Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote the majority of the New Testament, gives great insight into the purpose of Jesus Christ. Here are some various comments that he makes throughout his exposition on this historic figure:

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Corinthians 5:21).

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Romans 3:22).

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption” (I Corinthians 1:30).

Righteousness is a legal term used to describe a completely innocent position before God. It finds its definition in the character of the living God (Romans 1:17, 3:21-22) as opposed to the supposed morality and goodness of man. It is God who has set the standard and, try as we may, we can neither alter it nor justify measuring ourselves by another.

We have an overwhelming problem with this condition of being right before God; simply stated, we are not. We all fall short, miss the mark, and do things in thought, word, and deed that are contrary to the ethical demands of God. Romans 3:10-12 says,

“There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.

All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.”

And not only have we all committed acts of sin against a holy God, but we are by nature sinful. This means that the root of our problem is not in some temporary loss of control that occurs every once in a while, but in the very attitude of our minds. We do not sin by accident, rather, we sin because we are innately sinful. Being surprised at the fact that people actually do evil and immoral things is like being surprised at the fact that the new puppy you have just brought home barks incessantly. Dogs bark because they are dogs, and they instinctively do the things that dogs do. All men sin because they are sinful, and possess hearts that are naturally opposed to the things of God (Ephesians 2:3). Therefore, the solution for this problem can never be discovered through the modification of behavior.

The solution lies first in a transplanted heart, whereby God surgically replaces our old worldly hearts with new hearts that desire Him, enabling faith and repentance. Righteousness comes not from something we deserve, nor from something that we will ever be able to earn through obedience. We are sinners and will always fall short of God’s righteousness. Concentrating of God’s grace rather than our own personal morality enables us to experience a genuine spiritual life through Christ.

In Romans 3:21-25a, Paul writes the following:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from the Law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a *sacrifice of atonement*, through faith in his blood (emphasis mine).

I emphasize *sacrifice of atonement* because it stands at the core of what Christ accomplished on our behalf. The idea that Paul presents in this passage, and specifically with this phrase, is that Christ averted the wrath of God and allowed divine judgment to be poured out on him instead of on those who would place their trust in him. God's wrath is a product of His intense love for all that is right and good, and not a product of some arbitrary burst of malicious anger. His love for goodness is so intense and so perfect that He must punish all that fall short of it in order to satisfy His own quality of justice. Packer speaks on this subject insightfully, commenting,

And this is "righteous" anger – the "right" reaction of moral perfection in the Creator toward a moral perversity in the creature. So far from the manifestation of God's wrath in punishing sin being morally doubtful, the thing that would be morally doubtful would be for him not to show his wrath in this. God is not just – that is, he does not act in the way that is right, he does not do what is proper to a judge – unless he inflicts upon all sin and wrongdoing the penalty it deserves.^{ix}

The author of Hebrews also provides an illustration of what Christ did to turn away the wrath of God for us, paralleling that act with the act of worship performed in the earthly tabernacle (Hebrews 9). The tabernacle was a divinely-designed place of worship from the time in which Israel escaped Egyptian slavery until the reign of Solomon, a period of almost five hundred years. Its structure, composition, and functions are outlined in many locations throughout the first few books of the Bible, but especially in Exodus chapters 25-30. The tabernacle was inseparably linked with the Presence and Dwelling of the eternal God, and those ceremonies in which the elected priests performed pictorially embodied that which is required for communion and favor with the Lord.

Each year, on only one ordained day, the High Priest was allowed to pass into a room in the tabernacle called the Most Holy Place where there was a single piece of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant. The Most Holy Place symbolized the throne room of the Lord, the place of utmost adoration and worship as expressed by the two gigantic cherubim that flanked the Ark. On that day, the Day of Atonement, the High Priest

would sprinkle the blood of a goat on the atonement cover that lay on top of the Ark (Leviticus 16:15-16). The blood of the goat was an imperfect payment for the debt that Israel owed for her sins, because, as is evident throughout Scripture, blood is required for the remission of all iniquity (Hebrews 9:22). Such a sacrifice offered upon the atonement cover concealed the sins for that particular year, turning aside the righteous wrath of God until the next year when the same ceremony was again required.

The interpretation that we receive from the author of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ,

“The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God.”

John Piper

the great High Priest, entered into the heavenly tabernacle once and for all, sat down upon the atonement cover at the right hand of His Father and unceasingly intercedes for His followers. His blood, unlike the blood of a goat, was sufficient to do more than conceal sin; his blood was sufficient to completely destroy the penalty for sin because he actually fulfilled all that was required according to God’s righteous instruction. And he not only fulfilled the

Law, but he personified all that it revealed, internally and externally.

Since you and I are, by nature, objects of the wrath of God according to the condition of our hearts (Ephesians 2:3), the blood of Christ was spilled on the atonement cover as a replacement for you and me, making visible divine judgment according to the wrath of God. John Piper, in his book *Desiring God*, writes, “The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God.”^x

The sinless Jesus of Nazareth has made his position of perfection available to you and I, but not simply for the purpose of a title or declaration. He did it all – death, burial, and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-5) – to reunite and reconcile sinful creation to a holy Creator. Because of what he accomplished on the cross, we can have peace with God and enjoy living in the light of grace. The act of imparting righteousness reveals its full glory in the conclusion of reconciliation for genuine relationship.

The final basic principle is just this:

Principle 3

The end of righteousness is access into a growing relationship with the Lord that serves for the display of His glory.

After Paul has thoroughly treated the subject of righteousness through faith in Christ, he concludes with this statement: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand (Romans 5:1).”

Such love has brought us into the grace in which we now stand, a grace marked by peace. In fact, it is through an understanding of Christ and his cross that we know what genuine love is (1 John 4:9-10), possessing then the possibility of sharing it with others. If we now stand in the grace of God, then there must be a manifestation of that grace in the form of a gift that is neither deserved nor earned. Once again, nothing we have done in the past, nor any amount of pure and benevolent effort in the present will enable us to enjoy that which is attributed to grace.

And what, in essence, is the character of the aforementioned gift? It is the enjoyment of God Himself through rich and abundant fellowship, the daily privilege and responsibility of allowing your Creator to initiate and pursue you in a divine romance in which you come to know Him more deeply, and as a result, yourself more accurately. It is the subject of this present grace as it relates to our intentional fellowship with the Lord that we will explore in subsequent chapters.

KEY THOUGHTS

1. Spiritual Maturity is set forth in the Gospel and is parallel to the manner in which you were justified in Christ.
2. Integrating the Gospel into your daily life is visible through intentional fellowship with God.
3. Fellowship with God (a Quiet Time) is an experience of grace appropriated through faith in the finished work of Christ.
4. Jesus Christ atoned for your sins in order that you might be considered righteous on behalf of his life. Such a position gives you full access into a growing relationship with the Lord.

ⁱ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, 1977), p. 182.

ⁱⁱ H. Wayne House, *The Christian Life according to Colossians*, Bibliotheca Sacra, (Dallas, 1994), p. 445.

ⁱⁱⁱ My intention is not to undermine the importance of spiritual disciplines, but to question the manner in which some people utilize them. As Donald Bloesch has noted, "Biblical faith does not deny the place for spiritual disciplines but stresses that those have no value apart from the secret inward work of the Holy Spirit, and they are designed to bring our actions into conformity... with the will of God, which is perceptible only through the eyes of faith." Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* vol. 2 (New York, Harper & Row, 1979), p. 64.

^{iv} David Parker, *Evangelical Spirituality Reviewed*, *Evangelical Quarterly*, (1991), 63:2, p. 127.

^v Earl Palmer, *The Foolish and the Wise*, Preaching Today, Tape No. 54.

^{vi} John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downer's Grove, 1992), p. 119.

^{vii} Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians* (Dallas, 1990), p. 104.

^{viii} John Macarthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, 1994), p. 37.

^{ix} J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downer's Grove, 1973), p. 184-185.

^x John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR, 1986), p. 59.

And He Walked With God

Section 4: Initial *Intimacy Journal*

Intimacy *journal*

As long as I can remember, from the time that I first became a Christian, I have always had a firm conviction that the relationship between a believer and his God must be held in the utmost regard. In fact, that is what first drew me to the God of the Scripture, that there existed such a Deity that revealed Himself personally to those who would wait upon Him, and then act benevolently on their behalf. The knowledge of the Holy could never be divorced from a relationship with the Holy, and instead of being the pursuer of both I soon discovered that I was the one being pursued in some sort of divine romance.

I have labored as of late to uncover a Biblical basis for the development of such a relationship, for a theological foundation for what has become known as a Quiet Time, or a Personal Devotion Time. Since I have been in ministry I have noticed a disturbing trend: A person will embrace the Gospel (the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ and the reception of grace by faith), is followed-up with some basic doctrinal teaching, and is then told to grow their relationship with God through a number of disciplines, i.e. prayer, Bible reading, Scripture memory, meditation, and solitude. It is a very confusing practice to tell someone whose whole life has been based on performance that a relationship with God is opposed to any type of earning, that spiritual birth and growth are gifts, and then, just after they have begun to understand such a principle, to suggest that they get to know God better by doing a variety of things. Although I know that those things are parts of a larger picture which is anchored in faith, very few teachers take the time to expound on the connection between daily fellowship with God and the Gospel, between discipline and devotion.

Many famous teachers and preservers of sound doctrine are now calling for the promotion of systematic models of spirituality, that is, ways in which to teach fellowship with God that do not compromise the freedom that each individual should enjoy, but that maximize the experience of communion in accord with Biblical theology. Noted teacher David Parker has said, "Only a few organized systems of teaching spirituality exist; many of these are for new Christians, and are in the form of courses to nurture them in the early stages of their Christian

lives...” He goes on to add, “What may be needed is refinement of these practices and a more profound understanding of the processes to enable them to serve current needs more adequately.” As a result of a general neglect to form such models and to meet contemporary needs, the value placed on fellowship with God is slowly diminishing. One of the greatest theologians of our time, J. I. Packer, has commented on the condition of our Christian subculture, saying,

Modern Christian books and magazines contain much about Christian doctrine, Christian standards, problems of Christian conduct, techniques of Christian service – but little about the inner realities of fellowship with God. Our sermons contain much about sound doctrine – but little relating between the soul and the Savior. We do not spend much time, alone or together, in dwelling on the wonder of the fact that God and sinners have communion at all; no, we just take that for granted, and give our minds to other matters. Thus we make it plain that communion with God is a small thing to us.²

And, if this is an accurate portrayal, then it is not only communion that fades, but passion for holy living and compassion for less than holy people.

