

This will be *Part 2* of the series *A Balanced Prayer Life*.

This series has started out by focusing on the importance of communication (prayer). I gave some examples last week that just in families or in any kind of relationship between people you have to communicate. That's generally a breakdown oftentimes, that causes great breakdown sometimes in families because people don't have open communication.

God wants that with us. He desires us to be open with Him. He desires that we desire Him, that we want His way of life, that we're willing to change things in our life in order to reach out, to work for that. Because it takes effort. It takes work, and so, it's important to build on that communication, that prayer that God offers us to have with Him and His Son, and with one another in fellowship. On and on it goes.

That's to help us to build a right and balanced relationship, of course, with God. That's the only way to do it, and without it there is no growth, as we talked about. Without a prayer life, without communication with God there is no growth. We can't develop as we should. With only a half-hearted approach to prayer there can only be slow growth at the best.

God has patience with us as we grow, as we come along. But as we continue on and have more time within the Body we should be growing in that and understand the value and the importance of it and what God has offered us. So, we have to be careful that we don't squelch growth because this is one of the primary tools God has given us whereby He will give us His holy spirit. We have to cry out for it. We have to ask for it. It's not something that's just given to us, owed to us or anything of that nature.

Our prayer life is a powerful reflection of our true focus and commitment to God's way of life. It really is. It's a good way of looking to a mirror and seeing where we are.

Again here, it's important to understand that prayer is vital on our part, our effort, our desire, our commitment to dwell in Christ and to grow on a spiritual plane. We're going to go back here to, in this case, John 15:6.

Again, some of the most important knowledge and information and truth that Christ gave to his disciples happened there in the last two weeks of his life, and especially the most important thing that he gave, the most valuable, the most meaningful of everything he gave was done on that last night. So, everything that you find in John 14, 15, 16, 17, and in through there, these are the most awesome things ever revealed to mankind.

Before this, no one knew and understood this process. No one understood what was taking place. No one grasped to the depth of what Christ was now giving to the Church, if you will, because it's

written for the Church. He was speaking it to the disciples because the Church was about to be started on Pentecost there.

So again here, he says in **John 15:6—If anyone does not abide in me...** So, that's a choice. It's a choice that people have to make, whether they want to. This is really talking about whether you want to continue in the Church, in the Body of Christ, in the Church of God. That's what it means. It's a spiritual relationship, and sometimes that can be hard to understand because spirit is something you can't see. It's something you can't put your hand on except by the power of God's spirit that's in our mind that gives us the ability to see and understand things that really cannot be seen any other way.

God has to be a part of it. That's why God has to draw us and call us, give us of His spirit to see what is right, what is true because mankind can't figure it out on his own. He can't know it on his own. It's, candidly, totally hidden from mankind because of our carnality, our human nature. God has to give us of His spirit to see and understand what is spiritual, or what is of the spirit.

Again, **If anyone does not abide in me...** So, dwelling in God has to do with, when we're in the Church, has to do with fellowship. It has to do with understanding the importance of fellowship and what we have in a unique relationship to others whom God has called and drawn and opened their minds, who are part of the Body. It has to do with a desire to obey what is true. Because truth comes from God. Truth is revealed by God.

The world doesn't understand what is true. They might pick up on a thing here or there, like one church understands that baptism doesn't mean to have a little bit of water sprinkled on your forehead, especially not as a baby, that it's an adult decision that people have to make in life, so a person that comes to a point that desires God's way of life, desires the things that God reveals are possible, then baptized means to be immersed. It's the Greek word that means to be immersed. You're to be immersed in water. That's what John the Baptist did, he immersed them in the water. Mankind comes up with these different ideas of things they can do and somehow that's okay. Well, it's not okay, and so, the Church understands what that is.

Every once in a while, someone out here will pick up on something that is glaring at them in scripture. Might be the Sabbath day so they have a church that's called Seventh-day Adventist. Then they have the Baptist church because they understand this matter of baptism. So, these become important doctrinal issues with various groups depending on what it is that they see. But they can't put it all together. They only have a little bit here or a little bit there of something that they've read, that finally it's hard to deny those things, if you just look at them for something that's logical and right there in front of you as far as the language is concerned, if you want to talk about Greek or whatever. Anyway, on and on it goes.

Again, **If anyone does not abide in me**, obeying the truth, the truth that comes from God, God's way of life, seeking to live by the unleavened bread of life (we understand that), so it says here, **If anyone does not abide in me he is cast out as a branch and is withered.**

What an awesome thing to understand this thing of being in the Church, of being impregnated with God's spirit and what it means to desire to remain in the temple, to desire to be in God's Church, to be thankful for that. Because you have to fight for that.

I say it a lot - thousands and thousands and thousands of people have gone before us who leave, who don't stay with it, who don't treasure it for what it is. That's why those examples are given, very simple parables about the pearl of great price. God's word, God's truth is exceedingly valuable. It should be to every person. But it's not owed to us. You have to want it, and not just to receive it once, but to keep it. Because you can't keep it without God's spirit.

Everyone who has ever left starts losing the truth. They can't keep it. They start losing the perception of being able to have soundness of mind towards what is true because they start losing portion of it and start using human reasoning because that's all they have to rely upon.

Again, everyone knows of people, if they've been around for any length of time, who just don't continue to fight, and the truth is something you have to fight for, to live in the truth. Just to have it isn't enough, you've got to live by it. You've got to make choices of what you do and what you don't do in your life day by day.

If you want to continue to dwell in the Body of Christ, that's a spiritual relationship with God. It's spiritual because God will not dwell in us if we don't continue to live what is right. He reveals truth to us. It's our choice to hold on to it and cry out for the help to hold on to it. It's an incredible relationship on a spiritual plane with God and decisions then have to be made as to whether we're going to say no to things in our life, whether we're going to say no to what self wants. Because that's an ongoing battle in human life - "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life." It's what rules mankind.

