

We are revisiting a subject that needs to be at the forefront of everyone's mind if you will, every person's life, for everyone who desires a meaningful and close relationship with God, and that has to do with the subject of prayer. This is *Part 1* of a new series entitled *A Balanced Prayer Life*.

In a previous series, *Fighting for God's Way* (it was back in November), we discussed some of this subject matter and we're going to build on some of those things that were mentioned back then. But some of what was covered back then needs to be repeated in the beginning of this sermon (just going to repeat a few of the things that were covered there), because this is something we're to grow in. This is something you build upon over the years.

There is always something to work with in that particular area, as in so many things in our life. That is one that is, obviously, at the forefront because if you want to have a right relationship with God you have to have a proper prayer life. You have to grow in a better relationship, and that comes through prayer toward God.

In that particular series Revelation 3 was mentioned concerning the Church of Laodicea and some things that were mentioned there. I want to read a couple of those verses again.

Revelation 3:14-15—To the angel of the Church of Laodicea write, These are the words of the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God. It's about Christ and the things that Christ was given to give to John that were to be given to the Church. Obviously, the message is to the Church, and this one here to the Church of Laodicea. Again, "the Beginning of the creation of God" in the sense of everything was built upon him. God's entire purpose of Elohim and everything He created begins with Christ.

I know your works... And what we do in life when it comes to our relationship with God has to do with works, what we do, what you work at. And work is work. You have to put effort into it. It's not something that just happens in life. You have to think about it. You have to plan for it. There are things you have to do in life when it comes to a matter of work.

It says here, **I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.** So, awesome here some of the things that are stated here about Laodicea and about the Church. There is a lot said here in this respect. I think of this period we experienced in the Church, God's desire that we be one of the two. This middle of the road stuff is a bunch of malarkey. It just makes it hard on everyone. This middle of the road stuff where one foot is in and one foot out or straddling a fence or whatever it might be, and you can't have it! It doesn't work in God's Church. You can't have that kind of a relationship with God.

The whole era of Laodicea was to prove that, was to show that. That's important because that has to be established before the Millennium is established. You look at the different eras, of things to be learned, this is one of the greatest lessons of all, the last era, because there has to be that which was written, which is recorded about people who had access to God, who had God's spirit, the impregnation of God's spirit who lived through something like that, who were a witness of something that people can learn from in the future - that it's unacceptable to be lukewarm, that you have to make a decision in life as to what you're going to do.

Do you want God's way of life? Then you have to work for it. It isn't going to just happen. You have to actually fight for it because you have to fight against this, against your own human nature. I don't care what time period it's in, whether it be in the Millennium or the Great White Throne, people are going to have to still do the same thing. They have to fight against their own nature, and if they're not willing to put work into it it's not going to happen, Elohim, in other words, becoming a part of the Family of God. It's not going to happen.

God doesn't owe it to anyone and sometimes people can live life as though because I'm impregnated with God's spirit there are certain things that are owed to us. The reality is no, it's not. God has given us a gift of life, to be able to experience life. If all we had was this physical life then we should make the most of it. Thank God there is more, a lot more, things we can't even begin to imagine in the sense of the future and the excitement of those things that God wants to share with us.

I marvel at that often, about how God wants to share with us and He continues to give to us and share with us more and more His mind, His being, His purpose, His plan, and it's planned that way into not just the next 1,100 years but into thousands and thousands and millions of years ahead. We can't comprehend that. But there are things already planned out way, way, way beyond because there is much out there for that purpose, to fulfill much of that purpose. Incredible, God's plan and God's purpose for His Family.

There is a lot said here, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot." To me, as a minister, since I've been in God's Church, since 1969 when I came into the Church, then became a minister, one of the greatest frustrations has been the matter of that which sometimes is in people's lives that is neither cold nor hot. Because if it's cold it's easier to deal with. You're not with it. You don't want it. You don't desire it. It's reflected in your life. Sayonara. Auf wiedersehen, dos vedanya, whatever. I know some of those words I've learned don't necessarily mean good-bye, but that's what I'm saying. We're parting.

Hopefully, you can get your act together, you'll want it, and you'll fight for it, and you'll work for it. Because that's the only way this works. Otherwise, you just hurt others in the Body. That's the way it's always been.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and to be lukewarm, candidly, is sin. It isn't just being lazy, it's sin to be lukewarm. To not be zealous for God's way of life? Lukewarm means that there

isn't much of a prayer life if any at all! Because a person isn't focused on the things that God wants one to be focused upon so there really isn't the relationship there. It's become lazy, lukewarm. That's what it means.

Something that's hot is obvious. If it's on fire it's obvious. If you're desirous of this way of life God knows, God wants that, and within the Body we know.

So, ongoing situation in life. It's always been that way within the Body, within the Church, and we can learn from that. We can grow from that. We can be inspired by that in the sense of realizing there are things we don't want to do, "I don't want to be like that. I don't want that to be a part of my life." You have to make choices and decisions in all of this all along the way. "I want God's way of life!"

So, if you want God's way of life, what do we do about it? Well, you have to work for it. You have to fight for it. It's like anything in life. Being lazy doesn't work! (Hmmm, no pun intended there.) You have to work. You have to fight for things in life. That's just the way it works. It's the way it is.

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. It's just a frustrating thing if that's the situation, if that's the condition, being in the middle, being lukewarm.

I would that you were cold or hot. I understand that deeply, what's being said there. We all should understand that. But especially if you've dealt with situations and matters over a long period of time, it means a whole lot more because what should we all desire in one another? That we want, that we fight for, that we desire God's way of life, that we be on fire for this way of life, that we be excited about this way of life because then that'll be reflected in how you're living your life in other areas of your life.

What are we doing when we're not in Sabbath services? What are we doing when we're not together on a Holy Day? What are we doing when we're not sitting in Passover services? What are we doing when we're not around God's people? That tells it all. What are we doing? Because if God's first it's going to be obvious in our life in how we're living it toward God.