The structure of this journal is a response to the need for a way in which to teach and practice fellowship with God. It is not intended to impose a legalistic pattern of Christian spirituality, but to make practical certain Biblical doctrines that the Lord has given us in order to direct our paths toward Him.

Fellowship with God and the Gospel

It is not philosophically challenging to connect fellowship with God and the Gospel. It is, however, more challenging to connect contemporary teachings on the subject with the Gospel. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins so that his righteousness may be imparted to us. But that righteousness is not an end in itself; it is a necessary means for the restoration of a relationship between a holy God and sinners. We receive that grace by faith, and are then called to continue in the same manner that we began (Galatians 3:3; Colossians 2:6). The problem with the modern Quiet Time is not necessarily the procedure within the time itself, but the attitude that is often promoted. “If I pray for fifteen minutes and then study Scripture or meditate for fifteen more, then I will grow,” we tend to suppose. Growth is not dependent upon human

activity, no matter the discipline. It, like justification, is dependent upon the work of God in an individual's life through a faith that is focussed heavenward.

Quiet Times today have become more humanistic rather than theocentric in that people are more concerned with what they are doing and how they are doing it than with the God Who is there. We have forgotten that Bible Study, Meditation, and other disciplines are not ends themselves, but means to the great adventure of fully knowing and worshipping God. Therein should lie the focus of a growing devotional life, not on the completion of a set of spiritual disciplines. Therefore, a Quiet Time is a grace experience since its purpose is the knowledge of God, and God only becomes known as He chooses to reveal Himself. In essence, we are constantly given something that we neither deserve nor possess the possibility of earning.

The Gospel and fellowship with God are inseparably linked as the former provides the structure and foundation for the latter. The Quiet Time should no doubt be viewed within the context of God's entire redemption plan, from the time that we are born until the time that we are glorified with Christ, and with all the change that takes place in between.

A Biblical Model

A Quiet Time should be primarily concerned with knowing God. More specifically, that knowledge will take the shape of two interrelated forms, one being the character of God, and the other being the manner in which that character is made manifest to us personally. Christ made it clear that eternal life in definition is the knowledge of God. John 17:3 says, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Paul describes the greatness of knowing God in his letter to the Philippian church, writing, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things" (Philippians 3:8). The knowledge of God, however, is not cultivated by the careful, indifferent evaluation of pertinent facts, but within the context of a relationship, as the Greek word for *know* suggests. It is the same word used to describe the way in which a man would *know* his wife, carrying with it a very intimate connotation.

How is God, then, known in more personal way? The answer to this question is where the Quiet Time should begin to take shape. After understanding the purpose, a path should be

carved in which to direct the individual towards the intended destination. The beginning of the knowledge of God is drawing near to Him through faith, as Hebrews 11:6 explains, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." All that occurs in the Christian experience related to spiritual growth is an outworking of the inner reality of faith. "Without faith," as Packer has commented, "there would be no Christian experience at all." A trust and dependence upon the triune God is what compels someone to know more personally the Being of that trust. For many, the problem is not that they do not believe in the existence of God; the problem, instead, is that they do not depend on all the claims that He makes for their personal lives, trusting that He is indeed active in bringing all His promises to fruition for the individual as well as the entire creation.

The outworking of faith for the purposing of knowing God becomes a reality through what I call *intimacy*. Intimacy is simply communication with God of which two principle practices are involved, revelation and response. This is what comes to mind for most when the subject of a Quiet Time is mentioned. God initiates intimacy by making Himself known to us through the joint cooperation of His Spirit and Word. We then respond through prayer and adoration, disclosing our own thoughts and worship. It is easy, because this aspect seems more tangible, to forget that we are not by any means earning the right to know God on account of our participatory initiatives. Authentic intimacy is grounded in the active faith that was just discussed, one that trusts not only in an existence but also in a personal rewarding.

If knowing God is the purpose, active faith the vehicle, and intimacy the reality, then discipline is the act of human initiation. A man or woman who practices discipline in this context begins the process of delightful obedience by choice. However, the choice is not first to obey, but to nurture a repentant heart through two ways: (1) recognizing the depth of his/her own moral depravity; and (2) responding to the love and grace of God. Then, obedience becomes not an act of human will, but a response to God's great love. Intimacy with the Lord should, in fact, originate from a responsive heart.

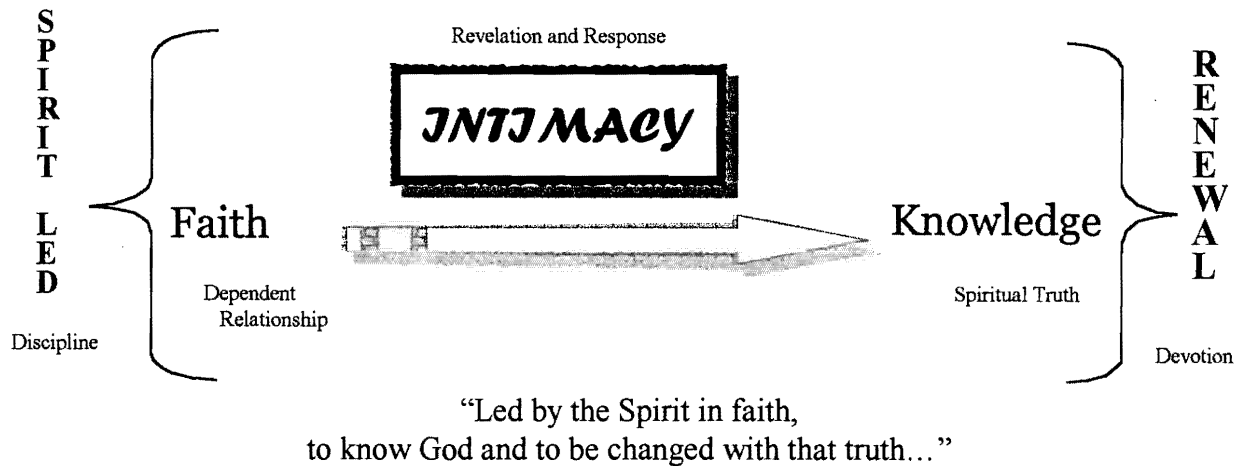
It is naïve to imagine that upon waking every day there will exist a natural desire to commune with God. The reality is that we all still struggle with sin, as did and does every man and woman of God. And because we still struggle with living according to the sinful nature,

we possess a tendency to hide from God and not confront the iniquity in our own lives, as Adam demonstrates in Genesis 3:10. Whatever the excuse for not meeting with God on a regular basis, it must be put to death as a pattern of sin, for as John Calvin once commented, "We are not our own; therefore, let us not make it our end to seek what may be agreeable to our carnal nature.... We are God's; to him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed." In Galatians 2:20 Paul gives a personal testimony of dying to self, remarking, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Though a Quiet Time should produce devotion, it will most often begin with discipline.

If a Quiet Time is anchored in the aforementioned principles, then the result is spiritual growth manifested in authentic inward and outward change. Knowing God, a knowledge directed by the Spirit in faith, will not leave someone static. Specifically, it seems that such change takes place in two connected areas, the heart and the will. By the term *heart* I am referring to the seat of one's affections. The apprehension of God inflames the heart resulting in the adoration of God. This is when true worship takes place, as Christ speaks of in John, worship "in spirit and in truth." Then, after the heart has been affected, the will (an individual's desire to make choices) follows, for whatever is endeared to the heart will be made manifest in volition. A heart inflamed for God will be reflected in a life that is passionately and joyfully obedient to God.

On the following page is a diagram for all those who are more visually stimulated. It is not designed to act as a formula, as all models in some way fall short of reality. Also, the dynamics of fellowship with God are not necessarily linear, but may be quite often simultaneous in experience, and that the diagram does not display. The phrase below the picture is a simple summary of the model itself, and has provided for me much focus in my daily endeavors to grow closer to the Lord. I hope that it helps you in yours.

Quiet Time Model



Using the Intimacy Journal

Most of the journal is self-explanatory, but I will use this space to elaborate on just a few topics that may be of some help.

The first thing to notice is the structure of the journal, composed primarily of five sections. The first section under the title "scripture" is simply for recording the verses under meditation and study. The next three sections (Establish Meaning, Establish Personal Significance, and Establish Ministry Initiatives) are all key aspects of interpretation. As Grant Osborne has noted, "Interpreters must follow this order to treat Scripture properly: the original meaning of Scripture provides the necessary foundation upon which we build significance first for ourselves and then for those to whom we minister."

In the "Establish Meaning" section, the goal is to take Scripture from what it meant in context to principles that establish universal meaning. Under "Observations," I would suggest making notes about the text's genre, grammatical structure, repeated words, etc. Under "Issues," look for main ideas in the passage, and for "Principles," record, in sentence form, facts that you have learned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The next two sections involve interacting with the questions, “How do I apply the text to my own life?” and then “How do I share the text with others?”. Again, God does not reveal Himself but for the purpose of changing a person into the likeness of His Son.

The last section is an opportunity to keep a record on exactly how God is answering prayer. There is rarely anything that does more to strengthen faith than an understanding of how God is moving in a very personal way.

Notice that the journal is not broken up into two distinct sections under the titles “Revelation” and “Response.” That is because the whole of the Quiet Time is much like a conversation where both revealing and responding are constant occurrences and tough between which to distinguish.

Lastly, I urge you to daily connect with the philosophy set forth on the first page, assisting with focus and the understanding of some spiritual dynamics. May you be changed in an incredible way as you feast upon fellowship with God.