Mankind doesn't rule themselves. People think they rule their life. They don't. They are ruled by other things. Primarily pride. That's how we function as human beings. Lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh. It's what we want, what "I" desire. "I'm" living "my" life by what "I" want. So that's how we live life, by what pleases us. We don't strive to live life by what pleases others.

Can you imagine all these parties out here, well, two main ones, and all the fighting that goes on if someone tried to please the other or try to reason with one another, to at least talk something over and debate something as to what they might be able to put into a plan to pass a bill? I'm talking about in Congress or wherever. They won't even talk about it sometimes— Incredible! — because they want their way and their way is to get rid of someone else that's in their way.

So, all this battling and fighting, it's just common to human life. That's why government doesn't work, man's government doesn't work. It's why God's government is the only government that can work. We have 6,000 years of stupidity and foolishness and killing and fighting and warring and killing, wars fought over and over again, rising of nations, destroying of nations all through the history of mankind, because we can't rule ourselves.

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we think we can rule ourselves. We're better than we were before. We're doing so much better. No, every kingdom that's ever risen always falls. Every nation that's ever risen will fall in time. It's just the way of life. We're to be sick of it because we can see it, we can understand the spirit that's behind it, and it's not from God.

If someone doesn't want to continue in the truth, "abide in me," because to abide in God means you have to embrace the truth. That's why we have a certain number of truths that are listed that are the primary things that we have been built upon, that God has given to us in understanding, and to live by those you have to fight for them, and you have to fight against other things of your carnal nature, like the simple things I've mentioned over and over again that test people.

Inevitably, before anyone ever leaves, they begin to mess around with that one. It's giving God what is God's, whether it be on Holy Days or because of the jobs we're able to have in life He has given us everything whereby we can live and have life and He says just give this portion back for Him, for what He's doing. Inevitably, somewhere along the line people begin to mess around with that one. When that happens, the door slams shut quickly as far as their spiritual life is concerned. Because to rob from God is not a small thing with God. We know that.

Whatever it might be that takes us away from the Body, what a horrifying thing. It says, **he is cast out as a branch and is withered**. God has patience with us for a time. He will give us opportunity for a time, sometimes a long time to receive different correction, whether it be in sermons or other ways, perhaps someone coming to us alone and whether or not we will respond and repent of certain things that we're doing wrong in our life, and if we hear what God is telling us and we begin to repent before God, which requires prayer—you have to go before God to repent—to acknowledge and admit where you're resisting Him, where you're sinning, and if you do those things then God will continue to work with one.

But if a person isn't doing that faithfully, openly, with desire, they begin to quench the spirit. Just like taking a hold of your main arteries and quenching it or tightening it, your hand on it or whatever, and the blood flow begins to slow down or stop, and you're going to die. That's what happens spiritually.

God will work with us for a time through those things and give us every opportunity in life to repent and change, but sooner or later this is what happens, "cast out as a branch and is withered." What does that mean? Separated from the Body, separated from the Church, cut off from fellowship with God. He will not listen to their prayers anymore. It's done. It's over until another time when He may, if they haven't committed the unpardonable sin (which, for most that doesn't happen), but to another time then when God then gives them back life again in a physical body a second time to make choices. Then they're able to look back and look at the stupid choices they made, if they could have done it just the first time around.

To me, that's a horrifying thought, with as much knowledge as we have, to think that I'd have to live in this physical body twice, as so many thousands and millions and billions are going to have

to do in what's referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment after the thousand years is complete when everyone is resurrected to life once again, to know the truth, to receive the truth, people who have never known it throughout history. Incredible!

...they are gathered as a branch and it's withered. And what happens to people? As soon as they're cut off, they begin to wither. As soon as they're cast out of the Church in that sense as far as a separation and disfellowshipment, right away they start withering spiritually. It starts leaving them.

It's amazing what happens to the human mind. It's like the Apostasy. For some, it happened overnight, ministers I knew for a long, long time. I'll share it again; I've shared it many times, but it's something we need to have deeply imbedded in our minds. One day, literally, talking to certain ministers, one individual in particular talking to him the next day I didn't know him. I didn't know the man. He was totally different. Everything he believed, everything he thought, the way he explained things, it wasn't the person I had known the day before and before that. Because what he had before, God's spirit, was gone; very evident because of what he believed.

He spent several hours on the phone with Joe Jr. and that's what happened to him. He began to listen and after a while his mind began to change, he began to make decisions on what he was hearing, and he rejected God. He rejected the truth he'd been given and that he had taught for years and years and years in the Church. Incredible! That's what can happen to the human mind. It's a scary thing once God's spirit is gone. That's how we're able to continue in the truth, is because of God's spirit. You can't continue on your own. That's why people who play games with God and still delve into sin and do the things they know they shouldn't be doing destroy their mind and begin to be removed from God's spirit.

I spent a long time on that, but again, this has to do with communication with God, being honest and truthful with God. That's why He says He wants everyone to worship Him in spirit. That's what we're talking about. Prayer. Spirit. A relationship with God. Wanting a continual flow of that into our life. Wanting God to dwell in us so that we can dwell in the Body, so that we can dwell in the Church, so that we can dwell in God, in the temple of God. That's what that means, so that we can continue to dwell within the Church, which is a spiritual relationship with God.

It says, **they are gathered and thrown into the fire, and they are burned.** So, if repentance doesn't happen at some point in time, like in the Great White Throne Judgment, life ends forever, for all eternity, never to have life again. That's what God's judgement is. Not eternal punishment but a punishment that is eternal because they can't be resurrected again. It's amazing how traditional Christianity has so twisted and distorted that.

**Verse 7—If you abide in me...** So, what does that mean? Well, you're living in the truth, for one thing. It's a simple thing. We're abiding in the truth. We're living by the truth. We're not out here doing our own thing that is opposite of what God says. We're not out here playing with fire that we know is sin. We're striving to fight it and conquer it and overcome it. That's what we're striving to do, and in that process, how do you do that? You cry out to God first of all to repent.