So, from these verses we went on to focus on one's prayer life, which I've been talking about a little bit in the midst of this, because that certainly reveals whether we're fighting for this way of life or whether we're drifting, drifting in the sense of being lukewarm, thinking that we can just kind of slide along and take it easy or that we're just waiting for Christ to return and that'll solve all of our problems and so "I'm going to stick it out to that point." Sticking it out is not an answer. Just hanging in there is not an answer. "I want to wait and see." Those aren't answers. There are many people who have fit in those situations in times past.

The reality is you have to fight. You have to keep fighting. You have to keep fighting this all the time. The day you let up is the day you fall into great danger, truly.

James 2:14—What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith and yet does not have works? I love these verses here - this particular verse, I should say, in this case.

So, someone thinks that they're okay, because that's generally what happens in the mind. We can tend to deceive ourselves that we're okay, that things are okay, that I'm going to Sabbath services, I'm tithing, I'm doing this and that, I go to Passover once a year, I go to the Feast of Tabernacles, I'm doing these things, I'm going through the motions, and therefore, I'm okay because I'm living by faith. There is far more to it than that. It has to do with every day of our life of what we're living.

So, doing those things isn't enough in itself. Yes, we have to do them, but it's not enough. It goes way beyond that. And so, if someone thinks that they're okay and doesn't have works in the sense of what they're doing day by day, and prayer is one of those, prayer is an important part of that process that reflects whether or not we really grasp what God is revealing to us, whether or not we really grasp some of the most basic things, that self is an enemy; self is an enemy to God. "The carnal mind is at enmity against God. It cannot be subject to the law of God." As it says there, "Is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Now, that's where the choices come in, because God gives us the impregnation of His spirit so we can choose to fight against self. Because self fights against God, and if we don't know that about our own nature, that our own nature literally fights against God, it resists God, it doesn't want God! It doesn't want that kind of control in its life. It wants to be free to do whatever it wants to do. That's where sin comes in. That's where idolatry comes in, raising up the idol.

We do that as human beings when we sin, when we do something wrong toward someone else, when we say something wrong about someone else, when whatever, on and on it goes. We judge someone in an improper way, in a way that God is not pleased with, then we've raised up the idol, the idolatry, "I can do that." No, you can't. It's not right.

...if someone says they have faith and yet does not have works? Can faith save him? No, because you can't have one without the other. It doesn't fit. If you live by faith God gives us truth. He's given us all the truth we have to believe, and then we have to make choices, "That's what I want to live by. This is the mind of God being revealed to me. He's giving me more understanding about Himself, who He is, and it's because of that truth I love Him more and more as He reveals more and more of Himself to me," as we should be thinking, and because of that then we choose then to live by it if we understand.

That's what faith is, choosing to live by what God has given us the ability to believe and that takes work. Why? Because your mind fights against it at times. Just the way your mind is.

The more we see our carnal human nature the healthier we can be spiritually. Because of that, you're fighting it and you know you have to have what? You have to have God's spirit. That should drop you to your knees. That should drop you to a point of prayer. I don't mean necessarily your

knees all the time, but I mean, walking, whatever you're doing, praying to God, whatever. The position isn't as important, it's that relationship you have. You can be anywhere at any time and pray to God and the promise is there He hears you. That's a promise.

If you've gone before God, you're freed of your sin through your Passover, our Passover, Joshua, God hears us. What an awesome thing to know the Great God of the universe has that kind of desire. He wants that relationship. But we have to choose it and we have to want it.

That's the motivation for prayer. Because you know with all of your being—the more you grow the more you will know that “I need God's spirit every day. Without it I can't be focused properly, I'm not thinking right, sin can creep in too easily, will creep in too easily.” So, it's a battle every day. It really is. That's the kind of work we're in.

I feel for those who don't see that, who give up that kind of battle or who don't really enter into that kind of a battle. Because if they don't, they're not going to last long. Because you can't do it on your own; we have to have God's spirit because our warfare is a spiritual warfare.

It says in **verse 17—Even so, faith if it does not have works is dead, being alone.** It's meaningless. There is no such thing then.

Works reflects how we think toward God. This is a great area to look back upon and think about that sermon back in November. Have I been making changes? Have I grown in my relationship, in my prayer life with/toward God Almighty? And use that as a mirror in a very powerful way to say, what am I doing? Where am I at? Because if nothing has changed we got some big work to do, we really do.

The question becomes one of how can anyone expect to grow and draw closer to God if they don't have a continual practice of prayer in their life? It's communication. How can we develop a relationship with God Almighty if we don't have a continual relationship in the sense of communication with God? How can any relationship be built in life without communication? You can't. That takes work. Communication.

Now, the world understands that, they really do. They understand in a physical way that there are things you can build upon whether it be in work, whether it be in family. Most of that kind of thing when it comes to relationships you can find when it's referring to family, marriage especially, and so forth. But it has to do with child rearing. It has to do with parents and children. It has to do with a marriage. It has to do with community, with friends, with relatives, whatever.

If a person desires to build a relationship then we realize that it takes work and we realize as well within a period of time it has to be two ways. It can't be just one sided, as a whole. And so, we already understand that mind of God. His desire to have that relationship with us. He's given us so much. But we have to respond. That's what we have to make choices of.

I'm going to read a few quotes here about communication. Again, just understood by the world. How much more though with God?

“Without communication there is no relationship.” That’s a reality. In a relationship with God, without communication there is no relationship. There is nothing being built and constructed as it should be. You can’t have this way of life, you can’t grow spiritually, you can’t develop as you should, as you need to, without communication (which is prayer) with God. It doesn’t work. If you’ve gotten this far without much of it then God’s been very merciful and very patient—which He is—but as He teaches us along the way we’re to make choices and changes because we’re given time to respond to that.

God knows what we’re like but He brings us to different points in life, different levels in our life, and we have to make choices along the way as to how we’re going to respond to it. This is a big one because it affects so many things in our life.

So again, “Without communication there is no relationship. Without respect, there is no love.” I like that one too that follows up on that because it’s continual (and I’ll read the rest of it here in a moment). But again, sometimes we don’t realize that we lack respect toward God or in showing respect toward God. That’s something you have to think about, of how that might be a part of your life, how that can come into your life where there are things we can do that don’t show respect toward God.