Summary and Tips

1. The quality of a Quiet Time is not measured in minutes, but in the change that takes place in your heart.
2. A Quiet Time is a grace experience in which you are given something that you do not deserve nor possess the possibility of earning.
3. Do not always expect that you will naturally desire fellowship with God. Existing sin and living in a world full of sin will steal such a desire in many cases. There, recognize that you must begin by yielding your will in obedience.
4. Here is a helpful pattern translated from Moses’ encounter with God in Exodus 34:
 - A. Remove distractions
 - B. Present yourself as a living sacrifice
 - C. Revelation and response
 - D. Authentic worship and adoration
 - E. Life change
5. This is the Lord’s time with you. Let your focus rest on Him and not the activity itself.

Intimacy *journal*

Date:

Led by the Spirit in faith, to know the heart of God and to be changed in that knowledge...

scripture

“... so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped.”

Establish Meaning

teaching

Observation(s):

Issue(s):

Principle(s):

Establish Personal Significance

rebuking

*How am I falling
short? How is my
lifestyle being
challenged?*

correcting

*How, then, should I
live?*

Establish Ministry Initiatives

training in righteousness

*How will I impact the
lives of others?*

prayer record

“Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

And He Walked With God

Section 5: The Finished *Intimacy Journal*

Intimacy *Journal*

Many of those who held the doctrines of grace wrote down a record of God's intimate dealings with their souls, not with an eye to publication, but, as in David Brainerd's case, to test their spiritual growth, and to encourage themselves by their re-perusal in times of low spiritual fervor.

*Arthur Bennett in his preface to
the collection of Puritan prayers and devotions,
Valley of Vision*

As the deer pants for streams of water,
So my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
Psalm 42:1-2



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Introduction

This project is simply a learning tool for the practice of fellowship with God, one of the great mysteries of our faith. The ideas and contents within the pages of this journal are not necessarily new, but instead represent the core of what spirituality used to be for many saints of the past. Like many things that are rooted in history, the jaws of extinction have become a threat, so this may be considered a project of preservation as much as one of exploration.

The contents of this journal are meant to blend careful theological composition with fresh, practical insight. Its intent is to sort of bring theology to life for many who do not consider themselves as theologians, and to encourage what may be the greatest privilege of a Christian – time spent alone in the Presence of God.

The first section of the journal is an essay that provides a foundation for practice entitled, *On Communion with God and Intimacy*. Its purpose is to introduce the reader to important concepts that will shape his/her understanding of fellowship with God. The content can be heavy at times, but the rewards of a careful reading should make it worthwhile.

The second section, *Using the Intimacy Journal*, is a brief explanation of how to make this entity useful. It is meant to be concise and highly readable, a sort of reference for future practice.

The third section is composed of the pages themselves. They are designed to provide maximum freedom in fellowship while directing the participant in accord with Biblical patterns.

Lastly, there is an appendix for reference and assistance. The appendix possesses a few extra tools that may help even further with understanding God's Word and then responding to it faithfully.

James Gordon, a minister in Aberdeen, once wrote about the preacher Robert Dale, "Later in life he spoke with wise humility about the failure of human language to do justice to the mysteries of the faith."¹ This statement should be affirmed here before turning the page to even comb the contents superficially. The fact that a holy God would make Himself available to a sinful creature is far too complicated to explain exhaustively at any level, so there will always be something lacking in a work trying to do so. Despite its deficiencies, this journal should at least provide some help in the quest for understanding such a phenomenon.

¹ James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London, 1991), p. 152.

On Communion with God and Intimacy

One of the greatest theologians in recent time, J. I. Packer, has commented on the current priorities of the Church of Jesus Christ, speculating that

Modern Christian books and magazines contain much about Christian doctrine, Christian standards, problems of Christian conduct, techniques of Christian service – but little about the inner realities of fellowship with God. Our sermons contain much about sound doctrine – but little relating between the soul and the Savior. We do not spend much time, alone or together, in dwelling on the wonder of the fact that God and sinners have communion at all; no, we just take that for granted, and give our minds to other matters. Thus we make it plain that communion with God is a small thing to us.¹

Few individuals would offer a persuasive argument disputing this observation, and a quick walk through the shelves of any Christian bookstore would only provide further evidence. Even believers who consider themselves evangelicals, those who are committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as presented in the canon of Scripture, have done little lately in the way of teaching, or providing learning tools, on this topic. To be sure, there are many books on the *spiritual disciplines*, and many works on subjects related to sanctification, but few, if any, that relate a revealing God to a dependent sinner, and a revealing God to that which is necessary for authentic and progressive life transformation. No, Dr. Packer is correct, we place little emphasis on the centrality of fellowship with God.

The practice of communion with God becoming trivial may owe much to the current focus regarding spiritual growth. We live in a society of self-help and twelve-step programs where credible voices are screaming that we can make ourselves better in every aspect of our lives. And we as Christians have listened and applied this idea to the concept of holiness, imagining that if we only work harder, pray more and gossip less, then we can meet the conditions for improvement. The result is a sort of pseudo-holiness that is merely outward – behavior modification, not inward purity.

It follows that God no longer fits into our equations for holiness. Elevating ourselves to agents of change rather than the objects, we have robbed Him of glory by demoting Him from the author of growth to an insignificant bystander, depending on Him less and less for the holiness we are commanded to represent. Sure, we recognize that He is a reality, but He is no longer the potter hard at work with a piece of stubborn mud, only the critic expected to stop and give approval for the work.

Scripture does indeed call on us put the “old man” to death in practice as it has been done in principle, and to quicken the “new man” in the same way (Romans 6:6-14; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 3:1-11). But we must understand these challenges in the light of the entire testimony of Scripture. The Bible is clear throughout that our problem with sin lies not in the things that we do, but foundationally in who we are (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:18-20). We are not good people who commit acts of lawlessness even after our justification through Christ; rather, we are bad people who, though now empowered by the Holy Spirit, still long for the bitter taste of sin. Our thoughts and actions are but reflections of the condition of our souls. Therefore, any attempts at change other than ones directed at the heart are akin to putting bandages on malignant tumors. We should not expect new outward behaviors to magically remedy our problem with our sinful nature.

The Bible is also clear throughout that it is first the revelatory acts of God that produce this inward transformation. It follows, then, that before we ever talk about taking action, whether that be ministry or ethics, we must first understand the dynamics of listening to God and knowing God. Spiritual growth as a process begins and continues with the initiating God – God communicating Himself to us, His creatures. This is demonstrated repeatedly, for instance, in God’s revelation to Israel through various covenants, in God’s revelation through the life of the Incarnate Son, in God’s revelation through the teaching of the apostles, and in God’s revelation through His living Word. In all of these cases, God’s self-disclosure is the primary provision for repentance, which is the essence of real life transformation. More will be said about this later, but for now, let us note that central to our ideas regarding spiritual growth and maturity must be that God actively reveals Himself as He so chooses.

Communion with God, a practice that encompasses these very ideas (listening to God, knowing God, and responding to God), must become the highest priority in the life of a believer. It is out of such communion that human existence finds its fullest realization and expression within this fallen world. By realization, I mean a deeper understanding of purpose, which in the simplest of descriptions is to reflect the glory of God (Isaiah 43:7; Ezekiel 36:21,22; Ephesians 1:12-14; Colossians 1:16). And by expression, I mean an active demonstration of that purpose in all facets of life, from our homes to our places of work to our communities and beyond. Time invested in this matter, in learning and practice, is no waste. It is time invested securely in things of eternal significance.

A Stake in the Ground

CLARIFYING TERMS

In light of its importance, let us now define the phrase that we have been using up until this point, *communion with God*. The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary defines the word *communion* by stating, “1. A sharing, especially of thoughts etc.; fellowship,” and “2. Participation; a sharing in common.”² The word is rooted in the Latin word *communio* meaning “common.” Thus, a simple, secular definition of communion with God might appear like this: Communion with God is the mutual sharing between God and a person through what is common to both of them.

This definition, however, is deficient because it still leaves us with a major unanswered question – what is it exactly that is common to both God and a person that enables sharing between them?

The opening chapters of Genesis set forth a great paradox in the essential composition of humanity, the pinnacle of God’s creation. Genesis 1:27 explains, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” And later it adds in Genesis 2:7, “the Lord formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a

living being.” From these passages we can gather that while the human race was created with something as profane as the dirt from the ground, it was also fashioned in some way after the very likeness of God Himself. Thus, people do indeed share at least something in common with their Creator, albeit perhaps in a limited and finite manner. And this commonality is not discussed in relation to any other created forms of life, making humans quite distinct from other animals and vegetation.

We can now go further in our pursuits by making inferences that apply to our subject. That fact that the Lord has chosen to create us like Him implies two important principles:

1. ***We must know God in order to understand ourselves.*** The famous reformer John Calvin once wrote, “For in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone.”³ Knowing truly the Creator is a precursor to knowing truly the creature.
2. ***We possess the faculties to know God.*** In John 17:3, Jesus says, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” If we are in some ways like God, then our likeness becomes a vehicle for communication, which in turn becomes the vehicle for true knowledge. Francis Shaeffer, one of the intellectual and spiritual giants of this century, wrote, “Furthermore, if we are made in the image of God, we are not confused as to the possibility of communication; and we are not confused concerning the possibility of revelation, for God can reveal propositional truth to me because I am made in his image.”⁴

Although there has been much debate over what is meant by the phrase “image of God,” there is no need to enter into that discussion here with the presentation of an exhaustive definition. It would suffice to simply specify that one of the ways in which

we reflect God is in our capacity to communicate with great complexity. Humans possess a special foundation for communication called the *soul* (the source of intellect, emotion, and will), and the complexity of our souls enables us to receive God's self-revelation, process it, and then respond properly. While animals can also communicate on some level, their communication is merely horizontal, one to another. Again, the famous reformer John Calvin helps us with our present subject when he writes,

For such sense as the lower animals possess goes not beyond the body, or at least not beyond the objects actually presented to it. But the swiftness with which the human mind glances from heaven to earth, scans the secrets of nature, and, after it has embraced all ages, with intellect and memory digests each in its proper order, and reads the future in the past, clearly demonstrates that there lurks in man a something separated from the body. We have intellect by which we are able to conceive of the invisible God and angels – a thing of which body is altogether incapable.⁵

Understanding that we share this complex ability to communicate with God allows us to build a more accurate and coherent definition of communion with God. We shall now agree that *communion with God is first the receiving of God's self-revelation, and then the proper response of our souls to His revelation*. It is two-way communication by means of the intellect, emotions, and will that He has given us for such a purpose. Notice that while there is indeed communication from both parties, there is also a natural order to that communication. Such communion begins with the Creator giving Himself to the creature. As the creature receives the gift, he is then motivated to response. Communion is then dependent not on us, the objects of creation, but on God, the author of creation.

