

#### **Volume 2, Day 4: Engaging in a Garden of Fellowship**

A lot of people talk to me about whether they should start going to church. They ask where they need to be involved in community where they can engage in fellowship. We all do engage in fellowship in some community. It is simply human. You likely engage with multiple groups of common unity. Now that you are born again, it helps to be linked in a cultural group that is intent to follow God. Most Christians find this in a church. However, church can be a group of believers from various churches. Fellowship is important!

I'm not as interested in people getting into a church right away or getting into fellowship as I am interested in people finding a conversation with God that expands into a conversation with other people. You will end up in fellowship either way. And there is a good chance that one of the places you have fellowship will be in a local church assembly.

God loves community. He is a community of three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit living, working and communing together. And when they invite people into that relationship, they also invite people into relationships with each other in community. Fellowship in God is irresistible. It's not an obligation. Just like my wife and her gardens. Wherever she lives, gardens bloom, because she is a gardener.

She loves the beauty of flowers and the harmony of various colors and plant textures coming together to make this beautiful masterpiece. That's God's passion too. He is gardening people to build this living temple as God connects brothers and sisters in local areas as well as around the world under one head, Christ. So, as your conversation with God grows, so will fellowship.

### **Volume 2, Day 5: Be Humble Enough to Ask for Help**

With other people alongside to share this journey with you, fellowship with and in God unites our hearts. It is not about sitting in a meeting together. It's actually growing in a conversation with other brothers and sisters who are experiencing the same life in God or something similar to what you are. We don't have to look alike any more than all those flowers look alike. It's the harmony and unity of the whole that makes it special to God and will make it special to your life as well.

That's why I talk about community, not as an obligation. You need fellowship. It's actually an irresistible reality. Knowing God and knowing his family will cause you to experience great life and health together. Now, how do you find those relationships? If you know an older brother or sister who's on this journey, and I don't mean older by age, ask them to help you. They may live just down the road a bit from you and they know things about God that you would like to know. Don't be too proud to admit that they've got a journey you would like to have. Let them help you with yours. Ask them.

Most people enjoy helping others, especially by invitation. It's as simple as asking, "Could we get together once in a while and explore what this journey's like?" So maybe you don't know someone like that, but you've got some friends asking similar questions. Explore a similar journey with them, maybe even watching Lifestream.org Engage videos together. Simply get together once in a while. It doesn't have to be every week. It doesn't have to be a formal meeting. Meet over a table in a coffee shop or in your home. Explore this relationship with God together. You will be amazed at what your insights, combined with theirs, will produce in revelations of the love of God.

## **Volume 2, Day 6: The Right Kind of Conversations**

Fellowship can be around any one of a vast number of common interests. Some are about sports. Others are about vocational pursuits. Still others are about any other topic. So fellowship which will assist you in this particular journey, must be about common interest in knowing God in an intimate way.

In your talks with others there are several useful questions to be asked and answered. "What's God showing you?" "Where are you struggling?" "Where are you getting it right?" "Where do you feel like you've grown due to something that was a significant struggle in your life?"

Here's what you'll notice. The conversations I want you to engage in are not religious conversations. What I mean by religious conversations, is ones that usually make you feel accused or they focus on your performance in a behavioral sense. They feed your guilt. They make you stressful, competitive, or conflicted. They make you want to pretend to be something you're not, instead of living in the reality of what you in reality are. If you're caught up in those, you're stuck in a religious fellowship, not a relationship.

The kind of conversations that induce loving feelings toward God are very different from religious ones. I'm referring to those that are more relaxed. They're real. They are genuine. They're enlightening and refreshing, as well as encouraging. You go away from them wanting to trust God more, wanting to follow Him with more of your own heart. Those who set you at ease in God's life are those who are having a better conversation with God than the performance overtones often associated with religion. You might actually find these good conversations outside of church circles.

### **Volume 2, Day 7: Don't Worry, Don't Hurry**

Although you might find great fellowship in an established church congregation, if you attend one, it may not be God's first priority to connect you with these kinds of conversations, so don't avidly pursue church attendance or membership. In His time, God will bring you into His family in circles which most promote the unconditional love of God and His amazing grace. The Bible says, "The Holy Spirit sets us in the family as He desires."

He'll bring the right people alongside you when the right time comes. It may happen first on the internet. A lot of people do conversations by email, texts or Zoom virtual meetings. He will connect you with folks who have a similar passion for God. These can grow into some of the most lovely and deeply satisfying relationship. But eventually God will give you some local face-to-face connections.