It can be Sabbath services. It can be toward tithing. It can be toward what we’re living, how we’re talking to people. Because it has to do with a way of life, and if we don’t respect what He’s given to us, the truth He’s given to us, if we’re not striving to do those things we’re not showing respect toward God. If we’re bringing shame before God’s throne by wrong choices it’s showing great disrespect toward God.

So again, this should mean so much more to us because we realize in order to show right respect and care toward God we need God’s spirit. You can’t do it on your own and understanding that is the very reason you’re drawn toward prayer, because you know you need God’s help, you can’t do it on your own.

That’s what I love about part of the meaning of Pentecost. God gave the law on the day of Pentecost, the 10 Commandments in the sense of when Moses was leading the children of Israel, and from Mount Sinai the 10 Commandments were given. On the day of Pentecost God gives of a codified law of how we should live life, life toward Him and life toward one another.

But then on another Pentecost He reveals to us in a very powerful way... and the history of Israel is you can’t do it on your own! You can’t live it. What do you do? You rebel. You rebel, rebel, rebel. You fight against it. You don’t live it. They weren’t able to live it. Why? Because they didn’t have God’s holy spirit. They didn’t have His holy spirit. They couldn’t live it.

They kept certain aspects of it; primarily the Jewish people did when it comes to the Sabbath and some of the routine of the law. They really didn't keep it, but in their minds they observed it as a matter of time and so forth. But we understand that even that is a spiritual relationship with God. Though in the world it is very physical. With Judah it was very physical, a physical thing. For that reason, God let them keep their identity. It didn't mean they were righteous by any measure. It has nothing to do with that. Just dealing with a carnal physical people.

“Without communication, there is no relationship. Without respect, there is no love.” What kind of a mind do we want? I think of David oftentimes, when God says, “He’s a man after My own heart.” That’s what we should want. To love God, to ask God for help to love Him more, to love His way of life more, to love His Son more, and to love His people more. Because they all go hand in hand. They truly do.

“Without respect, there is no love. Without trust, there is no reason to continue.” I like that one, too. It’s all one quote: “Without communication, there is no relationship. Without respect, there is no love. Without trust, there is no reason to continue.”

And so, because of that, many people have left God’s Church because these things were lacking in their life. It’s just the way it’s always been. It will be until the end because that’s the way we are as human beings. We have to make choices all along the way day by day by day.

So again, “Without trust, there is no reason to continue.” We’re tested and tried in different ways as to that trust, reliance upon God and looking to God. It goes back to the matter of “Do I really believe what He’s given me to believe?” He’s opened up our minds to see truth, but then we have to make choices as to how we respond to that. Because you can lose that. Because if it doesn’t become a part of your thinking, you can lose it because there’s a lack there of just trusting and believing God, what He says. Again, to have that kind of trust, that kind of reliance, you have to have prayer life, you have to have God’s spirit. You have to ask for those kinds of things.

“Ask and you shall receive.” It’s what it’s about. When you ask, when it says to “ask, you shall receive,” it’s about the things that God desires to give to every one of us. It’s not about asking what you want. “I want the lottery.” Whatever. Anyway. It’s not going to solve your problems in life.

Another one: “Communication to a relationship is like oxygen to life. Without it, it dies.” Love it! Some of these are good, these are really good, to think about them. Without communication what do we have? Without prayer what do we have? What do we have in a relationship with God? How can we think right toward God?

How can we think right toward this stinking, rotten world? Because if you love this world, you’re screwed up. God is showing us more and more how sick this world is. Everything is coming out! That’s why we’re going through what we are! That’s why things are on the news like they are, so you can get a little sick of this world.

The answer to it all is God Almighty. That's why He's letting the world experience a bunch of this right now. It's coming out more and more. We can't govern ourselves! What a joke! We can't love like the world want to be loved! Race relations? Yes, they're there, and they can't be solved by human beings because we're prejudice as human beings! Things that are deeply ingrained in people from this point all the way up by their parents and by society.

Only by God's help can you have a right mind, are we truly a family, are we truly at one, do we truly have freedom. Just because it's written in a constitution or whatever doesn't mean that it's true, does it? We see the inability of human beings. I am sick of this world and I hope you are too, because if you don't feel that way then something is amiss in your love toward God and what He's offering us.

I hurt for people when I watch this "stuff" (that I want to call it) on the news, and all the lying and the bigotry and the hypocrisy on all sides is just overflowing. You're taking a side? You're screwed up. If you're taking a side anywhere out there your mind is screwed up! Now, I'm getting a little worked up because I tell you what, we need to see these things. There is no side to be taken because somebody might be right in one point and then they're totally screwed up in a whole bunch of others. So, you can't adopt that.

"Well, the right is better off because they're saying this..." or "The left..." I don't even want to go there. That's just in la-la land. Seriously! You think of how messed up the human mind is becoming out there. It's scary. It really is scary. If you're not a little scared of it, afraid of it in the sense of what the world is becoming, because it's a dangerous world out there. It's a dangerous world for the mind. It really is. It's not getting any better. There is so much divisiveness, so much evil that's taking place. It's everywhere! Some of the slogans that are out there I loathe, because they're hypocritical. They're lying. People are lying. Does there need to be attention in certain areas of life? Yes. But who has the sound mind? Who has the ability to judge these things? Nobody.

Do you realize that? Only God's people do. Only in God's Church can people discern and see a balance in what is right? We're the only ones that have the ability to do those things because of God's spirit and because of a relationship with God, that He gives us the ability to perceive certain things. I think of the hideous injustices in life between races. And it's big! It's not small. It's not going away any time soon.

Then I think of that which isn't even being mentioned in large part, and that's between men and women! You want to talk about oppression! It doesn't get addressed because people don't know how to address it. They don't know the happiness that people want can't be there. Because God's way is not there.