That's what God wants in our life. You grow in character every time you repent of sinning because you're acknowledging, "I'm wrong. You're right, and I want help to change, to fight against this." And if you slip and do it again, whatever it might be in life - perhaps the way you've spoken wrongly to someone else in a manner, in a way that God says you shouldn't - you repent of that and you continue to ask God. After a time, you start getting better at it, at doing what's right, not doing the wrong. You begin seeing it more in your life. You begin hating it more if you really want what God is offering.

Again, "abide in me," so again, in the truth. **...and my words abide in you.** What is that? God's truth again. The word of life, God's word. **...you will ask,** it's prayer, **you will ask what you desire.** People can read this in a wrong way. It's like, well, I desire a lot of things. I want this. I want that. No, the whole context through John 14, 15, 16, and 17 is about a relationship with God, to continue in the truth, to continue in the Body, to be able to have a relationship with God and to receive of His spirit in your life. That's what it means by Him dwelling in you; you're constantly receiving of God's spirit so that you can constantly see the truth.

If you can't constantly see the truth you can't rightly judge things out here. You can't judge how you think about other people. You're just on your own and you're judging them from your own carnality, which is what we tend to do as human beings. So, we can judge people from our own carnality but the smartest and the best thing you can do in your life is to cry out to God, "Help me to judge this right. Help me to see this properly."

So again, **you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.** God's desire is, again, that we bear much fruit, as it talks about here, which is a spiritual thing. **So will you be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, I have loved you.** Again, scriptures we're very familiar with.

It goes on down in **verse 10—If you keep my commandments...** What does that mean? You want to abide in the truth. You want to obey what God says. You don't want to sin. You don't want to resist God. You don't want to have spiritual idolatry in your life.

**If you keep my commandments,** if we dwell in the truth, in God's word, **you will abide in my love.** Why? Because the commandments, God's way of life, explains what love is. The first four commandments are how to love God. The last six, how to love one another. Very simple. Very basic in life.

Let's turn over to 2 Timothy 2. We talked about last week, about how Christ gave us an outline of prayer. It's not the only prayer people are to have in their life as some people sometimes take it in the world, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on..." People go through this and they just repeat it. After a while it's like a prayer at a meal. It's the same old thing day in and day out and after a while it doesn't mean anything. It's just a repetition. It's like doing the beads or spinning the wheel, you know, those prayers that different ideas that different religions have, spin the wheel or whatever you have to do of something that somehow God hears you.

No, what He wants to hear is from what's inside of you. That's how relationships are developed. They're not by going through a tedious routine of some sort, and that's the way it is in people's lives. It's got to be for the right reasons. You want the relationship so you're going to work at the relationship.

The very first it says, **Matthew 6:9—Therefore, pray after this manner: Our Father who is in heaven.** You can spend a whole sermon on that right there, the things we're to learn from that, the things we're to be reminded of that, to understand the greatness, the might of Almighty God, to understand that from the very beginning before there was anything ever created there was no physical universe, nothing like that. Incredible! How it talks about finally, when there was a beginning of a physical creation, that the angels shouted for joy for what they saw God was doing. Then to understand there was no spirit realm either and then God began to create whatever that is, a spirit realm in which spirit beings could dwell. You can't understand that. I can't understand that.

They're trying to understand the universe right now and they really can't. They can just see a little part that goes way, way out. "Think it's 15 billion light years, yeah." Then they come back and find out, "Oh, we're measuring this one wrong so..." I'm not going to get into that, but anyway, there is so much we don't know. We're just babies. We're infants. And yet the Great God put it all there.

**Our Father who art in heaven.** "You've created everything. You've given us life. You've given us something to experience in life." It's a beautiful thing to learn to savor life. Too many people just don't, don't live it for the right reasons. If this is all we had, make the most of it. It's a beautiful thing to have, to have experienced. But He offers it for all time. Incredible!

**Our Father who is in heaven; Your name...** How this should be translated, it's not translated properly. People say, "Hallowed be Thy name." Well, what does that mean? "I don't know..." People just repeat something. They have no idea what it is, what it means. It's just really poorly translated in the first place. **Your name is to be sanctified, to be made holy.** What does that mean? It means you have that responsibility. The person praying, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name," because of what you're going to do in your life, because of how you're going to live your life toward God, because God is already sanctified, which is just a word that means "set apart for holy use and purpose by God." It's by His spirit, by whatever He does. Well, He's already done all that, but it's up to us then what we want to be a part of.

"Hallowed be Your name" or "Your name is to be sanctified." Well, how is that possible? How can you sanctify God's name? Well, once you're called, once you receive of God's spirit that's what He tells us to do, sanctify His name. First of all, the first thing, one of the first things that should come to our mind is by what kind of an example are we in the Body of Christ, the Church of God? It's God's Church, the called-out ones. That's what that's about. The called-out ones of God. It's God's Church.

No one's in God's Church unless God draws them, gives them opportunity for it. We understand that because it has to do with having to understand the truth first of all in order to make decisions and what they're going to do. And so, if we respond then we have a part in setting apart everything of God that He gives to us for holy use and purpose.

So, turning over to 2 Timothy. We're to do our part. This is what this is about. It's about, the whole outline of prayer is about what we do. It's about our response to God. It's about our thinking toward God. We are to do our part in our relationship to set apart everything about God for holy use and purpose and prayer is an exceedingly large part of that.

Do we set apart prayer for holy use and purpose? Because that's what God gave it to us for. If we don't take advantage of the very thing whereby God says we can grow spiritually in order to produce much fruit in our life, as Christ said, "Thereby is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." Well, if we don't do our part and sanctify, set it apart for use in our life, it's not going to just happen. Prayer doesn't just happen in your life. You've got to make it happen. So, if you're not sanctifying, setting apart something God gave us, gave you for holy use and purpose... Like tithes! Like offerings! We set that apart for holy use and purpose, for God's use and purpose, ever how He determines, and we have faith in that. We rely upon that and we do our part.

Same thing in prayer life. You have to set it apart for holy use and purpose, and if you don't, just like with tithes, if we don't do it because we're not setting it apart, you're not going to last long in the Body. The same thing with prayer. If we're not growing in our prayer life and setting it apart for the use that God gave to us, we're not developing a relationship. Incredible.

