

Developing your Devotional Life

Foundational Truth Volume 12

By Peter Tan

© Copyright 2008 by Peter Tan Evangelism. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher

The pdf copy of this book is A\$10. It has been provided free for those who can't afford it in order that they may be blessed and

grow spiritually. Please feel free to donate whatever amounts you can afford towards the upkeep of our ministry.

Donations can be made via PayPal to elshaddai1@bigpond.com.
Please contact us for any other form of donations:

Peter Tan Evangelism
PO Box 27
Belconnen
ACT 2616, Australia.

Email: elshaddai1@bigpond.com

We are still in the process of paper publishing of this book. If you are interested in the translation and publishing of this book, please write to Ps Peter Tan at the above PO address.

PREFACE

One of the first things every new Christian and believer are told to do is to have a special time with God on a daily basis; that is to develop their personal devotional life with God. Most people understand that it means finding time to pray, read the Bible, worship, etc. The problem is that there is very little writing about how to develop this area of the personal Christian life; although there is much material available for 'short-cut' devotionals like a small few paragraphs of inspirational stories put together in a calendar daily format sprinkled with one or two Scriptures. Others have a daily Bible reading program which is reasonably good.

However, in the long run, if Christians depend on shallow inspirational readings for their daily spiritual live, they will never really grow in the things of the Lord. It takes commitment, time and sacrifice to develop a good and solid relationship with another person. It would take the same amount of commitment, sacrifice and time investment if we truly want to develop a strong and solid relationship with our Lord.

This book is written to help those who want more from God, those who are seekers of God, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6). Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you; for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks find, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened (Matthew 7:7-8). It is hoped that it would lead everyone into a path of personal devotional life and Bible study that will set them on the road to greater things in God.

Pastor Peter Tan

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING A DAILY ROUTINE

Powerful men and women of God who have made major impact upon church history have begun the first steps of their spiritual lives in the daily routine of their personal devotional lives. John Wesley and George Whitefield are famous for their devotional prayer group, the ‘Holy Club,’ which meets at 4am for prayer during their college days. Each of them is well known to have spent hours with God on a daily basis. In fact, John Wesley regards himself backslidden if he did not succeed in spending his personal 4am time with God. Some other men and women of God prefer the night times, when they would spend hours waiting on God before climbing into bed for physical rest.

There is no such thing as a ‘right time’ for everybody. Every one of us is unique and some of us may prefer waiting on the Lord at night while others choose to rise early to enjoy the early hours of dawn. And at different phases in our lives, we might even change cycles between night and dawn times. The most important thing is to understand that we do need to devote a ‘major’ portion of our time (probably a minimum hour or more – no maximum, of course) each day to the pursuit of God and spiritual things. Outside of this minimum time, whether one is a morning person or a night person, we do recommend that the first few minutes of wake time or the last few minutes before sleep be especially given to a meditation routine which we will describe later in this book.

The One hour Principle

How much time is the bare minimum time that one must have in order to at least preserve one’s spiritual level living in our present society? While some people would see a tithing of our day (2.4 hours a day) minimum, the Bible does provide a clue as to the barest minimum time required. During the most critical time in His ministry when He needed His disciples to be in prayer, Jesus called on His disciples to wait in prayer with Him for at least one hour (Matthew 26:40). Unfortunately, the disciples were tired and sleepy and probably were unsuccessful in the ‘one hour’ prayer request that Jesus made of them. Never judge the spirituality of the manifestation by your own personal physical sleepiness or tiredness. At some of the highest revelations and powerful glory, the disciples were found drowsy and sleepy (Luke 9:32). They were all heavy with sleep during the most marvellous manifestation of Jesus’ glory and caught only the tail end of the revelation; which in latter times still made an impact upon their lives (2 Peter 1:17-18).

In his account of the visions of the Adullam orphanage children, H. A. Baker recounts how the children sometimes see demons lazily reclining under the table or upon a couch causing drowsiness amongst the other children who were praying (Visions beyond the veil by H. A. Baker, pages 80-81). Of course, this does not mean that all drowsiness and sleepiness is caused by demons. Sometimes it is pure physical tiredness and at other times a slight reaction of some individual physical bodies still adjusting to the spiritualized atmosphere. When the prophet Daniel was beginning to receive powerful visions from the Lord, his physical body had an adverse reaction to the higher level of God's presence and he was dizzy, drowsy, fainted and was weak for days (Daniel 8:27). The most important thing is not to judge things by the reactions of the physical body (it would be using carnal methods to measure spiritual things) for the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Sometimes the natural world and circumstances seem to show the very opposite of what is to happen spiritually. One would expect that some of the most powerful and glorious revelations and manifestations of the Spirit would occur during times of great travailing prayer, intercessions and worship. The history of revivals does record such things happening. Yet one must also understand that there are times when the opposite occurs. Kenneth Hagin received one of the first of eight visions that transformed his life and ministry during a time when natural circumstances caused a handful of people to attend a tent meeting (I believe in visions by Kenneth E. Hagin, pages 42-43). He described how on September 2nd 1950 it rained all day long at Rockwall, Texas and only a handful of about 40 people showed up. As all were Christians, he gave a short Bible lesson and invited everyone to the altar to pray. He described how he was not expecting what would follow next than he would expect to be the first man to land on the moon. While praying in tongues, he heard a voice say to him, "Come up hither." When he looked up, he saw Jesus and had his first powerful spiritual vision.

I believe that the one hour requirement that Jesus requested of the disciples speaks of the bare minimum time that one must spend time with God in order to at the least maintain one's spirituality and relationship with God while on earth. We all know that at this present time, the world is moving away from God into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. When you are in a river flowing in the opposite direction from where you want to go, it takes effort to swim against the current just to maintain your position. If there is no effort to swim in the opposite direction, one would be washed out to sea or wherever the river is travelling. The bare minimum represents the minimum time requirement to maintain one's spirituality in a carnal environment. It is for this reason that we

recommend spending an hour with God a day, praying in the Spirit and meditating on God and His Word. Of course, any extra time beyond that would be wonderful.