This definition, although the words and syntax are different, is not new. John Owen, a leading Puritan pastor and theologian in the seventeenth century, devoted over two hundred pages of thought to the subject of communion with God. He establishes a definition and description early in his work that resembles ours closely, stating, "Now communion is the mutual sharing of those good things which delight all those in that fellowship... Our communion with God lies in his giving himself to us and our giving

ourselves and all that he requires to him.”⁶ These definitions are both *theocentric*, as their meanings are substantiated from the viewpoint of a Sovereign God and not from the experience of man. We must be committed to understanding communion with God from this position and be wary of the temptation to give it meaning according to what we think it should be or according to the way in which we interpret our own existence.

PRIVATE COMMUNION: INTIMACY

While many people suppose that communion with God relates only to private religious life, it is just as important to acknowledge the public side as well. Public worship, whether it is teaching, preaching, prayer, or praise is not subordinate to private worship. Both have been instituted by God and are integral to Christian spirituality, and both complement one another wherever there is sincerity of heart. Because of Christ’s consistent rebuking of the Pharisees in their public ceremony, and because we all see people in our churches today who probably participate for show, we have a tendency to suppose that the private stuff is what really counts in the eyes of God. If that were true, then why does so much of the New Testament emphasize the role of the Church and then depict that body in public communion with God? Hypocrisy can also be prevalent in private religious life, for as Calvin once wrote, “On all hands there is abundance of ostentatious ceremonies, but sincerity of the heart is rare.”⁷ I wanted to state this here to prevent deception, and although the focus will now be directed strictly to private communion, we need to maintain a high regard for public communion as well.

In place of the phrase *private communion with God*, I would like to begin using the word *intimacy*. Again, etymology might provide a helpful explanation for clarifying this term. According to the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary the word *intimacy* comes from the Latin word *intimus*, a superlative meaning “inmost; most inward.”⁸ It denotes something that is most private and personal. To go even further, we could safely say that the connotation of *intimacy* suggests romance, communication, and a degree of closeness that is most often related only to husband and wife. Due to the fact that the phenomenon we are exploring is real in every sense, it would be misleading if the term used only conjured factual thoughts without a recollection of authentic experience.

Closeness is the very thing that we are after, and the very door that is open to us in Christ. The closeness that we can now experience with God is the very closeness for which we were created, and the word *intimacy* captures this type of closeness well.

Scripture illustrates this principle on some level when it speaks of the value in knowing God (John 17:3; Philippians 3:8). The word used in both of these cases for *know* comes from the Greek word *ginosko*, which has a variety of applications. One of those, however, is used to describe the sexual relationship between a man and woman (Luke 1:34), the most intimate spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship that two humans can experience together. A covenantal relationship with God demands this same type of knowledge, a knowledge that has not been validated by just the intellect but by the emotions and will as well.

We should not minimize the importance of knowing true facts about God for truth is very much the initial layer of any intimate encounter, guarding against idolatry and fantasy. We should affirm with great passion facts about God, like that He is indeed infinite, sovereign, just, and omnipotent. But apart from recognizing those facts in relation to a personal experience with this God, they are all but useless. For example, in Psalm 51:1, King David writes, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.” David recognizes that God is loving and that the character of His love is unfailing. These assertions are true facts, but he is not content to simply let those facts lie dormant. He goes beyond the layer of simple assertion by responding to that truth, crying aloud for a mercy authenticated by God’s unfailing love.

John Owen, the Puritan pastor and theologian mentioned earlier, understood the significance of experience validated by accurate thoughts regarding God. He writes,

What am I the better if I can dispute that Christ is God, but have no sense of sweetness in my heart from hence that he is a God in covenant with my soul? What will it avail me to evince, by testimonies and arguments, that he hath made satisfaction for sin, if, through my unbelief, the wrath of God abideth on me, and I have no experience of my won being made the righteousness of God in him... Will it be any advantage to me, in the issue, to profess and dispute that God worketh the conversion of a sinner by the irresistible grace of his Spirit, if I was never acquainted experimentally with the deadness and utter impotency to good,

that opposition to the law of God, which is in my own soul by nature, (and) with the efficacy of the exceeding greatness of the power of God in quickening, enlightening, and bringing forth the fruits of obedience in me... Let us, then, not think that we are any thing the better for our conviction of the truths of the great doctrines of the gospel... unless we find the power of the truths abiding in our own hearts and have a continual experience of their necessity and excellency in our standing before God and our communion with him.⁹

Intimacy with God is, in effect, knowing God in a more personal way through private communication. It involves understanding Him truthfully in a progressively exhaustive fashion, and then measuring personal experience by such truth. We are not without models of this sort of personal divine relationship throughout redemptive history. In Genesis 15, God reveals Himself and establishes a covenant with Abram. Then, in Genesis 19:27, Abraham returns to a place where he had previously met with the Lord. Throughout the book of Exodus, Moses spends much time in private communion with God. Exodus 34 represents one such episode in which the Lord provides Moses with the second set of stone tablets and instructions for the nation of Israel. Also, many of the Psalms serve as testimonies to David's personal communion with God. In Psalm 5:3, David explains that his mornings are times of such private communication with the Lord. We might go on with these examples for pages and look at such Biblical figures as Job, Isaiah, Daniel, Jonah, Esther, and even the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ. All interacted with God on some private, personal level. Robert Foster, noted Christian author, also recognized this pattern, commenting that

It's the golden thread that ties every great man of God together – from Moses to David Livingston, the prophet Amos to Billy Graham – rich and poor, business man and military personnel. Every man who ever became somebody for God has this at the core of his priorities: time alone with God.¹⁰

Again, we should be aware that there is order to communion with God, and thus to intimacy as we are discussing it. God is certainly portrayed as a friend to those who have entered into relationship with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but He is

not the type of friend to whom we are accustomed to relating. He is not the guy down the street with whom we meet to watch sporting events, or the woman with whom we gather to go shopping. He is an omnipotent King and benevolent Father, infinite and eternally able. We should not impress our experiences with our human relationships onto our ideas of communion with God, thus depriving the Creator of His identity and glory. God is the pursuer in this divine drama, and it is He who woos us to Himself. It is He who initiates intimacy, and He is never bound to do so by us. Thus, intimacy with God is a free act that begins with God, making the act of intimacy a testimony to His mercy and grace in and of itself.

No Other Gospel

COMMUNION FROM UNION

Let's picture intimacy with God as a room in which our hearts are fully delighted, a room in which the architecture and furnishings deliver such peace and satisfaction unknown to us in any other setting. Now, let us imagine that there is a door guarding that room with a lock that is unbreakable. As we approach the door we become quite aware of our innate desires to move through it, being drawn to the room as the result of the overwhelming void we expect it to fill. Fumbling through our pockets we pull out our collection of various keys, their shiny, attractive appearances instilling confidence as we begin to fit each of them into the keyhole. Key after key we raise up only to find that each one is far too short to trigger the lock. Finally, after each of our collection has been tested, we sit down outside of the door, exasperated by failure as even our bests have fallen short. Staring at the door we now become fully aware of our positions as outsiders, completely incapable of entering the room.

Intimacy with God is not a privilege that is open to anyone at any time, or even a privilege that we can earn with those shiny deeds we call good. Because sin entered into the world through Adam, intimacy with God will always be an act involving a holy God associating with a sinful person. This is where things begin to get problematic.

When the Bible speaks of God as being *holy*, it is distinguishing Him from anything that is not perfectly pure, setting Him apart from His fallen creation. Regarding God's holiness, noted author Jerry Bridges writes, "As used in Scripture, holiness describes both the majesty of God and moral perfection of His nature."¹¹ If God is perfectly and truly holy, as He is said to be declared eternally and unceasingly in Revelation 4:8, then it follows that He must also be perfectly free from a fellowship with anything that is less than holy. As Arthur Pink once wrote, "As God's power is the opposite of the native weakness of the creature, as His wisdom is in complete contrast from the least defect of understanding or folly, so His holiness is the very antithesis of all moral blemish or defilement."¹² God's holiness demands that its quality be reflected in the individual searching for His acceptance. In other words, to enter into the room that we previously mentioned we must be holy just as He is holy (Leviticus 11:44).

What does this mean for us? Well, the way in which God has chosen to reveal His holiness and the standard by which we are expected to live is through the supernatural giving of moral law. Moral law is the expressed will of God, and can be found throughout Scripture whenever a command is set forth, in passages, for instance, containing the Ten Commandments, prophetic teachings, apostolic admonitions, and the sermons of Jesus. Jesus' commentary on moral law (and, more specifically the Mosaic Law) teaches furthermore that human responsibility does not consist merely in outward behavior, but in the attitude of the heart. In Mark 12:28-31, when confronted by a teacher of the Mosaic Law regarding the most important commandment, Jesus answers by summarizing the totality of the law in two commandments:

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all you heart and with all your soul and with all you mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

As we reflect on the magnitude and breadth of this passage, the implications are crystallized: To commune with God, we must perfectly love Him with all that we are, and then show as much concern for others as we do for ourselves. This is the only key that can unlock the door to intimacy.

Moral law, though, does more than just lay the path for holiness. It also illuminates failure in such a way that it leads to frustration. Let us assume that someone came to us and gave us a puzzle containing a substantial amount of pieces, all of them separate, completely unworked. We look at the pieces carefully, and then make an observation about what those pieces *are*, broken components that need to be unified. However, we cannot, just by observing the pieces, make a completely accurate observation about what those pieces *should be* because we lack the information to assemble the puzzle. Then, the individual that initially gave us the pieces returns and presents us with the box in which the puzzle came, showing us how the finished puzzle is intended to look. Because we now possess a vision for the project, we begin to work excitedly on the puzzle. A few minutes into the operation, though, we realize that something is terribly wrong – although all the pieces are there, they are warped. Nothing fits, even after a period of manipulation whereby we pound the pieces with added intensity. The excitement we first had when we received the box now turns to anger and frustration, as every time we look at the picture of what the puzzle should be we are only reminded of our failure.