So, prayer is a large part of setting apart God's name for holy use and purpose because you can't go before God without addressing Him, "Our Father, Holy Father," and how do you do that? At the end of the prayer, what do you say? "In the name of Christ," "In the name of Joshua the Christ," that's how He made prayer possible for us to have a relationship with Him, through that means because it's only through having sin forgiven that we can have a relationship with God. Incredible.

So, much of our prayer life then is about drawing closer to Him, isn't it? Do you want to set that apart to draw closer to God? Because how else are you going to do it? You can't fast without prayer. So that isn't any good without prayer in your life. So, prayer is a focal point indeed of sanctifying God's name, of sanctifying His truth. The more you set apart God's truth, what's that saying? You're esteeming the truth and you're recognizing there are things that conflict with that in your thinking and in your life, and you're repenting of those things. That's how you sanctify God's name, the Church of God. Because you're a part of it.

**2 Timothy 2:19—Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His.** God is the one who has to call a person. God is the one who determines when someone is to be drawn to become a part in a relationship with Him. What an incredible thing. Over 6,000 years to understand that as a whole, except here toward the end of this time, that before this there are people who have been drawn, just like in the first 4,000



years -- not that many in the world ever had an opportunity to have a relationship on a spiritual plane with God.

Now, the nation of Israel did on a physical plane, but a physical plane only. It wasn't a spiritual plane at all and they couldn't do it very well. That's what their example is. Without God's spirit they couldn't live that law, that way of life. That's why they always rebelled.

To understand that there is only 144,000; primarily, that has been God's main focus over 6,000 years. God knows those. He's doing the building. He's constructing the temple. Every piece of that temple, of that first 144,000, very specific. Everyone is going to fit into their place. Then it just gets larger and larger as time goes on the next thousand year and the one hundred years beyond that.

**God knows, the Lord knows those who are His. And, Let every one who names the name of Christ depart from sin (iniquity).** That's a part of sanctifying God's name - departing, fleeing sin, hating it, learning to hate sin, learning to hate carnal human nature, your own. I loathe my carnal human nature. I truly do, with all my being. But I have to live with it. But I have to fight it. I can't let it have control though it does. Every day it has its way in so many things and I have to fight against that, and I have to cry out to God to do things His way, to be of His mind. I have to ask for help of His spirit and I have to repent of the things that I screw up, that I do wrong, and if we really see and grasp and understand, that's the way our life is and that's how God molds and fashions us, by that relationship with Him. He says, **depart from iniquity.**

**Verse 20—But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and clay; some to honor, and some to dishonor.** In other words, just using something physical, if you just want to look at something physical here, there are some things that you place greater value upon, that you handle differently, or you deal with differently in the sense of your feeling of value toward it. If you're looking at it strictly on a physical, not by some attachment. Because many things you might say even have, just have an attachment that it means something to you.

This is talking about something a little differently in the sense of something physical that has value in it, that you might be more careful of. If I have on a Timex \$15 watch, I'm not as concerned in my mind about maybe misplacing it or damage coming to it as I would if something more expensive that I'm going to be a little more careful of and guard a little more closely. I hope that makes sense to you.

Women with the wedding ring, a diamond in it. You're going to be a little more careful with that than you might be something else in your life because you value that more—in many ways—but especially, there's a gem in there too and you don't want to lose it.

There are things in a house. That's what it's talking about. There are things in a house that a person may spend more money on that you have a sense of feeling of greater value toward it. Other things you might have a glass that it gets broken and when you have a bunch of people

over, and it's a dollar, \$5. It's crystal. Oh, that's \$15 or whatever. "It's okay, don't worry about it." It's a \$30 piece of crystal! So, you might have to fight self a little bit more, but you have a sense of different value toward different things. That's the example that's being given here.

**In a great house/in a house there are vessels of gold and of silver, and some things of wood and of clay that...** In the sense of the value you place on it. Something happens to it, some to honor and some to dishonor. In other words, there's some that you show respect more toward in how you might treat it, handle it and so forth than you would other things.

**Therefore, if a person will cleanse them...** So the example is just using something physical here to show something spiritual.

**Therefore, if a person will cleanse themselves from these,** the things that don't have the value, the same value in the sense of something spiritual, to dishonor. There are some things that people can show greater honor. Again, this is a little bit awkward in some ways as to how we might look at it. But if we understand it spiritually there is a lot here.

**...if you cleanse yourself from these, they shall be a vessel unto honor.** It's using an example of something physical here, that there are things in life that we should show greater honor to in the sense of how we think and how we feel and other things in our life that we want to get rid of or we don't want to have in the same way we want something else. We want to have the things that are more valuable, in that respect, and so it's using an example here that's a little awkward in some ways, but again, we're to in our lives seek to have the things that are more valuable, the things that have the greater honor spiritually. That's the example being given.

It says here that **they shall be a vessel unto honor.** That's the desire we should have, a desire that our life be something unto honor, the gold, more precious in that sense in a relationship toward God. Not something that's not growing as it should be, that's not as useful as it should be, could be, whatever. This is the analogy that's being given here.

It's like the one in Corinthians that talks about everyone has to build, but how you build is important - whether you build upon wood, hay, and stubble. That example is given because all three of those can be burned up when a fire comes along. It talks about then gold, silver, and precious stone. Those things don't burn in a fire and so those things will last. We can understand that on a spiritual plane. That's what this is talking about.

**...unto honor, sanctified, and useful.** So, we want to be sanctified. We want to continue to be set apart for holy use and purpose. How do you do that? By responding to God, by sanctifying God's name. Because then the example you set in the Church of God becomes important. You know that when you're in community and people know you, and on the job, whatever it might be, they know that you don't keep the same times they do in the sense of you have to have off Friday when the sun goes down and people learn that. They see it when you're not around or they know when you're not being called: "Why isn't 'so and so'...? We have to rotate on every four weeks (or

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whatever it is) and be here on the Sabbath. Why doesn't 'so...'" "Because they have a religious conviction of not working on the Sabbath so they will come in on a Sunday, or whatever, but they won't do it on that day."