Only God has the answer. I hope we're seeing this more and more and more and until we get into a different age, until we get into a different world, and until we get into a time where God's ruling this world, where Christ and 144,000 are ruling this world and don't allow the kind of crap

that's going on today to exist, where the news is so sick and perverted, where people are trying to sway minds to hurt others because they have agendas, because there's money involved and there's power involved. That's what it's all about. It's about power and it's about money and who can move this and who can do that. Sick, sick.

I am dumbfounded by what we're seeing. This is a great sign of how close we really are. It's just like going back, candidly, and I was really inspired by going back through and doing that video concerning Mr. Armstrong, what God gave to him about Europe in 1950 in a very powerful way, already knowing that there is going to be a united Europe. Because God gave that to him.

Now, that's exciting to me because he hit that hard in 1950. Seven years later, finally, a common market, the EEC came together. Then he said that it would have a common currency. It wasn't until thirteen years after his death that the Euro came into being. Then, finally, 2018, thirty-two years after his death, thirty-two years later, and finally there are ten nations that have a sort of military pact, if you will, amongst themselves. May not be the exact ten yet but sure did zero in on a particular number there. Could be most of them, if not all of them.

You think of that process, and what was to follow that? What did he say? Third world war. So, yeah, there's been some time between each of those segments. You think, last one's already happened now. Then God's given us more to understand where we are, the things that have taken place in the Church, the Apostasy that took place.

All the Seals have been opened, and to realize in Seven Trumpets it's all going to start with one. The events, they've already been announced. They've been blown. That's what that means. They've already been announced very powerfully so to God's Church especially. Now, the world doesn't give a flip because they just don't see it, because they have to have God's spirit to be able to see, understand some of those things, until they start happening. But as soon as an EMP goes off over this country, wherever, things are going to take place. At some point this country is going to get crippled. How close are we to that?

Now, in some ways as horrifying and as bad as it's going to be and as evil as it's going to be, let's get it done. Let's get there and get through this. Please, God Almighty, clean up this world soon. Because to have children grow up in this kind of cesspool, this kind of filth, this kind of evil, this kind of hatred that exists in the world, in the minds and what they're being taught and it's just getting worse and worse, the lies, the TV, the way of life that children have to grow up and see this (you know what I want to say, just don't want to say it too much). But I feel it deeply because it's just a big cesspool. They see things and they think that's normal, that's how people live, that's what relationships are like today.

You think, no, it's so far from what God says brings happy lives. People don't even know who they are today even at young ages. Don't know whether I'm male or female even. I mean, how sad is that? "I don't know what I am. I don't have an identity. I don't feel right." You think, what's happened?

I truly (and I know you do), long for Christ's coming to save us, to save this world. Do you feel that way for others in the world, that you don't want to see children have to grow up in this cesspool, this filth, this garbage, the stench, this division that exists out there? It's so bad. Of course, I have a little history there, too, of why I may have some feelings about certain things. Anyway. Man, some other country. Could it be? But where do you go? There's nothing. The whole world is messed up. The whole world. We just happen to be living here.

So, "Your Kingdom come." We should want that. I think of Lot when it says, "He vexed his righteous soul from day to day" because of what he saw. He saw nothing compared to what we have today. He didn't see anything compared to what we're able to see today. So, does your soul, does your life feel that way toward everything that's going on? Do you hurt because of everything you see, for others, because of what people have to live in?

"Communication to relationships is like oxygen to life. Without it, it dies."

Another one: "Two things can destroy any relationship: unrealistic expectations and poor communication." Sometimes that exists in God's Church, too, or has in times past. Expectations, things that people think about God and what they should be receiving from God and what they can get by with sometimes and be in God's Church. Like, this thing of being out in the courtyard on the swing set or something. "There's the temple." (I'm on a swing.) Just kind of looking at the temple and the people around it or whatever, but "I'm out in the courtyard because I kind of like the swing set and... Oh, there goes the ice cream truck. Let's go have a snack."

I'm sorry, but sometimes people are a little bit with their eyes like that in God's Church. Out in the courtyard. It's like, "Because I'm so close to the temple, I go to Sabbath services, I go to the Holy Days, I tithe, I'm okay." Yet your life outside stinks! You either want this way of life and you're fighting for it or it's here goes Laodicea again...or even worse.

Another one. They're all related one way or another here. "Relationships cannot grow without communication." Well, that's the whole thrust of this whole thing. We can't grow, we can't grow closer to God. You want to become closer to God? Do you want to have more of the mind of God? Do you desire that God be closer to you, you be closer to God? Because, see, God wants to be close to us, it's just our choices. Do we really want to be close to God?

Like David was, a man after God's own heart, a woman after God's own heart, to have that in your being that you really desire that closeness with God Almighty. If you do then you've got to work on it more and have that time day by day that you're spending with God in praying about some of these matters.

What's the most important thing you pray for? What's the most important thing you could ever ask for? What's the greatest thing that God wants to give to you that you could have in life? His holy spirit. There is nothing greater. Because that's what transforms your mind. That's what changes your thinking to become in agreement with God, to give you the ability of this mind actually

changing from selfishness to giving, His kind of giving with sacrifice if need be, whatever it takes. But true care and concern for others in what is best for them and getting self out of the way in the midst of all that. That's a job.

Another one: "In a relationship, when communication starts to fade, everything else follows." You can look at that in marriage. You can look at that in families. You can look at that in the job. Whatever it might be in life. But how much more in a relationship with God and God's people when communication starts to fade? So, we have opportunities wherever we might be, whatever fellowship we might have, to whatever degree is allowed and given of things we're to work on.

Another one: "Communication is the fuel that keeps the fire of your relationship burning." If you want to have that fire we talked about "wish you were cold or hot," it comes through prayer. So, do our days ever go by without it? Do we have days where we don't have it? Because I know that there are situations that exist like that in God's Church. They shouldn't, but they do. Those are the kinds of things you want to repent of because it means, it shows, it reveals something that we should be able to see (like looking in a mirror), "There is that which I don't really fully believe that God has shown me, that self resists Him and that I need His spirit to bring it under control constantly. I need His spirit every day to fight against this nature."