Reaping is preceded by sowing

No one would expect to have a harvest if they have not taken time to sow seeds that would potentially produce the harvest. For those who live such busy lifestyles that they still see no value in giving an hour or more each day to the pursuit of spirituality, we remind them that they should see this time as a valued investment that would reap benefits both spiritual and natural. Before purchasing a home or an important asset or an investment portfolio that would reap great natural benefits, people take time to explore, study, research and finally invest in these areas. How much more should we do so on an area that would reap not just temporal benefits in this life but spiritual benefits that would last for eternity. The study and application of God's Word and spirituality has benefits that would cause one to enjoy good success in this life (Joshua 1:8). All the work of one's hands would prosper (Psalm 1:1-3). There would be blessedness in one's life and even in areas beyond one's control (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). One should see devotional time as the most important investment one is making for this life and for eternity; thus one would have to *make* time for it and not just wait until free time is available.

It was a requirement for kings to have a special devotional time with God (Deuteronomy 17:18-19). They were even required to personally create a personal copy of their own Bible and spend time reading it *all* the days of their lives. Those who aspire to be leaders of nations, multinational corporations, and international ministries must create their own special devotional meditation Scriptures and spend quality devotional time with God and His Word if they want to achieve greatness in the kingdom of God and of men.

One must study to show oneself approved as a workman for God (2 Timothy 2:15). Only the Word of God provides us the doctrine, instruction, correction and inspiration by which we can make our day to day decisions that would affect both our lives and the lives of others around us (2 Timothy 3:16). An investment of time is required to help us spiritually, mentally and physically cope with all the things that we need to accomplish each day. And this time must be regular and steady to reap a regular and steady harvest. Daniel developed a spiritual habit of praying three times a day even from his early days (Daniel 6:10). Jesus *often* withdrew into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16).

Success Guaranteed

The Bible pronounces blessing upon the man who eschews evil company and spends his days and his nights meditating on God's Word (Psalms 1:2-3). The picture painted is that of a tree growing by a stream of water which one day bears fruit in its season. It is not a question of *whether* fruit will come but a question of *when* it will come, which is answered in the phrase 'in its season.' The same promise was given to Joshua at the beginning of his leadership and ministry over the children of Israel. The Lord promised that he will have good success if he meditated day and night on the Word of God (Joshua 1:8).

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we recognised that we can do nothing without Him and all that we are to achieve in this life, having made Him our Saviour and Lord, are to be done only in Him and through Him. As long as we abide in Him and in His Word, we are told that we will bear much fruit (John 15:4-5). Jesus frequently emphasized that we need to abide in His Word for this things to take place (John 14:23; 15:7; 17:6-8). The key to abiding in Him is to daily meditate upon His word.

Moses specifically told the Israelites that for the Word to be in their hearts, they needed to teach them diligently to their children, and talk of them when they sit in the house, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and when they rise up (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). In other words, they are to constantly surround themselves with the Word of God. The name of the Lord is powerful and a refuge for the righteous but the Word of the Lord is magnified even above the Name of the Lord (Psalms 138:2). It is the Word that gives us faith in God's Name. It is through the written Word that the spoken word of God will be brought forth by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13-14). It is through the spoken word that faith will arise in our hearts and without faith it is impossible to please God (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6)

Not one word or promise of God shall fail (1 Kings 8:56). Heaven and earth shall pass away but the word of the Lord shall endure forever. God's promises are more sure than the expected rising of the sun every morning. We only have to make sure that we remain good ground for the Word to be implanted into our lives every day (Matthew 13:23). Trusting in God's Word is trusting in the very source of all that is created in the Universe. By daily meditating on the Word of God, we are tapping upon the very source of power that created this Universe. God Himself guarantees His own Word (Hebrews 6:17-18).

CHAPTER 2

DAILY TRANSFORMATION

Many people want instant answers to their situations while others seek God only when they are in desperate situations; and some seek God when they realise they are in wrong or bad circumstances. The first group wants spirituality to be like speedy Gonzales (the cartoon mouse), the second group are desperados and the third repent when they are banditos. Unfortunately for these, the Bible advocates that we walk with God, we walk in the Spirit, and not treat God like a supermarket or a servant.

We need to develop a day by day walk with God. The Bible speaks of daily transformation (2 Corinthians 4:6). Jesus recommended that we live for each day (Matthew 6:34). As we spend time with God during our devotional and look into the face of God through His Word, we are daily transformed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). The context of this verse speaks about the reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue which Paul said that we, having the veil taken away, can now behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are being transformed. The word of God is the mirror that we should look at every day (James 1:22-25).

Growth by Daily Impartation

The things of the Spiritual World were not designed to be swallowed in one big gulp; they were designed to be partaken one portion at a time just like we have our physical daily infusion of air, water and food. When Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, besides laying the principle of the essentialness of God's Word for life, He was also speaking of the daily partaking of God's Word (Matthew 4:4). Each day, we can receive a fresh measure of the Spirit, of grace, of love, of glory, of faith, and of all the other wonderful realities of quickening spiritual substances of the Spiritual life. We might not have felt the immediate effect in our lives (sometimes we do) but through time its effect, compounded over months and years, have a revolutionary impact upon all of our life.

Success in both the natural and spiritual world is by growth and not merely by our efforts. We *grow* into success rather than *work* for success. We *grow* into the mighty things of the Spirit rather than *strive* for them. We *grow* into the character of Christ rather than *trying* to be like Christ. The New Testament is not the Old Testament with different laws; the New Testament is a *new way of living* and not a new set of creeds. The core

message of the New Testament is that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). We only need to learn how to yield and allow Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith that we be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17). We all have received a measure of the Spirit of Christ when we were born again (Romans 8:15-17; 12:3; Ephesians 4:7, 16). The apostle John calls it the seed of God within us (1 John 3:9). Jesus Himself received the Spirit without measure but we all have received only a measure of Him and are supposed to grow to the fullness of His measure (John 3:34; Ephesians 4:13).