The moral law is great in that it shows us who we should be, providing vision for our lives. However, because it does not actually give us the tools to reach that vision, the moral law exasperates us, driving us to look for assistance outside of ourselves. This is why the apostle Paul says, “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The moral law illuminates our failure, demonstrating our desperate need for grace.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, provides a solution to this seemingly impossible dilemma. The gospel message is the key that opens the door that has been barred and locked by our own sin. One of the most thorough and concise explanations of this message is found in Romans 3:19-26:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

In summary, there are six basic tenets presented in this passage:

1. No one is declared righteous by observing the law.
2. The law makes us conscious of our sin.
3. There is a righteousness apart from the law that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.
4. There is no distinction in persons, for all have sinned and have a need for righteousness.
5. All who put their faith in Jesus Christ are justified freely by God's grace.
6. Jesus Christ completely satisfied the wrath of God towards sin through his life and death.

Through faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross, we are united with him in his life, death, and resurrection. It becomes a complete exchange of records – he takes on our sin and makes payment for it with his own blood, and we take on his righteousness and enjoy the inheritance that he earned by fulfilling the Law without error. We become recipients with nothing to offer. Neither do we receive what we deserve, nor do we

deserve at all what we receive. And, through it all, the wisdom, sovereignty, justice, and grace of God are made truly manifest. John Piper said it best, “The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God.”¹³

Through God’s grace in the person of Jesus Christ, we are united with a holy God. We possess the key now to communion with Him as a privilege won for us by Christ. Our home is no longer beyond the door, but within it.

GROWING UP

When a person enters becomes a Christian through faith and repentance (which always accompanies saving faith), he/she enters into a covenant with God that is unconditional. The word *unconditional* simply implies that this new covenant is not dependent upon the individual for its success, rather, it is dependent solely upon the ability of God to fulfill His promises. Paul writes in Philippians 1:6, “... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Not only has God promised to give us the inheritance that Christ earned, namely, eternal life with him in glory, but He has also promised to recreate in us the part of His original image which was destroyed by sin. The character of that image was manifested in Jesus Christ Himself, thus God is committed to transforming us into the image of His Son. This process by which we are transformed is known as *sanctification*. J. C. Ryle, the bishop of Liverpool in the nineteenth century, wrote regarding this process, “Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when he calls him to be a true believer... Sanctification, then, is the invariable result of that vital union with Christ which true faith gives to a Christian.”¹⁴

We can think of sanctification as a sort of “growing up.” Just as we grow physically into the shape that has been given to us by our parents, so do we grow spiritually into the shape given to us by God. That shape is the profile of perfect obedience or delightful conformity to the expressed will of God. Since communion with

God is a part of the life of a Christian here on earth, we can better understand it by placing it in the larger context of God's work in growing us up.

The story of Jonah gives great insight into how God authors this type of positive change in the lives of His people. It demonstrates, as stated in the introduction of this essay, that Christian growth is an interplay of revelation and response.

A brief synopsis or outline of the first three chapters of Jonah might look something like this:

1. God reveals Himself to Jonah in a command to preach to Nineveh (1:1-2).
2. Jonah responds in rebellion by running from the Lord to a ship bound for Tarshish (1:3).
3. God reveals His discipline for sin by sending a great storm (1:4-16).
4. Jonah responds by throwing himself overboard in order to appease God's wrath (1:12).
5. God reveals His mercy and grace despite sin by saving Jonah with a great fish (1:17).
6. Jonah responds with a prayer of thanksgiving (2:1-9).
7. God reveals Himself to Jonah in a command to preach to Nineveh (3:1-2).
8. Jonah responds in obedience by preaching to Nineveh (3:3-10).

One of the most striking principles that this narrative illustrates is that growing up mimics the gospel perfectly, demonstrating that the gospel is not only the message for conversion but the message for spiritual maturity as well. Just as our sinfulness once kept us from loving and obeying God, so does it still encourage us to run from His expressed will (*see I. and II. above*). Just as we once had to come to terms with the consequences of sin, so must we still be reminded that we deserve punishment for disobedience (*III. and IV.*). Just as our eyes were once lifted to beauty of God's mercy and grace, so must it still captivate us and make grateful our calloused hearts (*V. and VI.*). And just as we once responded to God's grace with trust and obedience, so must we still trust only in Christ for holiness and respond obediently to His grace (*VII. and VIII.*).

Growing up is simply taking hold of the gospel with the entirety of our souls – mind, heart, and will. It is not a message that we ever outgrow, nor is it a message that we ever fully grasp. It is slippery, not because it is a muddy message, but because we have muddy hands. The Apostle Paul writes a response to those who were not “acting in line with the truth of the gospel” in his letter to the Galatians,

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

The imagery here is powerful: If obedience is not a grateful response to God’s grace, recognizing all the while that it is His Spirit enabling us, it is similar to walking up to Christ on the cross, naked and struggling for breath, looking him in the eye and saying, “That’s nice of you, but it’s not enough for me.” We must learn to pattern intimacy with God, like all things in our lives, according to the gospel whereby God’s grace is the centerpiece of all our activities.

The Dynamics of Intimacy

Now that we know what *communion with God* and *intimacy with God* are, and that they depend on and should be patterned after the gospel, we can more fully explore the act of intimacy itself in principle and practice.

We must avoid a couple of extremes when dealing with this subject. The first involves advocating a pattern for spirituality that is not set forth in Scripture. We must not speak authoritatively where the Bible does not speak authoritatively. For instance, many people might suggest that the morning is the best time to spend with God as many biblical characters do indeed spend time with God in the morning. But to say that it is the *best* time with which to spend with God is only an opinion, and sinful if we attempt to impose it on other people as doctrine. The other extreme is ignoring any pattern for

spirituality because the Bible does not devote an explicit book or chapter particularly for this subject. The Bible has much to say about our spiritual lives, and just because it does not speak explicitly *to* the subject of intimacy does not mean that it does not speak explicitly *for* the act of intimacy. Regarding these two extremes, R.C. Sproul once warned,

... we have to be careful not to impose upon the Christian community a set of pattern of Bible study or prayer. We can't set up personal systems of devotion as tests of spirituality for other people. This has done a lot of harm to people who don't function well in a highly structured approach to prayer and study.

On the other hand, some of us are so undisciplined that we don't give adequate attention to the serious matter of prayer and the study of Scripture. These are our duties as Christian, and it's also our pleasure as Christians to spend time with God.¹⁵

INTIMACY IN PRINCIPLE

We should begin by employing certain known truths in order to present a construct for intimacy with God. Intimacy with God is built around two fundamental doctrines that we have already discussed briefly, so it follows that we should now expand our understanding of those doctrines to lay the foundation for our paths.

The first doctrine is the doctrine of *revelation*. This doctrine is essential to intimacy as it demonstrates the means for knowing God more personally. As J. I. Packer has written, "The doctrine of revelation is grounded upon the fact that God made man in his own image, to know, love, worship, serve, and so glorify him."¹⁶ The theologian Bernard Ramm writes, concerning the centrality of this doctrine to our faith, "If there were no revelation there would be no possibility of the knowledge of God, for according to our previous metaphor, there would be no autobiography of God. With the loss of revelation would also proceed *pari pasu* the loss of the foundations of Christian piety and of the Christian Church."¹⁷ And the noted philosopher and theologian Herman Bavinck strongly stated, "with the reality of revelation, therefore, Christianity stands or falls."¹⁸

Since intimacy with God is a matter of personal communication, we must understand how it is that God communicates. Theologians have long made a distinction between two different types of revelation, *general revelation* and *special revelation*. *General revelation* is basically that which God reveals to all men, for instance, in His creation of the world. Romans 1:20 says plainly, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what was made, so that men are without excuse.” Though we may know something of God from nature, Paul goes on to write that our sinfulness distorts this knowledge and leads us to idol worship as opposed to true worship. Where general revelation is lacking because of our sinfulness, *special revelation* is sufficient for our sinfulness. *Special revelation* is the knowledge of God modified for sinful people. Throughout history, since the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, God has provided special revelation to redeem and restore people to trust, honor, love and worship Him. This is the type of revelation that concerns our subject of intimacy.

We have previously said that intimacy with God must be patterned after the gospel. Therefore, just as we had nothing to offer God in exchange for our redemption through the blood of Christ, so must we not assume that we have anything to offer God in exchange for His self-revelation. God is not bound by our actions to reveal Himself, as if we might somehow force Him to talk. Instead, we must view revelation for what it is – another gracious gift from the hand of God which we apprehend through faith enabled by the Spirit. Again, the prominent teacher Bernard Hamm comments, “Special revelation possesses the same contours as those of redemption (gospel). It commences in the grace and glory of God; it is a free and gracious movement towards man; and it terminates upon man in an authentic manner.”¹⁹

Besides a picture of the gospel, the doctrine of revelation also demonstrates that we have a *personal* Creator, a transcendent Someone who acts towards us as a person might act, a Someone who loves, is jealous, becomes angry, forgives, etc. Revelation casts light on the source of God’s personality in the idea of God as Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The tri-unity of God illustrates that God is personal within His very nature, that relationship exists in the very Being of God and not only through His actions toward us. The doctrine of the Trinity is absolutely vital to our Christian faith. It invites

us into a relationship with a God who is relational at His core. It invites us into the Presence of a God who has created us in His own image, as relational people. So, when we are faced with hard times our hearts are not lifted to some inactive, uncaring deity who stands aloof from his creation. Rather, our hearts are given to the infinite personal God – the God who still speaks, who still moves, who still comforts, and who will forever care.

The second doctrine that is absolutely vital to our understanding of intimacy with God is the doctrine of *response*. Responding to God is simply our communication back to Him. God reveals Himself to invoke a response in our souls. To recap, our souls are the core of who we are – our intellects, emotions, and wills. As God reveals Himself we should be moved in all of these areas to worship and obey Him. Our minds should respond to God's revelation by thinking more accurate thoughts about Him, by apprehending the information He is passing down. Our emotions should then be stirred accordingly, for instance, to great joy regarding His promises and work in our lives and/or to great sorrow over our own unfaithfulness. Lastly, our wills should answer with the desire to serve and obey Him with the lifestyles we are leading.