Another one. I'll just read this again here, the same one here: "Communication is the fuel that keeps the fire of your relationship burning. Without it your relationship grows cold." Can't help but think of, again, Laodicea. It's exactly what it's saying in large part.

So, drawing closer to God in sincerity and truth. Because it takes that; it has to be in the truth, it has to be with sincerity on our part. God knows every thought of our being. That's an amazing thing to understand. When you go before God, as a whole He knows what's going to come out of you before you've ever said it. That's hard for us to comprehend.

God knows us inside and out. He truly does. He knows where we are in our growing process or lack of it. He knows what we need, and He gives those things to us. He gives us opportunity and we're judged accordingly over and over again in our life until sometimes the answer is, "Okay, this is it. No more." God will bring things to the surface, will do things in our life to solidify it, whatever that might be.

So again, drawing closer to God in sincerity and truth is a mouthful in itself (as I wrote in my notes). That's a whole sermon right there. It really is. Because it requires a lot of work.

Let's begin in Matthew 6. Now, we know this. You know it by heart most likely, the outline of prayer that Christ gave. But what we sometimes don't understand and don't know is of what was given there in an outline is something that you will build upon and grow as long as you're in this human body, that there are things you cannot understand and cannot know yet that you can build upon continually in these verses that God will help you to see in a greater way spiritually as you

grow. So, just knowing this by heart isn't enough. Building upon it and all the things that goes with it, it will come in time, and it's something you grow in.

Matthew 6:6—But you, when you pray, go into your room... Now, I'm going to come back to some of this a little bit later here as far as the outline itself. I wanted to have some of this here spoken of first. We'll come to that as we go along here.

But first of all, this is just about prayer. We're not to the outline yet. Getting a little ahead of myself. We'll get there. But just on the outline itself, when we do get there, there is a lot there. If we don't get to that today think about it this week, by next week, because we're going to start building upon some of that. There is so much there. There is so much said there, there truly is.

So, again here, this here is seemingly a simple verse but one that takes time to fully understand and appreciate. **Matthew 6:6—But you, when you pray, go into your room.** The King James says "closet," but it's talking about, it's a word that just means "an inner room." Basically, it's showing here by its context that it's a place by yourself because it says, "shut the door." In other words, the whole implication here is you're going in to pray, to have conversation with the Great God of the universe, and it's a private thing between you and God.

It says here, **go into your room, and when you have shut your door pray to your Father who is in secret...** See, now, He isn't to us fully because He's revealed Himself to us. He's given us understanding He's given us the truth. He's given us His purpose and plan, and yet we know He's there. We know His desire for us. That's why we do it. We realize what we've been given.

We see things that others can't see. You can't go out and share this with others. You can't go out and share it with relatives and so forth, though all of us probably have tried when we were first called. I can still see that incident when I first came in. Because you're excited! I mean, it's so clear to you! All of a sudden you see the Sabbath. "Can't you all see it? And the Holy Days! Look at this! Passover, Unleavened Bread! Look at what all this means, a plan, the Millennium, Feast of Tabernacles, the Last Great Day!" You start talking about some of these things and that "nobody is going off to heaven and that there is a resurrection in time where everybody who's ever lived and died is going to be resurrected at the end and have opportunity to receive God's way of life. They're dead and buried. That's what the word "hell" means. Isn't that amazing? It's not some place where there are little things running around with these pitchforks and stabbing you in the butt. They're hot and it's always a hot place and you're just tormented because of the heat."

Isn't that stupid? I mean, you look at stupid things like that you think, how could anyone, and yet the South especially has been known for giving these hell fire sermons to scare people. By not doing what they want you to do, you're going to go to this place of hell and it's bad

Anyway, you're all excited about these things but you find out before long they think you're nuts. They might be excited about a few of the things you said, and they might even be a little dumbfounded at what you're saying. Because they knew you before. They knew what you were

like before and all of a sudden you're talking about things like this and they're a little dumbfounded in that by itself. Then to hear some things that kind of make some sense.

But then after a while they have to make choices and decisions and they realize you're really out there because you probably unloaded the whole truck on them, and they can't cope with that. They know you're nuts. They don't just think you're a religious fanatic, they've come to the point where they're pretty convinced of it. Because they can't see what you see.

Isn't that an amazing thing we have? You see something, you know it. How do you explain it to anyone? You can't prove it. That's why I used to get so irritated in time in the Church where, "You can go in here and you can prove this to yourself! Prove it to yourself!" Give me a break! You can't prove diddly squat to yourself without God's holy spirit. Because He proved it to you in the mind. He gave it to you in your mind and that's why you see it.

You think you're some kind of great genius or something that you can go in the Bible and you figured all these things out yourself? Because there is great danger in that. A lot of people came to the point where they believed that. That's why they went off on different doctrines - 14/15 Passover. "I've proved it to myself and it's here, it's 14/15." Or, "Pentecost should have stayed on Monday!" because of the great intellect we have.

No, it's strictly by God's spirit you know and see the things you do. Isn't that a marvel? That in itself is encouraging. You're here because of that, because you can see something in the Bible that you can't give to anyone else. You can't prove it to anyone else. But God's proven it to you. He's shown it to you. You've had to make decisions about it, and because of those decisions you're here. Thank God.

Because you can lose it all, or the vast majority of it. You might have certain knowledge of certain things like the Sabbath or clean and unclean meats. Most people make choices of leaving all those things, but in time. But to be able to see them and hold on to them, what an awesome thing.

...shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. He'll give you help. He'll help you to change. He'll help your thinking to change to where in time you'll begin thinking differently toward people in relationships and how you see them. You'll begin judging differently. You begin judging more as God says we're to judge and get rid of some of the human element of that, of how we misjudge or judge harshly or judge whatever we do as human beings in those areas because we have that in us. In time we grow and develop more of the thinking and the mind of God. Even though it's as small smidgeon, it's a lot for human beings. Truly is. Because it's just not in the world.

And so, because of an example like this about prayer life there are things that we can learn from this and can examine this to look at ourselves in a mirror, and because of this, sometimes we've made various decisions in the Church. Because prayer is a thing that is not understood by people.