Growing by Grace

The New Covenant is a dispensation of grace for we no longer walk by the works of the law (Ephesians 3:2; Galatians 2:16). Under the Old Covenant, a person would receive based on their works, which would constitute a wage but in the New Covenant we are justified by the gift of grace (Romans 4:4, 16; 5:1-2). In Christ we have received the gift of grace and the gift of righteousness by which we will reign in life through Him (Romans 5:17). It is the desire of God that in this age and in the ages to come that He could show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

In the Old Testament, grace (Hebrew *chen*) means favour and all those who have the grace upon them prosper in every situation that they are in. The grace of God upon Joseph caused him to prosper in Potiphar's house where he served as a slave and in prison (Genesis 39:4, 21). In both situations, he reached to be the head and in charge of everything under his hand. Subsequently, he became ruler over all of Egypt under Pharaoh. Daniel also had the operation of grace upon his life and also ended up being in charge of a whole empire under King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:9; 2:48). No poverty, slavery, destitution, financial loss, natural or social or political or economic disaster can withstand against the power of the grace of God. It is a tangible and powerful force that attracts blessings upon blessings upon your life. This does not mean that there won't be challenges but it means that by the grace of God you will triumph over them gloriously.

In the New Testament, grace (Greek *charis*) continues to have the same power but it has a new manifestation. Grace is not merely favour alone; it also is a spiritual substance which imparts strength, abilities and gifting. It was the grace of God that enabled Peter to be an apostle to the Jews and Paul an apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8, 9). All the fivefold ministries are impartations of His grace (Ephesians 4:7-11). All the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the result of the substance of grace imparted (Romans 12:6). The

word gift comes from the Greek word *charisma* which could, in a sense, have been translated as ‘*gracelets*’ – a manifestation of His grace.

When Paul was weak and especially needed the strength of God, he was shown that what he needed was the grace of God. God told him, “*My grace* is sufficient for you, for *My strength* is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Note that *My grace* and *My strength* are directly connected and related. Grace is the strength of God in us. Timothy was told to be *strong* in the grace of God (2 Timothy 2:1). The word be strong comes from the Greek word *endunamou* which literally means *be inwardly strengthened* in the grace of God. Indeed, this revelation was clearly understood by Paul when he declared, “By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” It was the grace of God which made Paul who he was! Everything he did (I laboured more abundantly) was God’s grace working out through him!

The measure of grace that we received in Christ can continue to be increased and multiplied through the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 1:2). We can grow in the grace of God (2 Peter 3:17). We grow from one level of grace to another. We receive of the fullness of Jesus; we receive *grace upon grace* (John 1:16). Literally from the Greek, it is *grace on top of grace* (*charin anti charitos* – John 1:16). Whenever, we are in a situation where we feel that we are out of strength or are unable to cope, we need to draw near to the Throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and *find grace to help* in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Living the Overflowing Life

The secret of the Christian life is to flow with the level of grace that we have received and which we are at. As long as we allow the grace in our life to ‘labour more abundantly’ we will never struggle for it is not us but the grace of God working through us. If we want to do more in the Christian life, we need to grow more in grace. Since grace is multiplied through the knowledge of Christ and the knowledge of Christ is contained in the promises of God in His Word, it is obvious that the key to grow in more grace is through meditation on the Word of God (2 Peter 1:3-4).

We always live our daily life through the overflow. As Christ fills us with His love and we overflow with His love, we are able to impart love to others. As Christ fills us with His faith and we overflow with His faith, we can impart faith to others. As Christ fills us with Himself, we are enabled to overflow with Christlikeness. In Christ we receive the water that becomes a fountain within us springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14). The water

that He gives us is His life and His grace. It must *become* a fountain and a river of life flowing out from us.

We always minister from the overflow of His life. This means that His life must saturate and fill us first before it overflows out through us. We then minister and help others from the overflow. Jesus specifically told the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem *until* they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). On the day of Pentecost they were filled with the Spirit and became witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:4). The filling of the Spirit is a daily requirement of our life (Ephesians 5:18). The literal Greek translation is *Be filled with the Spirit!* Being comes before doing.

The first thing we should always do every morning is to *be filled* with the Spirit and, throughout the day and at night, we should *maintain* the filling and flow of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit flows out through us in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). Spiritual songs would include speaking and singing in tongues as well as new songs and new tunes given by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15). Part of our spiritual devotional time should be speaking in tongues and edifying ourselves everyday (1 Corinthians 14:4). Paul speaks regularly in tongues in private and even told the Corinthians (who were avid speaking in tongues abusers) that he spoke in tongues (privately) more than all of them put together (1 Corinthians 14:18).

When we are filled with the Spirit, it is like a spiritual covering or clothing that surrounds us (Luke 24:49). It is from the position of having been filled that we can walk in the Spirit (Note that the picture here is not the Spirit in us but rather we *in* the Spirit). It is by walking in the Spirit that we do not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The overflowing life preserves us from the flesh. As long as we are in this temporary earthly body, there is always the potential of us sinning for sin nature dwells within the body (Romans 7:17-18, 23-24). Christian perfection is daily maintained through walking in the Spirit. By doing so, all the fruit of the Spirit can flow out from us and Christlikeness becomes a daily experience.