The foundation of responding to God is, as is the foundation of receiving God's revelation, faith and trust in Him. Packer describes faith well, observing, "Not merely is faith, as an activity, the instrument whereby a sinner lays hold of Christ and so obtains all the promised benefits, but also, as a faculty, faith is, as we saw, the organ of that knowledge of and fellowship with God from which man fell and to which redemption restores him."²⁰ Active faith is the vehicle by which God's grace in redemption and revelation is poured out onto us. It is also the vehicle that enables us to respond to Him properly in worship and obedience.

INTIMACY IN PRACTICE

How does intimacy with God become a practical part of our lives? Are there any patterns in Scripture that detail how revelation and response interact, and can those patterns be applied to us today?

These are the questions that we should be asking ourselves at this point in our study, and the questions that we will now attempt to answer.

In order to examine the practice of intimacy, we need a model. And there is no better character to provide that model than the man who often talked with God at some length, bearing the burden of mediating for an entire nation. Moses was chosen by God to do many things, among them, to lead Israel out of Egyptian captivity, establish a theocentric society, and be his messenger to His chosen people. This last honor carried with it the responsibility of meeting with God privately in order to know the Deity he was serving, and to know the nature of that service by receiving God's expressed will.

In chapter 34 of Exodus, we receive an account of an episode in which Moses is meeting with God on a private level. Although his circumstances are much different than are ours today, we can gather some very practical information concerning the subjects of revelation and response.

The first thing that happens after Moses ascends the mountain to be alone with God is that he *receives revelation from God*. The text, Exodus 34:5-7, says,

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

God's revelation at this point in the meeting concerns His character, that is, the nature of who He is. This is one of the primary purposes of revelation, to express in truth the character of God. And though the Bible states explicitly that God cannot be comprehended in full (Job 36:26), we see here that we can know things about God especially as they relate to His dealings with us. We understand God's character through His attributes and His attributes through the way in which Scripture declares he deals with His creation.

In the practice of intimacy, the first step is receiving God's revelation. Knowing God is the first priority in the practice of intimacy. Since God has chosen to "inscripturate" His revelation within the medium of language, as presented in the Old and New Testaments, receiving God's revelation today is different than the way Moses received God's revelation many years ago. We need no longer wait for an audible voice, for God has given us access to His voice in the pages of Scripture whenever we want it. However, there are certain challenges that our finite minds face when receiving God's revelation in our interaction with Biblical texts. Cultural differences and our own faulty presuppositions pose problems for interpreting God's revelation in our lives today, so we must give careful attention to establishing the true meaning of those texts that we might know Him in truth.

God's revelation, however, is not only for knowledge regarding His character. Later in the passage, verses 10-27, we see that God also reveals His expressed will in His time alone with Moses. We not only know God through His actions and attributes, but we know Him also as we understand more about His will for our lives and as we endeavor by faith to follow that will. Receiving God's revelation involves knowing more about His attributes, His will, and His creation, which all point us back to His character.

The second major occurrence in this episode is that Moses *worships God as a response to God's revelation*. Exodus 34:8-9 points out,

Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. "O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes," he said, "then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.

Moses' first response to God's revelation is a response of worship. He falls to the ground, signifying his heart to elevate God out of personal decrease. When we establish meaning in our attempts to receive God's revelation in Scripture, that meaning always calls for a response of worship. There is nothing in Scripture that is not there to be applied in our lives, and there is no application of Truth that is not meant for worship. Worship is the natural response to knowing God in truth.

Worship can be many things for us today, as the term is a hard one to practically get our arms around. It is the process by which we ascribe worth to an object that deserves such ascription. There are several activities that have been traditionally associated with worship, namely prayer, praise, obedience, and art. Worship, however, has little to do with the activity and much to do with the object and our genuine loving response to it, or in this case, Him. Worship is not something we sort of ‘muster up’ because we know we should, rather, it is the manifestation of knowing God personally.

The last thing we should note in this narrative is another type of response that actually includes others outside of the intimate encounter. Exodus 34:29-32 records,

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had not spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

Knowing God directs our attention to two places, one, the throne of God in heaven, the other, the condition of man on earth. After Moses receives God’s revelation, responds in worship, he then directs his attention to the people around him. Responding to God faithfully involves loving Him with all that we are, and loving others as we do ourselves. Intimacy is not only a time of worship, but a time of preparation for the engagement of the suffering world.



There are many different ways, again, in which we share our Lord and lives with others. Some of these include teaching and communicating, serving, and intercessory prayer. Theology, that is, the knowledge of God, does not stop at doxology, that is, the worship of God. Rather, it compels us to move towards ministry, that is, the sharing of God. Sure, we can say that ministry is just another form of doxology, but the category in which it falls is not as important as the priority it should have in our lives as a response to knowing God.



CONCLUSION

Communion with God, receiving God's self-revelation and then responding properly, must become the priority of our lives as believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its private form, intimacy, is a necessary supplement to its public form, and should be practiced with sincerity and fervor, as a privilege won through redemption and as a responsibility modeled after the pattern of redemption. Intimacy should be considered in the larger context of sanctification, whereby the authority and initiative rest with God, leaving all good results reckoned to Him as a product of His free grace and mercy. We receive God's grace and His revelation through faith enabled by the Holy Spirit, and respond as faith leads us in worship and ministry.

Our souls yearn for fellowship with our Creator, to come to a greater realization of His love for us. The door to that fellowship is open to us in Christ, and our yearning has a name that we can now know.



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- ¹ J. I. Packer, *The Practice of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL), p. 215-216.
- ² Joyce M. Hawkins and Robert Allen, editors, *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (New York, 1991), p. 295.
- ³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, reprinted 1995), p. 42.
- ⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*, from *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer Volume 2* (Wheaton, 1982), p.32.
- ⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, reprinted 1995), p. 161.
- ⁶ John Owen, *Communion with God*, abridged and paraphrased by R.J.K. Law (Carlisle, 1991), p. 3.
- ⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, reprinted, 1995), p.42
- ⁸ Joyce M. Hawkins and Robert Allen, editors, *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (New York, 1991), p. 766.
- ⁹ John Owen *Communion with God*, abridged and paraphrased by R.J.K. Law (Carlisle, 1991), p. 134.
- ¹⁰ Robert Foster, *Seven Minutes with God* (Colorado Springs, 1988) p. 7.
- ¹¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, 1978), p. 22.
- ¹² Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, reprinted 1975), p. 41.
- ¹³ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, 1986), p. 59.
- ¹⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Cambridge, reprinted 1977), p. 16-17.
- ¹⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Now That's a Good Question* (Wheaton, 1996), p. 228.
- ¹⁶ J. I. Packer, *Revelation and inspiration*, from *The J.I. Packer Collection* edited by Alister McGrath (Downers Grove, 1999), p. 22.
- ¹⁷ Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, 1961), p. 19.
- ¹⁸ Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, 1953), p. 20.
- ¹⁹ Bernard Hamm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, 1961), p. 32.
- ²⁰ J. I. Packer, *Revelation and inspiration*, from *The J.I. Packer Collection* edited by Alister McGrath (Downers Grove, 1999), p. 25.

Using the Intimacy Journal

The Purpose of the Journal

Let me begin here by saying that you do not need this journal to establish intimacy with God. In fact, my hope would be that this particular journal would slowly wean you off itself, encouraging you to mimic its order naturally whenever you are reading Scripture or hearing it preached from the pulpit. Its purpose is simple and twofold: to provide you with direction in your private communion with God and to give you space so that you can keep a record of those times with Him. The following two paragraphs are a brief explanation of each of these objectives.

DIRECTING

The first purpose of the journal pages is to provide you with a learning tool to help as you begin to process and respond to God's Word. These pages are somewhat like a compass, pointing you in the general direction of where you need to be without sacrificing your individuality in getting there. Intimacy with God should not be some generic process whereby you follow exactly the patterns of others. Since God has created you with a unique personality, you should enjoy the freedom of using that uniqueness when you are communicating with Him. However, there are a few general principles that apply universally to all people regardless of personality, like the fact that God's truth leads us to worship, obey, and share Him. These universal principles provide the order and structure for the journal pages.

RECORDING

Arthur Bennett, in his preface to the collection of Puritan prayers and devotions gathered in the compilation *The Valley of Vision*, wrote, "Many of those who held the doctrines of grace wrote down a record of God's intimate dealings with their souls, not with an eye to publication, but, as in David Brainerd's case, to test their spiritual growth,

and to encourage themselves by their re-perusal in times of low spiritual fervor.”¹ In Psalm 77:11-12, the psalmist writes, “I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.” There is a great deal of value in recording aspects of your spiritual life as it helps you to recognize the blessings and benefits the Lord has provided, as well as to remember His goodness and grace in times of toil and struggle. The journal pages are meant to help as you begin writing an autobiography of your spiritual life.

Know. Worship. Share.

The journal pages are arranged in such a way as to promote a general order in your intimacy with God. This is a simple systematic approach modeled after Biblical patterns of revelation and response. The next few paragraphs will succinctly introduce you to this system and the various items that might fall under each of the headings.

KNOW

This section is dedicated to helping you establish the meaning of a particular text, thus helping you in understanding God’s revelation. Knowing God comes first because worship and ministry are founded upon the accuracy of this knowledge.

When interacting with a text, the most important thing is just to read it carefully and repetitively. Make observations about the characters, structure, and language of the text, as well as ask questions about the text’s main theme. While you should spend much of your time studying on your own, utilize also commentaries and Bible dictionaries that will help you with background information, contextual issues, and interpretation. After you are done making notes, attempt to transform your observations into principles that apply universally, regardless of time or culture.

In Appendix 3 you will find some contextual stickers to help guide you when you are attempting to place the text in its proper context. Just peel them off and attach them

¹ Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision* (Edinburgh, 1975), preface.

to your journal pages. Also, in Appendix 2 there is a genre reference guide to help you as you work with the various Biblical genres.

WORSHIP

Worship is the right response to knowing God, and so subsequently it is the next section in the order of intimacy with God. Worship is associated with the application of God's truth in such a way that it causes you to fix your eyes on Him, which then makes you quite aware of your own sin.