They really don't grasp what it's all about. They see certain things in part. It might be spinning a wheel on a mountain, or whatever, all these prayers going up. Or you light these things and all this smoke going up and the different things that are in the minds of human beings of things you can do and somehow these are prayers. Or you can pray to certain individuals or whatever is in your mind.

But to do it in spirit and truth because God has opened that door for you, because you've been forgiven of sin, because you're able to have a relationship with Him, because He wants to give you His holy spirit, and because you can grow then spiritually in your life? The world is not experiencing that. But we are if we're growing in our relationship in prayer with God. And so, it's a very personal thing.

God knows you inside and out. One of the most stupid things in the world is that we can live a double standard before God. Because He knows what we're doing. He knows what we're thinking. He knows what you did all week long, the day before, or that day or the hour, whatever it is. You have to be truthful to God. To be otherwise is pretty stupid. But sometimes we can be that way as human beings. We have to fight against that.

Just be open, truthful before God. He knows whether we are or aren't. Because if we're not being truthful with God, we're not being truthful to ourselves and there are things we are deceiving ourselves in that we can't see. Again, to people to see those things is easier said than done sometimes, and because this matter of prayer is so misapplied in the world, as a Church we've tried to show that we need to practice better balance in this. That's a part of what this series is about. It's about a better balance in prayer.

We've done this when it comes to things like mealtime. So, as a whole in God's Church to help people to think about some of these things and what the purpose is, because the world misuses this, and even about what Christ had to say as the outline of prayer is not understood as it should be. People can make more of an ado, more of a thing about praying around a meal, and after a while you know what? It just becomes a vain repetition, saying the same thing over and over again, and it's not really focused on God and it's not focused on a relationship with God.

Is it good to be thankful about the food we have? Yes. But it's really shallow. It truly is in large part. Should we thank God for those things? Absolutely. But hopefully, a whole lot more than that, you know, that we're thankful to God for and we build upon that understanding.

We don't want to be like the world. We don't want to get to a point where things are repetitious like the world, so sometimes we're asked to do things in God's Church that we can learn balance in. Sometimes it's getting away from certain things so we can see it in the world, how it's not done properly and how that can become meaningless in a family and how it can actually train the mind to look upon things in a wrong way even in a family. You have to think about those and pray about those kinds of things, what that means.

Again, not wanting to be repetitive, losing the meaning of sincerity, what is sincere, what is truly felt. All those things that we have to battle with as human beings. Even in your prayer life you have to be careful that things don't just become repetitious. Because they must be felt, and to be felt they must be sincere. They must come from inside, deep inside. That's what God longs for. He desires that kind of close relationship, not just something on the surface, but something that's deeper, in that respect. Hopefully, we understand that.

So, for balance, when it comes to some things, we're going to address some things as we go along here.

When it comes to maybe a special occasion, having different brethren around and maybe at a meal to have a prayer on occasion is a better balance than just having a family morning, noon, and night or whatever having prayers around the table. What are you doing with the rest of your life? Do you have a relationship with God the rest of the time or is it just this thing like counting beads, and here we are at the table and we're all holding hands...? Which I don't like. Anyway. That's Protestant.

So, there are things we learn. There are things we do that can be of a Protestant mind if we're not careful, which is not a genuine mind. It has to come from inside.

Once in a while when there are a lot of people together in God's Church, we may have an occasion where a prayer is called for. That's balanced as far as a group of people is concerned. Or several together for a meal on a special occasion and the atmosphere makes it conducive for that. Not at a restaurant or someplace like that, to be seen by others.

That brings up another thing. Sometimes prayer around others, with others, toward or in a group, like Sabbath services, we've come to a point in time where we quit having closing prayer. A lot of it was just becoming repetitive, empty. It doesn't mean that the person praying wasn't doing it. But for us as a congregation, and maybe even for the person sometimes, people have to weigh themselves out, what does it mean for us? What does it mean for me? What am I saying "Amen" to? So, we have to be careful.

What is the meatier thing to do? Well, the meatier thing to do is not to depend upon someone coming up and giving a prayer in a service and then making it easy and saying "Amen." You know, just kind of getting in that routine. It's just "Amen."

What's inside here? Do you want to be fed every Sabbath? Are you crying out to your God to be fed on the Sabbath day? Do you recognize the need, that you need whatever God is preparing for you? Are your prayers during the week at any time, not just on Friday, but about in preparation for what is going to be given and an ability to receive what God gives, an ability to be moved.

Do we pray for things like that? Because we should. Those are the things. I'm talking about things that come from deep inside. Because if they are, that's good. If we're not thinking about those

things or they're not as important to us, then why just say "Amen" to it in services? I hope you understand what I'm saying. It's something to be done in a relationship between yourself and God, as a whole. Sometimes we back away from some of those things.

Now, the main reason we have as far as an opening prayer is because of video and so forth that's just not as appropriate to have such a thing recorded like that and out there. Again, the same sort of thing as the closing. It's come to a point in time where it's good balance for us to learn that the weightier thing, the more important thing is that we do this in our relationship toward God because "This is what I want."

Because, candidly, that's going to determine more than an opening or closing prayer what you receive from God. Hope you understand that. It's what you pray for during the week, Friday night, Sabbath morning if it need be, ahead of time.

So, we learn from these things, and I'm going to throw this one out as well. It should also be noted sometimes that prayer in public and even in a Sabbath service can challenge a person as to whether pride is involved. Anyone who has ever done that, whether it be in a home environment and several people together and you've had a prayer, sometimes as human beings that can put us on the spot. Is it about self? Is it about being seen? Because those things enter in. They're a part of the human battle sometimes. They truly are. It's the way it is.

We're carnal human beings and we have to fight against this nature and recognize that the motivation needs to be because it's right, because it's a service, and to pray about those things because they don't just happen. I hope you understand again what I'm saying here, because there is really a lot being said on a spiritual plane.