Thus the daily saturation of the Word and the daily filling of the Spirit brings forth a glory to glory transformation in our lives. Every day we need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God and choose not to allow the world to dictate what we are to do but rather allow the Christ within us to live through us (Romans 12:1-2) The word transform is the Greek word *metamorphoomai* is where we get the English word *metamorphosis*, which is the process by which a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. This is the same Greek word used in reference to Jesus being transfigured on the Mount (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2). A little at a time from day to day, we are being

transformed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). For Jesus it was *as He prayed*; for us it is *as we pray* and spend time with God (Luke 9:29).

CHAPTER 3 PERSONAL WORSHIP TIME

Jesus said that the day will come when man shall worship God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23). Indeed, the Father is seeking such to worship Him. Many church-going Christians are aware of the importance of being part of a local fellowship and enjoy the gathering of believers in public worship together – some in small home groups and others in large public places (Hebrews 10:25). This is good but there is also an aspect of private worship that each believer must cultivate as part of his personal growth in God. Private devotional time is not just a time to draw into God but it is also a time to give ourselves unto the Lord. In the church of Antioch a few of the leaders gathered together and ministered unto the Lord and fasted (Acts 13:2). They were not asking for something from the Lord but were bringing their lives as living sacrifices and offering praise and worship to the Lord.

In the Old Testament there were different types of offerings that the Israelites had to bring to the Lord. There were offerings which were required when they sinned: trespass offering and sin offering (Leviticus 4:2-3; 5:1-6; 6:25; 7:1-2). There were peace offerings which were voluntary and given in thanksgiving to the Lord (Leviticus 7:11-18). The burnt offering was like a compulsory praise and worship offered to the Lord; the fire of which much never be extinguished (Leviticus 6:9-13). All these offerings were fulfilled in Christ but the principles behind them remains. There are the principles of compulsory praise and worship and of voluntary thanksgiving that are important.

The Awesome Presence of God

Why should praise and worship be part of a compulsory principle? In the Old Testament the high priest can never ever enter the holy of holies without the covering of the incense to protect him (Leviticus 16:13). The sin offering and the burnt offering must first be offered before the entrance by the cloud of incense to the holy of holies (Leviticus 16:3). This symbolises the entrance to the presence of God by the atonement of Jesus (sin offering) and by thanksgiving, praise and worship (burnt offering). The cloud of incense is lighted by the coals of the altar of incense and provides a symbolic covering of praise and worship that protects the high priest from the awesome presence of God. We might think that praise and worship is purely for the benefit of God but it actually benefits us by providing us with

an avenue that shields us from the awesome presence of God that could kill all who are in the earthly flesh body. The high priest was warned that he would die if not protected by the cloud of incense (Leviticus 16:13).

Moses was told that no man can see the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20). Although the Bible records that Moses related to God face to face as a friend, we know from the same chapter and context that the highest glory that Moses had seen was merely a glimpse of the back parts of God's glory (Exodus 33:11, 18-23). The manifest presence of God in the Ark of Covenant was so powerful that a mere accidental touch could kill a man (2 Samuel 6:7-8). When the Ark was captured by the Philistines and kept in their city, their entire city was struck with a great destruction (1 Samuel 5:9). On the other hand those who respect the manifest presence of God and welcomed His presence were greatly blessed (2 Samuel 6:11-12; 1 Chronicles 13:14).

God dwells in the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). The heavens cannot contain all of the fullness of God and the whole earth is but a footstool for God (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6; 6:18; Isaiah 66:1). The whole planet earth would be destroyed if God were to bring His presence from all the fullness of the heavens here. God manifests measures of His presence on earth *in direct proportion* to the cloud of thanksgiving, praises and worship that we could surround ourselves with. Aaron was told to offer the various offerings which the Lord commanded *and* the glory of the Lord would appear to him (Leviticus 9:6). It was *only when* Moses had completed arranging all the components of the Tabernacle and offered the sacrifices, the glory of God was able to appear in a greater measure such that even Moses could not enter into (Exodus 40:33-38). It was *only when* the musicians and singers were as one in making one sound in thanksgiving, praise and worship to the Lord that the Lord manifested His glory (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

When people cry out for the awesome presence of God, many of them have no idea what they are asking for. It was the mercy of God, in sparing their lives, that the Lord withhold His presence and only manifests *in direct proportion* to the atmosphere of thanksgiving, praise and worship. Thus when the Old Testament people approached the temple where God's presence was manifested in the holy of holies, they were told to enter His gates (the outer court) with thanksgiving and into His courts (the holy place) with praise (Psalm 100:4).

Creating a personal atmosphere of Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship

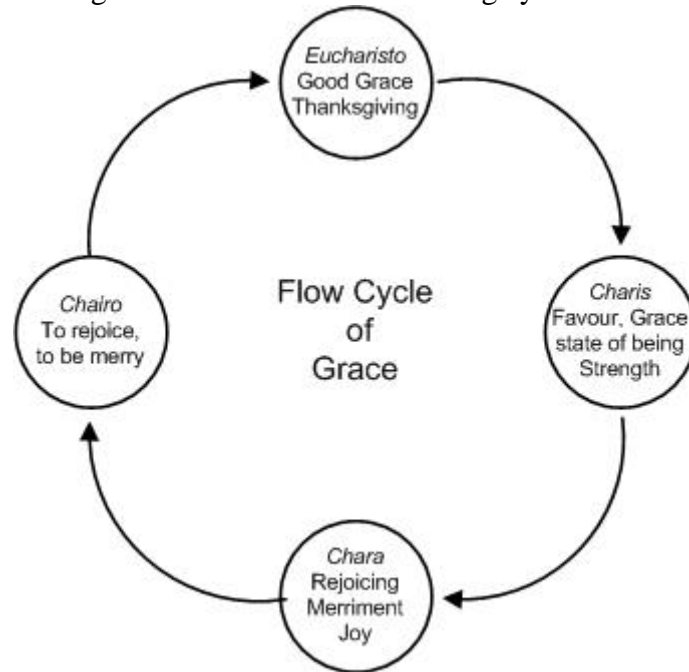
Understanding these principles of the manifest presence of God, if we so desire that the presence of God dwell in our lives every day, we *must* create and atmosphere of thanksgiving, praise and worship around ourselves. In the New Testament, we are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we have a greater potential for the manifest glory of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 3:7-9). It is the Will of God that His church should be his habitation and dwelling place of His glory (Ephesians 1:23; 2:21-22; 3:19-21). Besides gathering in unity with believers for worship, thus creating the atmosphere for God's manifest presence, we also need to create a personal cloud of praise and worship around us so that the manifest presence of God can be upon our lives continuously. The key is in living a life of thanksgiving, praise and worship.