Anyway, the point being is that in time people begin to know you and they know certain things about you and how different you are. You take a certain time off in the fall, parents take their children from school and go to a Feast of Tabernacles, and teachers find out. So, if you're not setting a right kind of example and they know you and they see certain things, and perhaps you lose your cool with someone and you start cursing them out or chewing them out or get in an argument with someone, and they're like, "Well, you're not very Christian," because they're going to judge from a physical, carnal way.

That's what this is talking about. What kind of an example do we set? So, is that important to us, that people know us. So how are you living your life? Are you careful about those kinds of things? Or does it even enter the mind, that someone who may know you, see you do something that doesn't really reflect someone who is striving to live a relationship and a right life with God? Does that ever happened in people's lives? Absolutely.

So, what does it say? It surely isn't sanctifying God's name. It isn't setting apart God's name for holy use and purpose. On the contrary; it's trampling all over it by our bad example, by our not reflecting what we should in community or in family or by relatives.

Get invited over to a relative's house and—this happens—and so they bring you out the ole' pork roast. That's the centerpiece. So, rather than offending them, "Okay." You'll eat it there because you don't want to offend them. Well...? "Well, Mr. Armstrong did that one time. I read where..." To use that example of what he talked about? I've heard people in the Church through time since that happened, of what he did before a world leader. It never happened again because he set up a system then from that point forward to make sure that everyone was ever informed if it had to do with government situation where there were rulers, kings, presidents, and whatever at a meeting that there was going to be a meal, that they did appropriate preparation for it as far as Mr. Armstrong was concerned.

In families that we already know, and you know what's going to happen in a lot of cases, people are to know. Why? Because you're different! We shouldn't be embarrassed by that. We should want to honor God. We should want to sanctify God's name because God says don't put that in your mouth, don't put that in your body because it's not healthy for you. It's not a spiritual thing, it's a physical thing, but it can become spiritual if you're spirit isn't right toward it, that you don't care, that you don't want to honor God or you'd rather honor your relative than to honor God. That's the contrast in those kinds of situations when something happens.

That's just one example of something very puny physically that can change a great deal as to what is your relationship like now with relatives and family and different ones. I've known of

situations where people just get in knock-down drag-outs. Well, how are we sanctifying God as an example by how we're living toward them if we get caught up in their drama and respond in the same sort of way? I hope that all makes sense. If you've ever had it in your life it makes sense. You will know.

So again, we are to be vessels unto honor because that honors God. It's setting apart God's name in our thinking. Those are choices you have to make in your life. If you esteem and honor God and what God's law and God's way of life is you'll live that without embarrassment, without apologizing for it.

One thing that just irks the you-know-what out of me, when someone is apologetic for God's way of life, that somehow you're kind of embarrassed by having to mention it, the Sabbath or the Holy Days. On the contrary! If you honor God, you love God, you're going to esteem that and you're going to be thankful that you have the opportunity of being an example for something they've never heard before. One day, as it talks about, they're going to glorify God. When? In the day of visitation when God works with them. Then they're going to understand what you did and why they treated you the way they did then. "Oh boy, I sure treated you lousy over that."

That's what's going to affect people inside. They're going to be pricked in the heart one day when they realize how nastily, in some cases, they treated some of God's people because of them standing up for what was true, when they come to understand, "Boy, you did the right thing! And did I ever treat you bad. I am so sorry for that." Those kinds of things are going to happen. But if you're apologetic for it it's like, "How did you ever make it? Why are you there?" In many cases, people aren't going to be for that very reason.

**...and useful.** It means "fit; for fit service" in that respect, **for the master's use.** We're all here for a purpose and we are to reflect God's way of life. The way to become stronger in that is by a relationship with God. If you really want to honor God in your life these things will mean a great deal to you inside. Someone after God's own heart. Someone who really wants God's way of life and is thankful for the opportunities of standing up for what is true regardless of what someone else does to you.

It doesn't matter what anyone else does to you. A lot of people have died in God's Church because they stood up for what was true. They've been persecuted for what was true. They did it in strength and boldness and in gratitude that they could be that kind of an example.

I think of Stephen, right away as soon as the Church was started, stoned to death because all of a sudden he was given of God's spirit in a very powerful way to preach something, to teach something so powerfully so, and the people responded so badly, so horribly that they stoned him to death and he just kept at it, thankful to do it. That's the spirit he had. That's the mind he had. Incredible! So, sometimes we may suffer until the end. So be it. Because we know that's only the beginning.

If you're convicted of God's way of life you know your life is in God's hands and what other hands would you ever want to be in? In your own hands? Hardly. What can you do to change things in life and give life and make life richer and better on a spiritual plane? Diddly squat, unless God's in it.

**Hebrews 10:24—let us consider**, which is just an expression that means, “Let’s think about this,” “Let’s stop and think about this,” **how to...** the word they used here in a lot of translations, “provoke,” but it means to move in the sense of stirring, to encourage, but to stir is literally how it means, **to move or stir one another to love**, and this is the word “agape,” **and to good works**.

Well, how do you do that? What is the most powerful way that most in the Body of Christ have opportunity to do that even amongst ourselves with one another? What’s the most effective and meaningful way? One of the most powerful is by your very example. It’s by your example, what you do, how you do it, how you live God’s way of life, your conversation, on and on it goes. That’s all a part of sanctifying God’s name, because you love God’s way of life and that’s what you want to reflect in your life in your speech and what comes out of your mouth, in your actions and what you live.

**...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some.** Now, this has been misused in times past because of a lack of understanding, that it was as though this was strictly about keeping of the Sabbath, and it’s not. It’s more than that. Certainly, that can be a part of it if someone is not including that as a part of their relationship to God. Because that’s the first thing that comes in our life, is an importance of our relationship to God and assembling together with God. One of the most meaningful ways you do that during the week is in prayer. It’s in your prayer life! It’s not just on the Sabbath day coming before God, going before God. It’s about a relationship to God, a prayer life.