Going on down in Matthew 6. It kind of goes along with this matter here. **Verse 16—** **Moreover, when you fast, don't be like the hypocrites who have a sad countenance, a gloomy look,** in other words. Well, why is this being pointed out? Because there were people who were fasting at that time who knew about fasting in the Old Testament, obviously, and "religious individuals," but they want others to know they're "religious." It's like this thing of being seen.

Christ is giving instruction to his Church, to his people, don't be like the world that does it hypocritically because they want to be seen. Because, as a whole, a lot of things you see in the Protestant world, it's about being seen. Prayers at a table in a community is about being seen. I hope you understand that. There is vanity. There is pride involved there. There is not a relationship with God involved at all. It's of self and what self is gaining from that, which isn't good because it's not balanced, it's not true, it's not right.

When you fast don't be with a sad countenance, a gloomy look, disfigure their faces, in other words, they change their appearance so that they may appear to others to be fasting. **Truly, I say to you, they have their reward.** That's their reward. Because they get something out of it.

They all hold hands around a table in a restaurant and everybody is kind of uncomfortable because how do you respond to that, because here they're having their prayer. Should you get up? Should you stop speaking. You think, come on, give me a break! This is all a lie. It truly is. It's not something genuine before God, filled with God's spirit at all. It's a carnal thing and we're carnal, and sometimes we can do the same things, truly.

I think of people who have wanted to speak at different times and wanted to give sermonettes or whatever it might be, or wanted to give sermons, and it was more about being seen and them. It wasn't about the message. It wasn't about helping. It wasn't about God's spirit working to give something that is beneficial to the Body. It's about what they could do. It's about what could be shown. Now, those who have been around for a long time know what I'm talking about as far as God's Church, because we haven't had that kind of thing for a long, long time.

The point being is we all have to fight these kinds of battles, human being's, because that's what we are.

It says, **they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face...** It's something between you and God. Prayer, as a whole prayer is between us and God. As a whole it's not a public thing. It truly isn't. On a rare occasion because of God's Church or because of a large group of people because it's fitting in the atmosphere and it might be conducive to do it, then it can be done.

It says, **But when you fast anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to others as fasting...** It's not about self. That's something that human beings have to fight against.

It's the difference between the extreme of when Mr. Armstrong got up and spoke in an area he was visiting and people got up to applaud at a Feast of Tabernacles and he would shut them down. Strong words that were used. He didn't do it mildly, he did it with strength not to do it. "Stop! Stop doing that!" Why? Because it wasn't good for them and it wasn't good for him. He knew that.

The absolute opposite of that--which I've given this example many a time but it needs to be in your mind so that you know the extreme opposite--of the one who led God's Church astray, sought to lead it astray, sought to break down everything, the man of sin, the son of perdition, would stop after, I don't know, 10 minutes of applause, and then say, "You can do better than that! Come on!" Think, wow, that revealed a lot. It really did. This is really bad.

Because it's never about us as human beings. It truly isn't, and yet we can tend to do that if we're not careful. Power, how we think about ourselves as human beings, those are battles you have to fight.

It says here, again, **So that you do not appear to others as fasting, but unto your Father who is in secret... And your Father who is in secret...** Same thing is said about prayer, isn't it? **He will reward you openly.**

It's about a relationship with God. It's about a personal and a private relationship with God Almighty, our prayer life is, our life of fasting, whatever we do because we want to draw closer to God. That's what it's about. It's about what's inside of us and what do we desire toward God?

So again, what Christ had to say in the outline of prayer: **Give us this day our daily bread.** So, when we talk about meals, it can indeed be a matter of gratitude for all that God provides us, but it's mostly an instruction about something that's spiritual, not about something physical. If we can start understanding something physically, to be thankful about certain things, that's fine, but prayer life is much more than this. Prayer life shouldn't be reduced to something that's basically just that at a meal.

Let's notice what was said back in John 6. This is a part of that prayer and we'll go back and go through it all, but again here, just a portion of it to think about this aspect of it, of what it's saying just about, "Give us this day our daily bread." It's not about a routine thing at a mealtime. It wasn't meant to be that at all for God's people. It is not instruction for praying like this at a meal at all, period, exclamation mark. But human beings tend to take things this way.

John 6:31—Our fathers ate manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Joshua said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you that Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. So again here, he's teaching them something about what happened physically that has meaning in it spiritually. He's showing here a value of something that's so much greater, so much farther beyond physical food. I mean, that would have been an awesome thing for a few days, a few weeks, to go out and get manna and whatever. Of course, if you don't have any food out there growing anyway you're probably just really get to the point where "I'm really glad there's manna on those sticks out there and those places where I can take it off and gather it. Because without it there is not anything you're going to have out here in the wilderness to eat." It helps to straighten out your thinking a little bit in that area. But he's showing something that's far more miraculous, far more meaningful. That's the point being given here.

Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. We know this is about Christ. This is about God's purpose in Christ. It's about his life, what he lived as our Passover, living, the unleavened bread of life we understand, without sin, and a bread of life that we can partake of, the way of life. Because it's about a way of life, the unleavened bread of life. He lived a perfect life, in that regard, without sin. We're jam packed with sin just because of our nature, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." So, we have repentance in front of us all the time, of things to be repenting of.

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Well, what? Life to the world? How? Through him because we can be forgiven of sin through him and we can become unleavened. We’re to work at becoming unleavened, to get rid of the sin. Whenever sin pops up, what do we do? We ask God to forgive us of that through our Passover. That’s what it’s about.

Then they said to him, Lord, give us this bread always. So, we realize that it’s not that simple. It’s not something as simple as going out and gathering manna and the work put into that. There is a different kind of work that you have to be involved in and that’s about a relationship toward God through prayer and fasting and other things we do in our life by how we live.

Then they said to him, Lord, give us of this bread always. And Joshua said to them, I am the bread of life. Just because he said those things doesn’t mean we can have it. It’s a supply of something you can have regularly in your life, but you’ve got to work for it. You’ve got to ask for it. You’ve got to pray about it or it’s not going to be given to you. That’s just the reality of it.