In the New Covenant we are exhorted to give thanks in everything; for this is the Will of God for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18). All our prayers are supposed to be accompanied with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6). When Jesus gave thanks for the loaves and fish, they miraculously multiplied and fed thousands of people; and the leftovers were more than the original amount (Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:6; John 6:11). In recording the miracles, John especially noted that they ate bread *after* the Lord had given thanks (John 6:23). When Paul and Silas were beaten up and locked in prison, they prayed and sang hymns to God and miraculously a supernatural earthquake shook the prison and all their chains were loosed (Acts 16:25-26). Imagine what wonders and miracles that believers missed out on when they neglect to thank and praise the Lord in every situation.

The word *thanksgiving* (*eucharisto*) is derived from a combination of two Greek words *eu* and *charis*. We know that *charis* is the Greek word for *grace* and *eu* is the Greek word for *good, well* or *pleasing* (Example, the *gospel* or *good news* – *euangelion* – *good message*). It is the goodness of grace flowing upon us and out through our lives. Both the reception and the flow of grace through our lives would be accompanied by thanksgiving, praise and worship. Anyone who is impacted by the grace of God or is filled with the grace of God would be a natural thanksgiver and a worshipper. It is the key evidence of whether grace is upon a person or persons – they would be filled with an atmosphere of thanksgiving. It is also the pre-requisite for the further reception of an increased measure of grace.

The word *joy* (*chara* – *rejoicing, merriness*) is also related to the word *grace* (*what delights, the happy state, the 'favour' of fortune, the favour of God*), having been derived from the same Greek root word *chairō* (*to rejoice, to be merry*). Just before speaking about thanksgiving in everything Paul exhorted that the Thessalonians *rejoice always* and pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Continuous joy, continuous prayer,

continuous thanksgiving, praise and worship – what a powerful combination! This is the atmosphere that every single Christian must have surrounding them on a daily basis. If we placed all the above Greek words with their roots together we can see the following cycle:



As we exercise our free will everyday and choose to rejoice and offer thanksgiving to God, we move into a state of grace and favour which continually produces joy; which in turn would cause us to rejoice and the cycle increases. Sometimes, when we fellowship with people flowing in the grace cycle at different points, we ourselves are infused with a measure of grace from their lives and vice versa. As grace increases in our lives through continually increasing cycles, creating a spiritual atmosphere of thanksgiving, praise and worship in our lives, the Holy Spirit is able to manifest His presence and His gifts (*gracelets*). When great grace was upon the apostles, great and mighty signs and wonders resulted such that even Peter's shadow wrought powerful healings (Acts 4:30, 33; 5:12-16). When we abound in grace we abound in great prosperity for doing many good works (2 Corinthians 9:8). The grace of God caused a might revival and church growth that established the Antioch church, the base of Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 11:21-22).

We need to find personal worship time to cultivate this atmosphere of grace, thanksgiving, praise and worship to surround our lives. Although music would be a help to cultivate this atmosphere, not everyone is able to play a musical instrument like David did (1 Samuel 16:16, 23; 2 Samuel

23:1-2). Elisha did not play any musical instrument himself but, knowing the importance of creating an atmosphere of praise and worship, called upon a musician to help prepare the way for the presence of God to manifest (2 Kings 3:15-16). At other times, we could just sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). Singing with grace and melodies in our hearts would create an atmosphere of praise and worship around our lives (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). Though we all may not be talented musicians, we all have melodies in our hearts which resulted from the grace of God imparted to us. Morning, noon and night, we should vocalise and release (or even hum) the melodies that God's Spirit stirs in our hearts. It is the platform from which many other works of the Spirit can be released through our lives.

The Lifting of our Hands

Another important practice in our personal worship life is the lifting of our hands to God as a gesture of surrender, praise and worship unto Him. There is a time and place for kneeling and bowing our heads before God in worship but Paul exhorts us to lift up our hands in prayer to the Lord (Matthew 28:9; Revelation 5:14; 7:11; 1 Timothy 2:8). The lifting up of our hands is as the evening sacrifice (Psalms 141:2). David mentions the lifting up of hands in the sanctuary of the Lord (Psalms 28:2; 63:4; 119:48; 134:2). The method of blessing was done through the lifting up of the hands (Leviticus 9:22). When the path is hard and difficult, we are exhorted to lift up our hands to the Lord (Psalms 63:1-4; Hebrews 12:12). Among the last things that Jesus did with His disciples was to lift up His hands and blessed them as He was taken to heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

During the battle with the Amalekites in Moses' time, the victory wrought by Joshua was dependent on Moses keep his hands holding the rod of God raised (Exodus 17:8-16). Each time Moses' hands grew tired and came down, Amalek prevailed but each time he raised it high, Joshua prevailed. Aaron and Hur had to help Moses keep Moses' hands up until Amalek was utterly defeated. At that time God also revealed to Moses another of His redemption name *Yahweh Nissi* – The Lord is our banner (or victory). In the natural, there is no correlation between Moses' lifted hands and the actual battle on the ground but in the spiritual realm, it was the invoking of the Name of God empowering and anointing of God upon His people.