Under this heading, take time to meditate on what you just learned. Meditation is simply the thoughtful and prayerful consideration of God's Word whereby you recognize your complete dependence on Him. You might want to record a hymn of adoration, a prayer of repentance, or even a testimony of thanksgiving. Attempt to move what you just learned from your mind to your heart.

In Appendix 1 you will find some helpful hymns, prayers, and poems that you can identify with when worshipping God. You do not always have to create your own words as it can be helpful to sometimes identify with the words of others.

SHARE

The last section is devoted to helping you share what you have learned with others. As we mentioned earlier, the knowledge of God first lifts our eyes to His throne in heaven, and then bends our eyes to the condition of people on earth. Ministry, the edification of others, should be a priority resulting from your time with God.

In this last section, it is helpful to list ways in which you can exercise your faith. Primary ways of exercising faith include teaching, service, and intercessory prayer. Teaching simply denotes sharing your faith through language, whether written or spoken. Service uses the medium of actions in order to communicate spiritual truths. Intercessory prayer is petitioning God on behalf of another person, and is one of the greatest ways to demonstrate concern for others. Take time to record your plans in this space, and hold yourself accountable for following through on those intentions.

CONCLUSION

This journal is only a tool meant to guide you and to provide you with space to record your time alone with God. Be careful that it does not turn into a yardstick by which you attempt to measure your spiritual growth, as if completing a specific set of activities indicates growth. If by some chance you notice that you are acknowledging it as the author of change in your life, then it has become useless to you, and even worse, a burden. Remember always that you are desperate, unable to restore yourself, and that it is only by the grace of God that you are genuinely changed.

Intimacy *journal*

Date:

scripture

"... so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped."

Know *establish meaning*

study

The construction of meaning through inductive and deductive means; We recognize features such as context, grammatical relationships, word meanings, literary genres, and background information, piecing them all together to set forth principles which apply in a universal sense; The goal here is to interpret the text (what does it mean?), which lays the foundation for applying Truth in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Worship *elevate and enjoy God*

meditation.

Creative and re-creative responses to God's revelation; We elevate God when we recognize the discrepancy between us and Him – sin confessed and His grace asserted; We enjoy God when we see Him as the fulfillment of our greatest need and desire; Meditation is the prayerful contemplation of God's Word; What is this passage telling me about Him, and then about myself?

Share *edify others*

The exercise of faith and love in the lives of others; Some primary ways of sharing are intercessory prayer, teaching, and service.

Appendix I

Historic Hymns, Prayers, and Poems

*Say
what
principle
of selection
is guiding
you
here?*

HISTORIC HYMNS

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (Robert Robinson, 1758)

Come, Thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise His name – I'm fixed upon it – Name of God's redeeming love.

Hitherto Thy love has blest me, Thou has bro't me to this place;
And I know Thy hand will bring me safely home by Thy good grace.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger, bought me with His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above.

Amazing Grace (John Newton, 1779)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Holy, Holy, Holy (Reginald Heber, 1826)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the crystal sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who wast, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Tho the darkness hide Thee,
Tho the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy! There is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

When I survey the Wondrous Cross (Isaac Watts, 1707)

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose such a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spread o'er his body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Be Thou My Vision (Anonymous Irish poem, c. 8th century; trans. Mary Byrne)

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought, by day and by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son,
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High king of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High king of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heav'n's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

HISTORIC PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 51 (A prayer of David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;
According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
Wash all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
So that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost
place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than
snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain
me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.
Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing
of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in
burnt offerings.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you
will not despise.
In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then
bulls will be offered on your altar.

Glory be to God (As found in *The Book of Common Prayer*)

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to
thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father
Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy on us.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy on us.
For thou only art holy, thou alone art the Lord, thou alone, O Christ, with the
Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The next five prayers are prayers from various Puritan ministers, as recorded in the book, *The Valley of Vision*.¹

The Trinity

Three in one, one in three, God of my salvation,
Heavenly Father, blessed Son, eternal Spirit,
I adore thee as one Being, one Essence, one God in three distinct Persons,
For bringing sinners to thy knowledge and to thy kingdom.
O Father, thou hast loved me and sent Jesus to redeem me;
O Jesus, thou hast loved me and assumed my nature, shed thine own blood to
wash away my sins, wrought righteousness to cover my unworthiness;
O Holy Spirit, thou hast loved me and entered my heart, implanted there eternal
life, revealed to me the glories of Jesus.
Three persons and one God, I bless and praise thee,
For love so unmerited, so unspeakable, so wondrous,
So mighty to save the lost and raise them to glory.
O Father, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast given me to Jesus, to be
his sheep, jewel, portion;
O Jesus, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast accepted, espoused, bound
me;
O Holy Spirit, I thank thee that in fullness of grace thou hast exhibited Jesus as
my salvation, implanted faith within me, subdued my stubborn heart,
made me one with him for ever.
O Father, thou art enthroned to hear my prayers,
O Jesus, thy hand is outstretched to take my petitions,
O Holy Spirit, thou art willing to help my infirmities, to show me my need, to
supply words, to pray within me, to strengthen me that I faint not in
supplication.
O Triune God, who commandeth the universe,
Thou hast commanded me to ask for those things that concern thy kingdom and
my soul.
Let me live and pray as one baptized into the threefold Name. Amen.

Christ is All

O Lover to the uttermost,
May I read the meltings of thy heart to me,
In the manger of thy birth,
In the garden of thy agony,
In the cross of thy suffering,
In the tomb of thy resurrection,
In the heaven of thy intercession.
Bold in this thought I defy my adversary,
Tread down his temptations,

Resist his schemings,
Renounce the world,
Am valiant for truth.
Deepen in me a sense of my holy relationship to thee,
As spiritual bridegroom,
As Jehovah's fellow,
As sinners' friend.
I think of thy glory and my vileness,
Thy majesty and meanness,
Thy beauty and my deformity,
Thy purity and my filth,
Thy righteousness and my iniquity.
Thou hast loved me everlastingly, unchangeably,
May I love thee as I am loved;
Thou hast given thyself for me,
May I give myself to thee;
Thou hast died for me,
May I live to thee in every moment of my time, in every movement of my
mind, in every pulse of my heart.
May I never dally with the world and its allurements,
But walk by thy side,
Listen to thy voice,
Be clothed with thy graces, and adorned with thy righteousness.

Yet I Sin

Eternal Father,
Thou art good beyond all thought,
But I am vile, wretched, miserable, blind;
My lips are ready to confess, but my heart is slow to feel, and my ways reluctant
to amend.
I bring my soul to thee; break it, wound it, bend it, mold it.
Unmask to me sin's deformity, that I may hate it, abhor it, flee from it.
My faculties have been a weapon of revolt against thee;
As a rebel I have misused my strength, and served the foul adversary of thy
kingdom.
Give me grace to bewail my insensate folly,
Grant me to know that they way of transgressors is hard, that evil paths are
wretched paths, that to depart from thee is to lose all good.
I have seen the purity and beauty of thy perfect law
The happiness of those in whose heart it reigns,
The calm dignity of the walk to which it calls,
Yet I daily violate and condemn its precepts.
Thy loving Spirit strives within me,
Brings me Scripture warnings,

Speaks in startling providences,
Allures by secret whispers,
Yet I choose devices and desires to my own hurt, impiously resent, grieve,
and provoke him to abandon me.
All these sins I mourn, lament, and for them cry pardon.
Work in me more profound and abiding repentance;
Give me the fullness of a godly grief that trembles and fears,
Yet ever trusts and loves,
Which is ever powerful, and ever confident;
Grant that through the tears of repentance I may see more clearly the
brightness and glories of the saving cross.

Spiritual Growth

O Thou Most High,
In the way of thy appointment I am waiting for thee,
My desire is to thy name, my mind to remembrance of thee.
I am a sinner, but not insensible of my state.
My iniquities are great and numberless,
But thou art adequate to my relief, for thou art rich in mercy;
The blood of thy Son can cleanse from all sin;
The agency of thy Spirit can subdue my most powerful lusts.
Give me a tender, wakeful conscience that can smite and torment me when I sin.
May I be consistent in conversation and conduct, the same alone as in company,
In prosperity and adversity, accepting all thy commandments as right, and hating
every false way.
May I never be satisfied with my present spiritual progress,
But to faith add virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness,
charity.
May I never neglect what is necessary to constitute Christian character, and
needful to complete it.
May I cultivate the expedient, develop the lovely, adorn the gospel, recommend
the religion of Jesus, accommodate myself to thy providence.
Keep me from sinking or sinning in the evil day;
Help me to carry into ordinary life portions of divine truth and use them on
suitable occasions, so that its doctrines may inform, its warnings caution,
its rules guide, its promises comfort me.

Humility in Service

Mighty God,
I humble myself for faculties misused, opportunities neglected, words ill-advised,
I repent of my folly and inconsiderate ways, my broken resolutions, untrue
service, my backsliding steps, my vain thoughts.

O bury my sins in the ocean of Jesus' blood and let no evil result from my fretful
temper, unseemly behavior, provoking pettiness.
If by unkindness I have wounded or hurt another, do thou pour in the balm of
heavenly consolation;
If I have turned coldly from need, misery, grief, do not in just anger forsake me;
If I have withheld relief from penury and pain, do not withhold thy gracious
bounty from me.
If I have shunned those who have offended me, keep open the door of thy heart to
my need.
Fill me with an over-flowing ocean of compassion, the reign of love my motive,
the law of love my rule.
O thou God of all grace, make me more thankful, more humble;
Inspire me with a deep sense of my unworthiness arising from the depravity of my
nature, my omitted duties, my unimproved advantages, thy commands
violated by me.
With all my calls to gratitude and joy may I remember that I have reason for
sorrow and humiliation;
O give me repentance unto life;
Cement my oneness with my blessed Lord,
That faith may adhere to him more immovably,
That love may entwine itself round him more tightly,
That his spirit may pervade every fiber of my being.
Then send me out to make him known to my fellow-men.

HISTORIC POEMS

From **Holy Sonnets** (John Donne)

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to'another due,
Labor to'admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly'I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, 'untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you'enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Love (III) (George Herbert)

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
 Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 "Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
 "My dear, then I will serve."
"You must it down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
 So I did sit and eat.