God will have patience with us, draw us, work with us for ever how long that judgment is given depending on how we respond, depending on what’s in our being and what we desire then of what God’s given to us, how we respond to what He teaches us and shows us. Because there’s a whole lot of people that have gone before who haven’t wanted it, who haven’t continued in the fight.

Then they said to him, Lord, give us of this bread always. And Joshua said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst. So again, something spiritual here, not something physical. It goes way beyond physical food and physical drink, whatever.

Then a few verses down in **verse 47—Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life.** “He who believes in me, he has everlasting life,” believes in the way of life, the truth that is given that Christ taught, that God has given to us. And what is that everlasting life? Well, if you’re able to continue in it, by God’s spirit you’re able to grow in it, that’s what it’s about.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they’re dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. So, for us we understand it’s a way of life, but Passover, it starts there. It always goes back to our Passover. We partake of it every year, unleavened bread, which is symbolic of what we’re supposed to be doing the entire year by being able to be forgiven of sin, by the fact that we believe what God says, and because of what is made possible through Christ.

He died so that you could have a relationship with God. He died so that God can live in us and we can dwell in God and in Christ and they in us. It’s a spiritual thing. It’s a spiritual relationship. But it’s not something we do once a year. But it’s something we’re to do every day of our life, a desire to partake of the unleavened bread of life, God’s way of life.

That's why I get really perturbed and upset when I see of things that have happened throughout the Church through time, and people living other things in the world around them thinking they can imbibe in and do things that are not right before God, thinking that they don't have to tithe or this month I need it for rent or I'm not going to give Holy Day offerings or I can go out here and mess around with someone in the world and do things that I really know I shouldn't be doing but I want to do. Choices. Choices. Choices.

You want that more than you want God? You want that more than the truth of God? You want that more than the opportunities that God has placed before us of a life that is being spoken of here in God's family? It's mind boggling. It really is.

Many have been called and few have been chosen because the many have made some really bad choices along the way.

Over and over again I say, from Feast to Feast primarily, "Who will not be here this year?" Every year. It just goes on and on and on, and if it continued on like this and God not drawing others there wouldn't be a whole lot left if time were to go on for ten more years. That's a reality.

Do you believe that? Would ten years put people to the test, different ones to the test? That's not what I'm telling you. Please understand. I'm hoping it's real soon. But if it's ten years, so be it. If it's twenty, I don't care. I mean, I do care...but my selfishness wants it much sooner. But none of that's being shown to us for a purpose and a reason. We've gone past all that to learn.

We're at a point in time now where we realize it's a way of life. It's a way of life all the time and what else would I want? What else would I choose? Well, I can speak for me, but I can't speak for anyone else. Everyone has to speak for themselves. Where are we in our relationship with God?

It goes back to prayer. That reflects what you're working at in your relationship toward God, whether you see the need for God's help in your life, whether you believe what God says. Because Christ has made it very clear to us over and over again about what we are. He's made it clear through the apostles and things that are written what we are like, what we need, how much we need God.

That's why he shared the most important thing he could ever share with a human being on the night that he was betrayed, when he made it very clear what was going to take place, the power, the ability that not only would God now as He was dwelling in him be able to dwell in the disciples and in the Church, and they in Him as well, is an awesome thing to grasp and comprehend. The greatest thing to be given to human beings - the holy spirit. The mind, the power, the being of God that surpasses human reasoning and human thinking, and the only means by which you can know the truth and by which you can keep and stay in the truth.

A lot of that has to do with our ability to dwell in God. It's His word. Dwelling in God is dwelling in His word, dwelling in the truth. It's a spiritual relationship and it can only be done through

God's spirit. We cry out, "I need... I want Your holy spirit. I want that mind. I want the conviction in my life. The things I'm not convicted in I want to become deeply convicted in." That's the relationship we have to have with God. We want to become more deeply convicted of what is true and what is right and you have to ask for those things.

Not just to know the truth. Knowing the truth isn't enough. Knowing right and wrong is not enough. You have to become convicted of the right and the wrong. Knowledge by itself, it's like childrearing at Ambassador College and classes that were taught by people who never had children went out and gave sermons about childrearing and didn't know what it was like. There was something missing. Experience. Reality. Reality check - life isn't like that.

So, knowledge is one thing, experience through choices and judgment is totally unique because that's where conviction comes in. When something is spoken through conviction because you know, because you've lived it, because God's given you that to learn and grow in, that's what life is about, ever growing in the truth, in God's way of life. We should want that. We should cry out for that.

He's the bread of life. We're able to partake of it. We're able to dwell in God and God in us. We're able to dwell in the word of God. Because without God's holy spirit you can't dwell in it, you can't hold on to it!

Every time I see people leave, they started leaving long before. Every time in God's Church. It's not something that just pops up all of a sudden, "Oh, mysterious!" It's a way of life and you can begin to cut off God's spirit in your life by not having a relationship with Him.

Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they're dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread... It's a way of life, what you live, what you choose to live day by day. By the truth? By the unleavened bread of life? Or we do our own thing, we coast, whatever it might be. Or do we cry out for the help we know we have to have to be focused properly?

You know, this outline of prayer thing, it's about a focus. If you don't keep your focus on God day by day your mind is going to drift. Just like some of those quotes we read earlier, if something begins to fade this way of life begins to fade. You can't help it.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread... Because he's the word made flesh. He was the Word made flesh. He is the Word of God. He's the mind, the being of God in conviction, in mind, and knowing, and truth. **...he will live forever; and the bread that I give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.**

Well, we're going to stop there and pick this up in *Part 2*. But again here, it's showing a process of life that takes a lot of work. It doesn't just happen and if we have that conviction then we're

going to cry out for it. We have witness of so many who have gone before us. “Many are called, and few are chosen.” That’s because of the choices we make.

I marvel at the use of words there, “few are chosen,” because of our wrong choices. It always boils down to that in life, truly does.

We are to build a strong relationship with God Almighty and it’s something that must be a yearning within our being, with all of our being, to be close to God, to want to have that, and if we really want that it’s going to be an easier thing to do, truly.