The appearance of the angel, Gabriel, to Daniel about the time of the evening burnt offering is interesting in its symbolic meaning (Daniel 9:21). The timing of the appearance of the angel to Zechariah at the hour of incense was also remarkable (Luke 1:9-11). David declared that he will praise the Lord seven times a day (Psalms 119:164). Since the lifting up of

our hands is as the evening sacrifice, and in the New Covenant we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we could symbolically lift up our hands from time to time throughout the day (and also during times of personal praise and worship) and offer God the praise and worship due His Name. It is our heart that counts but the methodology of releasing it through the lifting up of our hands is simple and elegant. Lift up your hands to bless the Lord and give Him an offering of praise and worship in your personal worship time (and in public if it is the practice of your local church). Throughout the 'busy-ness' of each day, take a few minutes and lift up your hands seven times like David and give God praise and worship.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Every new Christian is encouraged to read the Bible but very little is taught as to how to study the Bible. It would be an excellent plan to read through the whole Bible but I recommend that new believers start with the New Testament first. The gospel of John or the gospel of Mark would be a good place to start. After familiarising yourself with the gospels, you can then proceed to read the book of Acts and the epistles of the various apostles to the churches. Once you have read through the New Testament several times and are familiar with the stories contained, you could then start reading through the Bible from the Old Testament. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament containing 1,189 chapters and 31, 273 verses – a total of 807,361 words. If you read about 3.25 chapters a day, you could read through the Bible in one year.

Brief History of the Bible

The Bible was first translated into English from the original languages of Hebrew (parts of it Aramaic) and Greek by John Wycliffe (around 1380 AD), which was revised and published by John Purvey, his assistant, in 1388 AD. Many other translations into English have since been done with the most famous being the King James Version of 1611. Take note that when you read through the Bible, the divisions into chapters and verses might not have been divinely inspired (the divisions were not in the original text) and so you might have to sometimes read across the chapter and verse divisions to get the whole sense of the inspired author.

The chapters and divisions were done over a period of a few hundred years to aid study and analysis by scholars: Cardinal Hugo de Sancto-Caro (around 1236 AD) and Stephen Langton (1150-1228), Archbishop of Canterbury, each separately divided the Bible into chapters but the modern chapter divisions in use today were those done by Stephen Langton as published in the Vulgate edition of the Bible in 1205, Rabbi Mordecai Nathan divided the Old Testament into verses in 1448 AD, and Robert Estienne, also known as Stephanus, a French printer (it is said on horseback between Switzerland and France), divided the New Testament into verses around 1551 AD (the year he published his Greek New Testament; an

earlier verse division by the Italian scholar, Santi Pagnini 1470-1541, was never widely adopted).

The present New Testament canon (accepted books that formed part of the Bible) was slowly accepted over a period of several hundred years of early church history. Eusebius in 327 AD (two years after the Council of Nicea), set out to enforce a decisive orthodox creed that could be enforced throughout the world giving priority to the Holy Quaternion (four gospels), Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, all the epistles of Paul (including Hebrews according to Clement of Alexandria), and included what he called disputed but not heretical documents of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John and 3 John. He listed as partly disputed some of the Apocrypha (Acts of Paul, book of Hemas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Gospel of the Hebrews, the Apocalypse of John and a certain 'Teaching of the Apostles.' He listed as forgeries the Gospels of Peter, Thomas, Matthias, and the Acts of Andrew, John and others.

Around 350 AD, Bishop Cyril included in his lectures to his churches in Jerusalem the list of texts which he considered as Holy Scriptures. This was the first time that there was an official pronouncement by a high ranking church official on what the New Testament Bible consists of – all the present New Testament books except the book of Revelation was included. This list was finalised, inclusive of the book of Revelation, around 367 AD by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria who declared it in his Festal Epistle (known as the Western canon). It was not until 692 AD that it became official in the Trullan Synod. The Old Testament canon is the same as that used by the Jews in their Tanakh (The Bible used in Judaism).

Systematic Study through the Bible

The Bible can be studied systematically book by book or topically or by following inspirational thoughts (studying by revelation) brought forth by the Holy Spirit. It is good to keep a Bible study notebook in which you can make notes as you read systematically through the Bible. For new believers, they should systematically read through and have a thorough knowledge of the New Testament (especially the gospels) before they begin reading and studying the Old Testament.

In making notes through a systematic Bible study, you could separate biblical notes from your personal inspirational notes. Biblical notes are those which you observed to be patterns or principles that present themselves to you as you systematically read through the Bible. For example, as you read through the gospels, you might observed some word pattern, phrase, principle, teaching, method or style that Jesus adopted

throughout the gospels. Or you might observe the re-occurrence of certain phrases or key words or principles that are repeated within a passage or several chapters. This enables you to have a personal conception of the content of the Bible from your own study.

Many others have studied the Bible and have written their own books and summaries of what they see in each passage (Bible commentaries) but remember that each person reading the Bible, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will see unique new things and new areas in the Bible that others haven't seen before. I have noticed that each time I read through the Bible, there is always something fresh and new that can be seen in a passage that was never observed before. With the use of a concordance, you can also have a systematic study of the Bible topically. You can choose a topic listing in the concordance and read through all the verses listed from Genesis to Revelation to gain understanding as to what the Bible is saying regarding those particular topics.

Inspirational notes are those phrases or Scriptures that seem to leap up at you from the written Word and which speak to your current situation in your life. Jesus did say that the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance those things which He has spoken (John 14:26). Sometimes they relate directly to you from the context of the Scripture passage and at other times they just seem to stand out by itself as a *rhema* (spoken) word from the Lord. You need to make a note of this as corporately together with other methods which God use to speak to you, they will begin to form a part of God's voice speaking into your own personal unique life and situation.