¹ Arthur Bennett, editor, *The Valley of Vision: A collection of Puritan prayers and devotions* (Edinburgh, 1975), p. 3, 18, 70, 109, 180.

Appendix 2

Genre Reference

1. NARRATIVE: A narrative is a story, its meaning being found in the text as a whole rather than in the text's isolated units. With a narrative, the reader should give careful attention to the plot, characters, and the setting, remembering that its main purpose is to relate the account of an event or series of events. Examples of narratives include the four Gospels, Acts, Exodus, and Nehemiah.
2. POETRY: Poetry is mostly used in Biblical literature for worship. Its focus is usually on human experience, but it also declares great truths about God. With poetry, the reader should look for models of worship, how believers express their deepest joys and sorrows. Examples of poetry include Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and passages from Job.
3. WISDOM: Wisdom literature in the Bible is found in books such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and in some passages from Job. One of their primary purposes is to instruct the reader on how to make wise choices in normal, daily tasks. Wisdom literature is primarily geared towards practical, skillful living.
4. PROPHECY: Prophecy is a form of Biblical literature in which a particular individual is called by God to relate a specific message. Prophecy warns its readers against the consequences of disobedience, as well as informing them about the rewards for obedience. The reader should give careful attention to historical context when studying this particular genre. Prophecy can be found in books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, and even a portion of the New Testament Gospels.
5. PARABLE: A parable is a simple story used to communicate a spiritual truth or moral lesson. Jesus used parables often throughout the New Testament Gospels to teach his hearers about such matters as the kingdom of God, the hearts of men, and the character of God. When studying a parable, the reader should be wary of trying to read too deeply into the analogy as there are usually only a few main points that parables are meant to communicate.

6. EPISTLE: An epistle is a letter used in the New Testament to aid in the establishment and edification of the Church. Epistles can be highly doctrinal and also highly practical, challenging the mind, heart, and will. The reader should give careful attention to background and contextual information as they play a huge role in the interpretation of epistles. The books of Romans, Galatians, James, Titus, and 1 John are just some of the ones falling under this category.
7. APOCALYPTIC: This is an exciting genre that uses many symbols and images to communicate a vision that the author has had regarding future events. The book of Revelation and many passages in Daniel provide examples of this genre. Apocalyptic literature requires much of its readers, and even today there is a great deal of debate raging over what most of this literature means. The reader should inquire about what insights these texts provide regarding God's final victory, and how the certainty of the future compels faithfulness and obedience in the present.

Appendix 3

Contextual Stickers

GENRE	AUTHOR	HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

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GENRE	AUTHOR	HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Chad Scruggs
C. S. Senior Project
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Annotated Bibliography

Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology, (1958), 29-99, 202-210.

Systematic approach to Reformed Protestant theology. Provides in-depth look at major historical, orthodox Christian doctrines emphasizing the centrality of Scripture in the development of those doctrines. Also provides historical views on various components of theology.

Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion, (translation and reprint, 1995), 27-181.

Theological treatise on the tenants of the Reformed Protestant faith, with special emphasis on the authority of Scripture for the edification of the Church, justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, the necessity of the knowledge of God, and the condition of man.

Edwards, Jonathan. Religious Affections, (reprint, 1984), 3-206.

Reprint of Edward's classic written in the eighteenth century. Identifies characteristics of true revival personally and communally. Emphasizes the role of human affections in true religion, and the necessity of those affections to be grounded in Truth.

Eyre, Stephen. Drawing Close to God, (1995), 9-116.

Explains the dynamics of a Quiet Time with an emphasis on the spiritual disciplines of reading, studying, meditation, and prayer. Raises and answers many basic questions regarding Quiet Times. Includes also some devotional exercises that allow the reader to apply the principles being advocated.

Fee, Gordon. Listening to the Spirit in the Text, (2000), 3-32.

Addresses a range of pertinent issues connected with the Gospel and the life of the Church. Advocates the importance of spirituality being the end to which exegesis points, and how the Trinity applies to Christian life. Discusses also the relevance of Paul's spirituality.

Ferguson, Sinclair. John Owen on the Christian Life, (1987), 20-98.

Review of John Owen, Puritan pastor and theologian, and his thoughts regarding important doctrines such as sanctification, communion, and grace. Sorts and summarizes Owen's complete works, which exist in a sixteen volume form.

Fuller, Daniel. The Unity of the Bible, (1992) 21-480.

Shows God's unfolding plan for humanity in reference to the progressive revelation of the Bible, Old and New Testaments. Asserts that the purpose of God throughout, from creation to redemption and beyond, is the manifestation of His own glory. Also

gives special insight into the necessary work of God being Trinity as opposed to the free work of God creating.

Gordon, James. Evangelical Spirituality, (1991), 1-331.

Analyzes the roots and major figures of Evangelical spirituality, from men such as John Wesley to John Stott. Discusses vital subjects like sanctification, faith, discipline, conflict, prayer, and Scripture in relation to the growing spiritual life. Maintains that there is no simple pattern for Evangelical spirituality, just common themes.

King, David. "The Affective Spirituality of John Owen" *Evangelical Quarterly* 68.3 (1996), 223-233.

Evaluation of the spirituality of seventeenth century Puritan pastor and theologian, John Owen. Owen's spirituality is described as reformed and scriptural, rationalistic and affective, distancing him from the pietist movement.

McCartney, Dan and Clayton, Charles. Let the Reader Understand, (1994), 13-292.

Provides a scholarly, reformed guide to interpreting and applying the Bible. Discusses such topics as truth, language, sin, presuppositions, and the Church, relating them all to Biblical interpretation. Deals also extensively with the different Biblical genres, and how to study contextually.

Miller, Paul. "Spirituality, Integrity and Competence: Essentials of Ministry in Richard Baxter's *Reformed Pastor*" *Evangelical Quarterly* 69.4 (1997), 333-342.

Review of Richard's Baxter's book on pastoral ministry. Calls to mind the importance of active spirituality (communion with God) in the Puritan tradition, as well as competence and integrity.

Owen, John. Thinking Spiritually, (reprint, 1989), 13-95.

Discusses a series of topics related to spirituality with special emphasis on cultivating a spiritual mind. Basically, this is a treatise regarding the importance of spiritual maturity.

Owen, John. Communion with God, Abridgement R.J.K. Law, (1991), 1-209.

Offers theological insight into the practice of communion with God. Special focus is given to the Triune nature of the Godhead, and to the responsibility of communing with all three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Scriptural references are plentiful throughout.

Packer, J.I. "Revelation and inspiration" *The J.I. Packer Collection*, edited by Alister McGrath, (1954), 17-34.

Summarizes two of the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, revelation and inspiration. Major premise is that Scripture is the fundamental way in which the Church receives the revelation of God today, and that Scripture is sufficient to lead the Church unto her purpose, holiness.

Packer, J.I. "On Knowing God" *The J.I. Packer Collection*, edited by Alister McGrath, (1975), 137-148.

Asserts that knowing God is the primary responsibility of every human being, and that the knowledge of God causes a person to respond in love, trust, worship, and obedience. Declares that knowing God consists of three components: the apprehension of what God is; the application to ourselves of what God is and what God gives; and the adoration of God as the one who gives these gifts.

Packer, J.I. Knowing God, (1973), 17-279.

Distinguishes between knowing about God and knowing God. Provides practical insight into a life of knowing and worshipping God, and then describes the God of both the Old and New Testaments. Emphasis on the marriage between theology and spirituality.

Packer, J.I. A Quest for Godliness, (1990), 11-327.

Informs by utilizing the Puritan vision for life and applying to the Church today. Relates relevance of major Puritan theological thought, attaching it to their desire to bring all things under the lordship of Christ unto the glory of God. Introduces John Owen's thoughts on communion with God, stating that this indeed was the end to which Puritan theology pointed.

Pink, Arthur. The Attributes of God, (reprinted, 1975), 9-92

Maintains that a spiritual and saving knowledge of God is the greatest need of every creature, and that such a knowledge comes from a clear mental apprehension of God's attributes as revealed throughout Scripture. Lists and explains many of those attributes, such as holiness, sovereignty, love, power, faithfulness, grace, wrath, and solitariness.

Piper, John. Desiring God, (1986), 9-95.

States that all Christians are required to be true hedonists, because giving glory to God should be our greatest delight. Explains thesis in light of God's total plan in redemption and His ultimate end in creation, to bring glory to Himself. Utilizes the theological assertions of Jonathan Edwards often to provide credibility for his thesis as well as a myriad of verses found in Scripture.

Parker, David. "Evangelical Spirituality Reviewed" *Evangelical Quarterly* 63:(1991), 123-148.

Analyzes the theology and structure of evangelical spirituality, reviewing its present practices in the light of contemporary trends. Some of the major trends that he discusses include the Quiet Time, retreats, service, and discipline. Concludes that the weakness of evangelical spirituality is in its absence of a recognized unified system of spiritual practice.

Ramm, Bernard. Special Revelation and the Word of God, (1961), 13-69.

Writes about the contemporary problem of revelation in response to the theology presented by Karl Barth. Asserts the centrality of revelation to the understanding of God and thus to the health of the Church. Outlines the modalities and products of *special revelation*.

Russell, Walt. Playing with Fire, (2000), 280.

Examines the Bible's role in spiritual formation, and in the igniting of change in the soul. Provides tools to study and meditate properly on different styles of biblical writing. Discusses both the informational and devotional sides to engaging Scripture, and advocates a balance of both.

Schaeffer, Francis. Genesis in Space and Time, (1972), 1-59.

Discusses the philosophy of the book of Genesis and its implications for modern man. Underlines the importance of being created in the image of God and how that image applies to life.

Sproul, R.C. Now, That's a Good Question, (1996), 223-262.

Answers specific questions regarding the growing spiritual life of the Christian. Answers are reformed in their theological perspective. Relates need for consistent intake of Scripture and prayer, but also discusses problems of imposing a specific pattern for the practice of those disciplines.

Stuart, Streeter. "A New Testament Perspective on Worship" *Evangelical Quarterly* 68.3 (1996), 209-221.

Explains Old Testament and especially New Testament perspectives on worship. Asserts the primacy of text in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, where Jesus describes the essentials components of worship as "spirit and truth."