**...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.** So again, yes, on the Sabbath day, fellowship with one another in the Church. Yes, these are all part of this. **...assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting**, encouraging, as the word is, **one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching**. So again here, there is that which we are to do in the sense of encouraging each another by example, by fellowship...by fellowship with one another.

We got an interesting email. We have elders reports that come in every month, and they’re supposed to every month. Anyway, we got one here, and sometimes it’s just a matter of a communication. Sometimes people just send something of something that happens and their response to it, or whatever. But anyway, an individual made comment about how that last week’s sermon had an impact upon them because they realize they started thinking about others. Not just in relationship with God, but communication when it comes to brethren within the Church and the importance then of contacting others or being in contact, especially at a time like this and what the Church has been going through, is more important now than ever before.

The conversation, or communication to us in that continued on and it was like it was somewhat disconcerting in some situations because it was like if I didn't do this there are some I don't think I would ever hear from because it's not a two-way street. So, how much are we as a body doing this kind of thing regularly? How much do we esteem something that God has given us to set up? We have an opportunity, though it isn't what it used to be, because that was hard.

I'll tell you what. People who went through the Apostasy, that was hard, having nearly 100,000 baptized members, that you could go to different churches, like Cincinnati had five churches, in all congregations several hundred people in each congregation, get together for a Holy Day 1500-plus people just in one little city like that, and city by city by city and huge, incredible Feast of Tabernacles of 12-15,000 people at each location. You got used to that kind of environment. Then all, of a sudden, for an Apostasy that was prophesied for the end-time to come along to decimate that, and it wasn't there anymore, I'll tell you, that just hurt like mad! People you once knew, like I mention that one minister, friends, shared so much together, food together, went to God's house side by side, counsel blended sweet, as the Psalm goes. Then for them to turn totally against everything they'd ever been given as far as truth was concerned, turn against you because you're not doing the same thing they are. Those things hurt!

Now look at what God has given. A small body. We should treasure even more so, especially people who went through the Apostasy, what we do have and the importance of being in contact with each other.

**...do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting...** How in the world can anyone exhort or encourage or give encouragement to anyone if there is no communication? This is a part of exactly what this is about, see? It's up to us how valuable, how much we value this. How much do we value God? Because the Body of Christ is God's. It's God's. How much do we set that apart in our thinking? How valuable is that to us? "Hallowed be Your name." "Your name is to be sanctified." God's name is in every person who is baptized, every one of us. That's why it's so important how we think toward each other, how we judge one another. Because we belong to God. We're God's servants. That's why it's so dangerous sometimes in how we judge. We've got to be so careful of that.

Then how we communicate toward one another? God wants to see, just like what we're experiencing this weekend at a campout they've had once a year for some time. Not everybody always able to come to it except those who are closer, but it's awesome when you can have that kind of environment to spend more time together on an occasion like that. Like at the Holy Days or like, especially, the Feast of Tabernacles and things you're able to do in that. There's just an air about it that's unique. You know what that means because of your experiencing it. But you have to maintain it.

If you want that to grow like you want your relationship with God to grow? Your relationship to God will actually grow if you will enhance that relationship with one another. Because God's in a

lot of people. Not as many as it used to be in Worldwide, but within the Body today we're very blessed to have all that we have, though as small as we are at this point. Which is getting ready to change before long.

I am so looking forward to that. I thought I might mention there is a new video out now. At some point they'll be used. One is geared toward the scattered Body, this one here is, and it's about the fact that there was an abomination of desolation. We're just trying to zero in on certain specific subjects to make them shorter because people's attention span now a days is so much shorter. But that's the way it is with YouTube now. Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen maybe, if you can hold my interest. But not forty-five minutes like I've done in some at the beginning. We're trying to be very specific and trying to narrow these down. To me it's a powerful tool if so used. It will be used at some point.

I mentioned, it's geared toward some of the scattered Body because then we have the next one coming out that will be as well because they're advertised on YouTube toward those particular sites, which will make some people very happy. The next one is the Apostasy. They're the same thing, but again here, just zeroing in on that because they're more specifics about that that the scattered Body might relate to, whereas the rest of the world, "What are you talking about?"

So anyway, to realize where we are in time? We have known for a long time that there is going to come some point where people who have been scattered are going to begin having their minds shaken to be awakened from that spiritual sleep that they're in. Because, still God's people. They're just asleep.

Just like any one of us at any point in time after the Apostasy, ever how long or short that period of time was, we understand that state, what can happen to a human being, to be of a Laodicean spirit and have to be awakened out of that. God is the one who does it. It's something beyond a calling, if you will, in that respect, because a calling in the beginning is a big change out of the world to have a relationship with God. But an awakening is another matter spiritually that can happen in people's lives as well, that a person can fall asleep spiritually and God can at any point in time can awaken them.

Just like those who are going to die, who have fallen asleep spiritually and be in the Great White Throne. They've already been baptized, it's just to being awakened. They'll be awakened and the things they're going to see? Incredible! That they're going to understand instantaneously, just right away! Incredible. Well, we know we're going to come up to that point in time.

So, I'm excited by that. I look forward to that. Because there are thousands and thousands and thousands of people out there that are going to be given the opportunity to make those choices here before everything comes to an end. Then what lies beyond that you really can't imagine. To grasp the whole world having the ability to know what is true and to begin a process of leaving whatever it is that they were held bondage to in their lives, whether it be Buddhism or Hinduism

or traditional, we know what that is in the world, to be separated from it because now they understand what is true?

It's sometimes I go on the site there. I've read some things that some have said and like three days and three nights or did Christ die on a cross, to show that he died on a pole, that his hands were up above his head and it's like it's not important to people. It's like, "Isn't it enough? He died for us. That's enough. It doesn't matter how." Well, yes, it does. "Was he in the grave, in the heart of the earth three days and three nights?" "Well, it doesn't matter. He was resurrected. That's what's important to us." They can't help it.