Use of Bible Tools and References

I do not really recommend commentaries as they are more the biblical notes and insights that others see in the various Bible passages, some of which might be more personal application than exegetical analysis (exegetical analysis keeps within the actual passage without adding external interpretations from outside the context of the passage). The quality of a commentary is directly proportional to the quality of the scholarship of the author in the original languages of the Bible and to the quality of the spiritual life of the author. Some are good and have spiritual and exegetical depth but many are purely the collection of the author's opinions on various issues.

The only Bible tools that I recommend are a good concordance and a good Bible Dictionary. The main two concordances on the market are the Strong's concordance and the Young's concordance. The first use of a concordance is the ease by which you could find any Bible verse you want

on a particular topic or where you need to find an exact place where a verse is located though only roughly remembering part of a verse. The more important use of a concordance is the ability to locate the original Hebrew or Greek word from which the English is translated. The Strong's has the advantage of the Strong's numbering system (Strong has given a number for each Hebrew and Greek word). Remember though that Strong has given different numbers to Hebrew and Greek words that often came from the same root. To locate the original word in the Strong's concordance you would have to first find the verse and after locating the number printed next to it, refer to the numbering system at the back of the concordance to find the original Hebrew or Greek word.

The Young's concordance uses a different style and places all the Hebrew or Greek words within the same page where the verses occur within a topic. The Hebrew and Greek words are Romanised so that the English reader does not have a problem reading them. It also provides a Romanised Hebrew and Greek lexicon at the back for those interested in studying the specific Hebrew or Greek word. For example, if you check under the word *power*, you will find the listing of all the verses with the word *power* in it from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the New Testament section you will notice that it lists *power* under different Greek words: *dunamis*, *dunaton*, *exousia*, *ischus*, *kratos*, etc. Now if you refer to the Romanised Greek lexicon at the back of the concordance, and check under *dunamis*, you will find under it the listing: *ability* 1, *abundance* 1, *meaning* 1, *might* 4, *mighty deed* 1, *mighty work* 11, *miracle* 8, *power* 77, etc. The numbers next to the words tell you how many times the word *dunamis* has been translated into those different English words; and to find the verse where they are located, you would have to check under their respective headings. I enjoy this style and arrangement and have a preference for the Young's concordance.

As you use the above concordances, remember that they were done long ago (before the age of computers) and were based on the old King James Version; so you might not find the same references in some of the modern translations. In regard to the Bible translations, I have not found one 100% to my liking. Some of the modern translations are more interpretations than actual literal translations. For example, if the phrase *white as snow* is translated literally, it would retain the same phraseology but if it is interpreted for the local understanding to those who have not seen snow, it might have been rendered *white as the inside of a coconut*. To me this is not good and I would rather have the translation retain *snow* and then explain to the local people, who have not seen snow, what *snow* is (perhaps in the foot notes). At the moment, I am working on a new Bible translation (LKJV)

which will be accompanied with a new concordance designed especially for it.

Bible dictionaries are useful to look up the historical perspectives of the various cultures and customs of ancient Bible times. The four-volume International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia or the five-volume Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (they also have an abridged one volume version) are useful. For more serious students of the Bible and ministers, I recommend that they study as least some level of Hebrew and Greek to gain proficiency in analysing the original language text and in the use of Hebrew and Greek lexicons. There is nothing worse than hearing a minister of God misquote or misinterpret a passage of Scripture from the original language because they have depended on others to do the translation for them.

Studying by Revelation

Another inspirational method of studying the Bible is to study by revelation. The Holy Spirit continues to reveal truths to each one of us specific to our needs and interests. Jesus said that He is the Spirit of Truth and will teach us all things (John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 John 2:20). Jesus said that He brings to our remembrance all things which Jesus spoke. The Holy Spirit works in our inner thought process and inspires thoughts which point us in the right direction of truth. Sometimes when we are reading the Bible, praying, worshipping, hearing message or even reading a good book, the Holy Spirit inspires thoughts about some area or topic of relevant or interest to us. These *inspirational thoughts* must be further studied in the light of Scriptures to gain the right balance and correct understanding of them. Many times they are the *revelation thoughts* that the Holy Spirit inspires within us that will become clearer as we study the Bible to see if they line up with the Scriptures. This process is call *studying by revelation*.

When Jesus asked the disciples who they think He was, it was Peter who spoke up and said that He was Christ the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). Jesus pointed out to Peter that it was not just flesh and blood that has helped him come to this conclusion and revelation but it was by inspiration and revelation from the Father (Matthew 16:17). The thoughts that Jesus was the Christ must have been going through Peter's mind for some time before he made his famous declaration on the day Jesus asked them to tell Him what they think. Today, the same Holy Spirit is working in our hearts and in our minds bringing inspirational thoughts that answer to our needs and desires.

Each inspirational thought needs to be thoroughly researched in the light of the Scriptures to determine their accuracy and to purify any parts of it

which might not be in line with the written Word of God. Every doctrine, every principle, every instruction and teaching must be cross examined with all Scriptures relevant to the topic for correction and reproof (2 Timothy 3:16). Sometimes one inspirational thought might take months or years of research. For example, one day as I was reading Kenneth Hagin's book 'I believe in visions,' the inspirational thought occurred to me that just as all authority over demons has been delegated to the church and that it was the church's responsibility to cast out the demons and not for us to ask Jesus to do it (story found in Hagin's third vision of Jesus when the demon ran between him and the Lord), that the same principle applied in healing, too. To test out this inspirational thought on healing, I had to examine every single Scripture on healing from Genesis to Revelation which took me about six months of Bible study. I came across some verses in the book of Acts and in the book of James which needed further examination and clarification in the original Greek language before I could formulate an understanding of healing in the New Testament.