Some of the people He gives you to walk with may even be just starting their journey. They may not even know they're on one yet. But they're people with whom you can be really genuine and vulnerable. They're people you can care about. And if you find that reality, you find the hope of a relationship growing that will invite you into the larger community God is building around the world.

There is a mutual mentoring discipleship program entitled "Day Primers – Abandoned to God" which enables two people, even if neither is theologically trained, with the Holy Spirit between them, to explore a collection of writings of men and women inspired by their passionate intimacy with God. These guided readings of Scripture, Devotionals, and Books spawn exploration of the heart of God such that the individual revelations shared face-to-face erupt into even more inspirations for both.

### **Volume 2, Day 8: Misery Caused by Contradiction**

What do we do when God still seems distant in our attempts to come to know him? One person wrote, “I listened to the transition series eight years ago, and in that series you gave similar advice as to how to begin the journey. The next day I started to pray, as you suggested, I stuck with it for a while, probably one week, and then I turned to other things that I thought would help me on this journey. Today, it still feels that I’m just as far away from God as I was eight years ago. I struggle with anxiety and depression, and fear that I will not have the relationship with God you describe.”

Another man wrote, “Your books have been very liberating for me, but having been on this journey for a good four years now, despite what can only be described as an authentic supernatural experience with Jesus, some 20 years ago, I have never felt more distant from God. My depression is acute right now, so I think about suicide many times a day. I am currently stressed with my stomach tied in knots continually. I have constant feelings of shame and guilt. I literally beg the Lord for help and feel like he just ignores me.”

If your experience resembles these, you have some wrong beliefs. You might also need medical attention to adjust chemical imbalances if they are hindering your comprehension. All of our feelings are triggered by what we believe. Fear as a child was stimulated by our belief in boogey men and Santa Claus. “He know when you ... so be good...” Even when you believe many right things, when something else you believe contradicts a ‘right’ thing, you will experience confusion, frustration and misery. So as you hear new truth, find the conflicting old truths and dismiss them from your gallery of beliefs. This is a major obstacle to intimacy. Let God alone guide you into truth.

### Volume 2, Day 9: Feelings Follow Faith

Your relationship with God will only become deeply satisfying when you let His Holy Spirit guide you into God's truth, not the truth which has been passed on to you by well-meaning but sadly mistaken trusted sources. You may even have deduced these beliefs through your own wrong 'common sense.' Relationships in general, and particularly with God, require correct information about the other party. I was personally very dissatisfied with my relationship with God after 40 years of expecting God to do or be something that He is not!

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The fear of the Lord is respecting what He says about you and about Himself. If you will give yourself permission to change what you believe, that is when the wisdom of God's can finally change your heart. When you believe what the Holy Spirit tells you instead of your formerly trusted information, He brings peace as all confusion is eliminated. "You cannot be wrong, **sincerely enough**, to be right!" And you cannot properly interpret what is being said if you are mentally impaired.

Depression is rarely a cause. It is an effect. Usually it is the effect of biased reception of what is being expressed by others. And bias is simply the by-product of previously formed beliefs. The gospel of Jesus Christ is an example of this. The Pharisees called for Jesus' execution because their religious bias hindered them from accepting His newly proclaimed truth. So if you continue to languish, making little progress in these new teachings, explore the biases of your own beliefs that keep you from embracing these truths. Our emotions follow our beliefs as water seeks the lowest level. So, if you want to change your feelings, give yourself permission to change your beliefs.

## Vol. 2, Day 10: Relationship Is Not Behavior Management

If it's difficult for you to find intimacy with God, then try to find out what it is that causes you to believe things about yourself that promote depression. Seek out a professional counselor or life coach who has obviously attained to this love, joy and peace we are encouraging. This will not be just any professional or religious counselor or coach. It cannot be one who focuses on behavior management. It must be one that has made this journey. No others can help you unpack this.

If your emotional state is not such that you can be responsive to God's leading, this is an impossible journey. Actually, until you surrender all of your beliefs to God and let His Holy Spirit guide you as to which ones are valid and which are not, you cannot take this journey. Paul said in Romans 12:1 and 2. "I beg of you, brothers, to present your bodies (heart, soul, mind) as a living sacrifice... Don't be conformed to the thinking of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you can distinguish what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Notice that Paul states here that your mind must be renewed (**new thinking, new beliefs**) in order to be transformed!

Most of us dread believing outside our own box. You may have even heard someone say about this journey, "If you're the only one who believes this, you must be wrong!" My response is, "Then Jesus must have been wrong in suffering the Crucifixion since He was the only one who believed that He should." Only a tiny percentage of 'born again' persons begin this journey, let alone complete it! Just admit to God that you cannot do this, and **let Him** do it for you. "Not of works, lest you boast!"