Because it is important. It proves whether or not he was the Messiah. To believe something else, for a day and a half from good Friday to Sunday morning for a day and a half cuts in half what Christ said would prove he was the Messiah. You think, "You don't think that's important?" Well, that just shows without God's help people can't help it. So, what an awesome thing when people begin to see what is true and begin to see that those things, "Oh, it is important."

I don't know about you, but again, I feel you do, but again, something to pray about, to pray about those things that are out there, to pray about the time we're in. How much do we really feel that concern and desire for people who were scattered? How much desire and concern do we have that we mention those things in our prayers about the rest of the world, that we're so looking forward to the time when God begins pouring out His spirit, as He says He will at the end-time here and that people are going to begin to see what is true. What an awesome thing! Can't imagine what that's going to be like.

**...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some.** I can say with absolute certainty that I know that there are too many who are not applying this in their life in their relationship with others in the Church. Because each one of us has a responsibility to build relationships with others in the Church. They don't just happen. You have got to make the effort. Well, you don't dial anymore, but to push the buttons in. Shows my age. Some say, "What do you mean 'dial'?" The younger generation.

So again, to call someone on the phone? It's not a lot of work and you've got them, and you can start talking. What a miracle in this age we live in. Can you imagine people being resurrected one day and the things they're going to see? I mean, it's going to be shocking, just as it's going to be for us when God begins to reveal more things to us that we have no knowledge of. We're so infantile in understanding of things in this universe. Truly are. So, you have to work at developing a relationship with others in the Body of Christ, and if you don't make any effort of it, how much do you esteem God, how much do you love God, how much do you value what God has given us in one another? Because it's all about God. It really is. Sad.



...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching. What day? Just the time we live in right now, to understand how dangerous this world is today... Anyway.

For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins (verse 27) but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. We have to have a lot of knowledge to grasp what this is about because people who just hear it don't know what the entire story is here. But we have to be mindful of this if we're going to make changes in our life. Does that really exist in our thinking? Does it exist in our thinking that we're not honoring the Body of Christ, the Church of God like we should?

That's why I marvel about what it says in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, up through there, when you start talking about taking of the Passover. Especially in Chapter 11 when it starts going through there and it is talking about not being able to discern the Body. And people look at that, have looked at that physically, primarily, but the literal reality is it's something spiritual. Do we understand, value, rightly discern God's Church, the Body of Christ, the Church of God?

So, going on in verse 28—He who despised Moses' law... Why is this mixed in with this thing about prayer? Because if we don't get these things on a physical plane in relationship with one another, how on earth do we get the importance of a spiritual relationship we're able to have with God Almighty on a spiritual plane, period? Because that's on a spiritual plane. So, we're tried and we learn in a physical world. We have the Church to learn these things in so that we can begin to grasp the things that are spiritual in a greater way.

Family - how do you develop the relationship in your own families or the Body, the Family of God, the Church of God, and a relationship then with God where it all comes from in the first place?

...but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much worse punishment do you suppose will be thought worthy who has trodden the Son of God under foot, and has counted the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, an unholy thing?

Now, we might think "I would never do that!" ...and has brought insult to the spirit of grace? Well, the reality is every time we sin, yes, we do this. That's what we're doing spiritually in a relationship with God. The same thing is true that if we're not building relationships when we have the opportunity within the Body of Christ, within the Church of God, we're doing the same thing, "trodden underfoot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant, which he was sanctified, an unholy thing," because we don't value then what has been made holy by God. The Church of God. That reveals so much about a relationship with God. Because you have to pray for these things. You have to pray how to do this, how can I do this in a better way within the

Church? It starts with some very physical things - dialing a phone and saying hello. Simple. Easy to do.

These are simple, physical things sometimes that we can understand in a better way than we can spirit or spiritual things. But if we can see those, we can begin to grasp more deeply what is spiritual in a relationship with God, how important it is you don't have to use that cell phone to talk to God any time of day. You just pray to God. You ask for forgiveness of your sins. You ask for His holy spirit to give you ability to see and grasp things in order to better serve Him, to honor him.

**1 Peter 3:15—but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.** That's what this is all about. Sanctify. What does that mean? Set apart for holy use and purpose. That's what the word means. Each one of us has to do this, sanctify, set apart for holy use and purpose, God in your hearts. That's exactly what it means to sanctify God's name in that prayer that Christ gave as the outline.

**Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready,** as this example is here in what Peter is discussing, **and be ready always to give a defense...** It says, "give an answer," but it's about a defense. It's about standing up for what you believe. It doesn't mean to be on the defensive in the sense of apologetic in any fashion or form or whatever. It just means that you take a stand and do what you're going to do because it's right before God. It doesn't mean anyone else is going to grasp or understand it, even in a relationship with one another.

**...but be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason (accounting) of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.** It can happen with brethren in conversation. You have to think about that for a while in relationship within the Body, and it can be in the world as well, obviously. But it's all in how we think. It's how we think toward God.

One of the things that used to irritate me the most... Well, not the most. Many things have irritated me in times past. But one thing that I would hear sometimes from Church members would be that when they had this conversation of a kind of confrontation with someone else, whether it be with relatives or someone on the job or whatever it might be, or with a teacher taking children out of school... "Well, the Church won't let me do that." Huh. So, it's not that "I don't want to do it." It's not that "I wouldn't do it," but "The Church won't let me do it." It's like saying, "God won't let me do it." So, hmmm, what is it that God won't let you do?

I hope you understand what I'm saying. It's like, "This is my defense." It's not because "I'm convicted of the way of life that God has given us." It's not because "It's my conviction because I'm going to the Feast of Tabernacles, and basically, in my mind, you can accept it or not, I really don't care because I'm going to the Feast of Tabernacles." But you say it in a nicer way. "I'm sorry, but this is my conviction, and this is what we must do because this is what we believe." They may ask you a few more questions and you tell them. If they want more you tell them a little bit more. "Well, this is what we learn as far as what it says in Leviticus 23." You don't have

to get into scriptures. I'm not telling you to do that. But you can say this is an annual observance. "What's it called?" "It's called the Feast of Tabernacles." "The Feast of Tabernacles? Well, how does it have that name?" Well, anyway, you're ready to give any kind of answer if anyone wants to ask. But the point being is you're going to do what is right, you're going to stand for what is right before God. It's just the way you are. What a beautiful thing.