Today, God continues to bring new spiritual experiences and new inspirational thoughts which need deep cross examination by the written Word of God before it is ready for doctrinal assimilation. If we all walk with God and continue to grow in Him, we will keep on having new experiences and inspirational thoughts of various areas which we can then further research through a Bible study plan of examining every single verse pertaining to the subject. This study by revelation is demanding and we need to approach it with an open mind to allow the Scriptures to bring correction and reproof (as opposed to twisting the Scriptures to fit one's own theology). Sometimes, preachers proclaim 'revelations' that are half-baked and poorly researched from the biblical perspective. Most of the time and due to the lack of Bible study time these preachers devote to the Word, the so-called 'revelations' have an element of extremism and rawness that is not ready for assimilation by the body of Christ.

Write down any inspirational thoughts and revelations you might have received from the Holy Spirit and then spend quality time systematically studying the Bible to examine what the Scriptures say concerning them. To truly grow to be a highly spiritual person in God and yet well balanced, no matter how much spiritual experiences and revelations God entrusts to us by His grace, we must have a genuine love for the Bible and regard it as the inspired Word of God for guiding us through all areas of human life on earth. Every Christian must develop a personal study time in the Bible if they desire to grow to know God more and also desire to be a blessing to all of the body of Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

In a vision of the Spiritual World, I saw that every spirit in God was being cared for by others above them and that everyone was also caring for others spiritually below them. It was a marvellous and beautiful follow-up system orchestrated by the Holy Spirit where everyone was growing together in the Lord. Jesus said that we are to go out into all the world and make disciples teaching them to observe all things which Jesus has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20). Although this book is written to teach about developing one's personal devotional time with the Lord, there is an aspect of personal growth where unless one is related to a system of care in which they are being personally cared for (one-on-one) by another and they are personally caring for another (one-on-one), the flow of personal revelation and growth can be stunted. Giving and receiving are not just laws that apply to financial giving and prosperity but they also apply to the laws of spiritual growth and revelation growth in God (Luke 6:37-38; Matthew 10:40-42; Philippians 4:15).

Fellowship with Two or Three

There is also a reason for why Jesus specifically mention two or three when He spoke about His manifest presence (Matthew 18:20). In the end, no matter how many millions or billions our sphere of influence might be, the practical day to day relationship that we have with others are usually only among the two or three. Jesus had His thousands of believers during His physical ministry on earth and He had hundreds of those whom He could send out two by two; but He especially concentrated His efforts on the twelve disciples and of the twelve He chose three: Peter, James and John. He related to them, revealed to them and trained them more closely than all the other disciples because they were going to be the main core leaders who would lead the flock He left behind.

Paul had a very close relationship with Barnabas which lasted through many years of early Christian life and early ministry life (Acts 9:27; 11:25; 13:1-2). They had their disagreements and differences (Acts 15:37-39; Galatians 2:13). After their parting of ways, Paul had different ministry partners and followers (Silas, Timothy, etc) but none of them had the same impact on his life that Barnabas had in the crucial formative years of his Christian walk and ministry. No man is an island. No one develops personally alone. Every one of us has our two or three inner circle. This inner circle might change with time and under different phases of life. Some inner circles last decades others last years, while other are lifelong (the

marriage relationship is suppose to be part of such). No organisation or human follow-up system can create an accurate and intricate system that matches that of heaven and the Spiritual World, so don't try as it would cause more harm than good. It all must be individually and Spirit led.

Giving of ourselves brings Personal Growth

The fact remains that we all must allow the Holy Spirit to help us find the people whom we are to take care of, share Christ's love and disciple them. God will lead others to find us and take care of us; He has assign angels to take care of all of us and He will assign the exact people to nurture us for each phase of our lives. We in turn (whether we are aware of people assigned to care for us or not) need to reach out and be led by the Spirit to care for others – love them, help them, be Christ to them. Of course, this should always include your spouse, your family and loved ones but there might be those outside of your flesh and blood circle but within the spiritual circle of those whom the Holy Spirit assigns to you. Usually, the Holy Spirit will stir the love and compassion of Christ within you to care for these.

Along with the usual love and care that one gives to others to help them in Christ would include the investment of time to pray with them, visit with them and give them one-on-one Bible study. Yes, every one of us can share from our life and from our personal knowledge of the Scriptures to help another one-on-one (or one-to-two or one-to-three). This investment of our life and time should be regarded as part of our personal growth and not just as the growth of others. For unless we give of our lives, we cannot grow. The good news is that the more we give, the more we receive and it is a never ending but widening cycle of blessing. You will also notice that as you pray for others, your own prayer life improves; and as you teach others what you know, your own knowledge increases. The only way to learn to love is by doing it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the people whom Jesus wants you to love and disciple. Some of them could already be in your circle of acquaintances like Peter, James and John who were already partners in fishing before they met Jesus (Luke 5:10). Others might be people whom the Holy Spirit will let you meet when the time comes. Remember that these people are assigned to you by heaven and not by your own choosing. This means that you would need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as to whom He links you up with. Whether we like it or not, all of us have to be linked to other people in some manner for the gifts to flow (Ephesians 4:16). Every part must does its share for the whole body of Christ to grow in edifying itself in love. Personal growth is being linked to the rest of the body of Christ in a two way relationship – giving and receiving. Jesus is the Vine

and we are all His branches, we need to do our little part as a branch of the Vine (John 15:5).

In the area of understanding the Bible and the revelations from God, you would also notice that when you have studied the Scriptures and are teaching others (one-on-one or more), the revelation is more solidified in you when you have witnessed or shared it with another. Moreover, sometimes in the midst of sharing what you have understood, you might even get further inspiration of the Truths surrounding those areas, which would then inspire another round of research in the Bible. Christianity is not a mere religion of intellectual beliefs and creeds, nor is it purely the assimilation of divine revelations from God that enable us to be more spiritual or more successful in this life - spirit, soul and body. It is a life imparting to life – real person one-on-one to another real person.

As God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, as Jesus so love us that He gave His life for us, so must we so loved others that we would give of our lives to help another (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16). Go forth and love like Jesus loved you. Go forth and make disciples of Jesus.