**...be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason, an accounting, if you will, of the hope that's in you with meekness and fear.** So, you don't do it out of pride and haughtiness in any fashion or form, but you do it because you would be afraid to do it, something against God, against what is true and right.

**...having a good conscience.** What an incredible thing, the conscience. How do we think? Are we embarrassed by sin? Are we ashamed of sin? Are we bothered by sin? Because sometimes if people begin to sin after a while the mind can become kind of numb to that and excuse why it's important, "Well, I've got that insurance payment to make," or "I've got this house payment to make." We don't realize sometimes by doing the very thing we think we have to do on a physical plane that we're going to cut our self off from God more in or life.

What's more valuable to us? Some suffering for a while, making some changes in what we have to do? Because everyone has to. As a whole, people just have to make changes when they're first called and drawn into the Church. They really do. Because you learn something different. You work six days a week, not seven. You quit at Friday sundown. You don't just work on a few more hours if the boss needs you to put in a little more overtime or whatever. You live by a certain standard.

That's because you sanctify God's name. You're going to be a right light and a right example because it's in your heart you want to do those things because it's pleasing to God. You want to be able to make a stand for what is true and what is right, even when someone is going to attack you for it. Because it happens.

If anyone has been around the Church for any length of time, I don't know of anyone who probably hasn't experienced someone attacking them for their stand, for what they believe, and trying to get them to do differently.

"Having a good conscience." It's so valuable to have a good conscience because it's a matter of something in your thinking toward God, and if we don't have a good conscience what happens? What are we doing? And does that affect prayer life? Yeah. That's why sometimes people quit praying. Because they don't have a good conscience. Because they just can't be honest and truthful with God and pray to God openly. God already knows everything you've done. So, it's your choice. Are you going to have a good conscience toward God and want to be cleansed of the thing that are wrong in the mind?

It's like my wife and myself. There have been occasions in our life, many, where we've done a lot of visiting over the years. Different church areas. And sometimes there are situations where people won't come up to us. They'll almost do anything to kind of skirt around, be someplace else. If they see you coming it's like kind of turning to the side. It's not done maliciously but it's done because they can't open up because something is in their life, and they can't.

That's what sin does. Sin can hurt a person to where they can't have a right relationship with others in the Body. I don't know how to describe that any other way. I could get more specific about it. Because it happens and generally her and I, we'll even make comment about it later on, about different situations in people's lives.

We know that something is wrong there. We hope they'll come to a point in time where they can break through whatever it is that they're dealing with. We don't know what it is. But we know that spiritually something is wrong there. If they can break through that, what an awesome thing! If not, in time it'll come out because God brings everything out. If they continue to get worse and worse and worse it won't be long, and they'll be gone. That's what happens.

It's like hiding. It's like Adam and Eve. That's what it is when they were in the garden. It's like we'll kind of hide here because then God can't see us. Like, don't you get it? He made you. He made everything that's here. He knows everything that's going on. He knows you. He knows what you're thinking. I'm sure He didn't tell them that part, but anyway, you can't hide from God. But it's that carnality in us that sometimes that's what we do when there is sin. We hide from God. We hide from the ministry. We hide because it's like they can see us, they can see something, and I just can't be myself around them. It's a weird thing, it really is, but it happens.

**...having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation.** The word means "conduct," but it can, obviously, come out in conversation. That's why it's translated like that. Because most often that's what happens in human life. Most of everything that we mess up in comes out in our words towards someone or at someone or whatever it might be in how we say it. But it can be actions as well.

But, so again here, **That they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conduct in Christ.** Now, that doesn't mean it's going to happen right away. For most this isn't going to be until the Great White Throne.

**For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good,** meaning it is the will of God that if need be we stand for what is true and right because we love God, because we seek to sanctify God's name, God in our life.

**...for the will of God, to suffer for doing good, than for doing evil.** It's very simple. Very basic.

One more scripture here, 1 Corinthians 3. So, all this is all so basic, as it states right here in **1 Corinthians 3:16**. So simple in so many ways, but it really isn't simple. **Do you not know that you are the temple of God?** So, we have to understand that of ourselves, that if we're a part of the Church, if we're a part of the Body of Christ we're a part of the temple. This is something that Paul was telling the congregation or the people there in Corinth. **Do you not know that you're the temple of God?** You're in the temple! You're a part of it. In other words, your behavior, how you live, this should be evident to you.

Now, taking that a step further we should know that in every other person who's in the Church, that they're a part of the temple of God, and if we believe that with all of our being it's going to affect how we think toward them, how we treat them and so forth.

**Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?** This is something we have to be deeply convicted of. We know! If you know the truth, you know that the spirit of God dwells in you. If you're able to see it, if you're able to receive the things God gives from Sabbath to Sabbath you know it's because of the spirit of God. It's the only way you can see it. On and on it goes.

**If anyone defiles the temple of God... Sin.** Because that's what it is. Defiling the temple is anywhere there is sin. That's what we have to repent of. If anyone defiles the temple of God - in other words if we won't cease defiling the temple of God, this is what results, **God will destroy; for the temple of God is holy**, same word, sanctified. We've all been set apart for holy use and purpose by God. We know what that is. For some, it's to be part of the 144,000. For other it's to a small, but a beginning foundation, if you will, for a new age, of those who live on into the Millennium. Awesome, to understand such opportunity - that we don't really grasp what that means for us, for you.

**If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.** Awesome!

We'll stop there. But to understand these things don't just happen. This relationship, things we're talking about, grasping these things, setting apart God for holy use and purpose, prayer is the most powerful tool we've been given to develop that. Because in that relationship with God that's what affects our thinking and our mind then toward God. It's God's spirit working in that mind transforming the way we think that gives us growth in that thinking. Powerful, powerful tool.