

Stephen Kaung
“Spiritual Exercise: Worship/Communion”

Scripture

1 Timothy 4:8-10—For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

John 4:23-24—But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Romans 8:15-17—For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

1 John 1:1-4—That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

1 John 4:15-17—Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

Prayer

Lord, as we gather before You, our hearts are full of praise and thanksgiving. We thank and praise You. Because of love, You are willing to come to this world to die for us. Lord, we become who we are because of the work of Your grace. We thank and praise You because You have given us another opportunity so that we can read Your words. May Your words, through Your Spirit, be planted deeply in our hearts so that we can be transformed and conformed to the image of Your Son and Your will be accomplished. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.

REVIEW

We thank the Lord that we can come to the gymnasium together once again. I always feel that it is difficult to share the words after the Lord’s Table. Because when we broke the bread, we have already reached spiritual climax. It seems a bit unnecessary to speak after the breaking of bread. But we thank the Lord, we are given another opportunity. Like I mentioned before, our sharing this time is not regarding any kind of doctrine or special messages.

(1) The meaning of exercising godliness and the way into glory

This time we gather together to exercise under the guidance of the Holy Spirit because God's word clearly tells us *bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things*. Godliness has no other meaning but to be like God. The will of God is to have us conform into the image of His Son. God will not be satisfied merely with the forgiveness of our sins and being able to go to heaven. The will of God is glorious because He is glory. Therefore He desires to lead us into His glory. It is not an external matter. It is an internal matter. It is true that one day the Lord Jesus will lead us into His glory. However, in order to enter into that glory, we must first have glory inside of us; otherwise, we will not be able to enjoy that glory.

(2) Get on the right boat and walk on the right path

There is this story. One time a group of people were taking a trip. It just happened that a group of Christians were getting ready for a trip as well. There were these two boats: one prepared for the people of the world and another prepared for the Christians. There was a brother who came late. Because he was in such a hurry; he just boarded the first boat he saw. He did not know he had boarded the other boat. As the boat was leaving the dock, he saw the condition on this boat. People ate, drank, and made all kinds of noise. That really made him uncomfortable and sorrowful. He had got on the wrong boat!

(3) God wants us to exercise to be like Him now

Brothers and sisters, we all hope that one day the Lord will bring us into His glory. But if we do not allow His glory to form in our heart, I am afraid even when you enter into glory you would not be able to bear it. The will of God is for us to be like Him. Not only has He given us His life, He wants us to exercise this life, in order for this life to grow in us, be transformed, having the full stature of Christ. This is the heart desire of the Lord towards all those He saved. To accomplish this, He has prepared all things. At the same time He wishes to have our cooperation because He respects our personality.

God is the highest will of the universe. When He created man, He gave man a free will. He respects this free will and He will never go against the will of His creation. Since He gave us this free will, He will respect it. Therefore, He will obtain our consent before doing His work on us. God wants us to exercise godliness so we can be like Him. What kind of exercise is this? We know how to exercise our body but how do we exercise godliness? Exercising godliness is unlike exercising our body. The Bible tells us that God is spirit. Because He is spirit, in order to exercise godliness, we must exercise our spirit. Bodily exercise is of little use if you want to be like God. Yes, exercise of the body benefits our body but what we need is exercise of our spirit.

(4) God is spirit and we are to be like Him in spirit

Because God is spirit, if we want to be like Him, we must be like Him in spirit. I remember years ago, the Russians sent a satellite to space and when the astronaut returned to Earth, he made such a comment: "When I was in space, I looked everywhere and could not see God. Therefore, there is no God." He thought God would have a flesh like him that he could see God with his physical eyes. God is spirit. You cannot see God without a spirit! Our body cannot touch God and our thought and mind cannot touch God either. Job 11:7 says, "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" God is beyond the wisdom and knowledge of man. If we were to encounter God, we must encounter Him in spirit.

(5) The creation of spirit and the death of spirit

The spirit of man allows us to be conscious of God. We thank God. When He created us, He breathed a breath – His breath of life – into the nostril of man. This breath entered man and became the spirit of man. Hence man had come into contact with God. Unfortunately our ancestors, Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God. God told them not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil for the day they ate of it they would surely die. Adam and Eve did eat this forbidden fruit but they did not die immediately. Adam lived to over 900 years old. He even had sons and daughters. His body did not die immediately and his soul did not die immediately. Was the word of God spoken in vain? Surely his body did die one day and his soul did die one day. But the Lord said, “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” So what did die on that day? It was his spirit.

We have already mentioned before. The scientific definition of “death” is when an object has lost communication to the environment in which it existed in. Death is the cessation of communication with the proper environment. To our spirit, God is the proper environment. It is death when we cease to have communication with God. Adam and Eve were casted out of the Garden of Eden, signifying the separation between God and man. The Bible also tells us that man had become flesh. He only had body and soul. His spirit had died.

(6) The salvation of the Lord has revived our spirit

We thank God. Because of His love for us, He prepared a salvation for us. He sent His Son to this earth and He bore our sins personally. He washed away the iniquities of our heart with His precious blood. Yet, this is merely the passive perspective. The active perspective of salvation is that He has revived our spirit. He has revived our spirit that was in a coma. Therefore it says in John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” That is why the moment we believed in the Lord, our spirit was revived. We began to have fellowship with God. The Book of Romans tells us that God gave us a spirit of a son and the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, thus we cry out “Abba, Father.”

(7) Believers have the life of Christ and the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit

For all of us who are believers, not only do we have the life of Christ in us, we also have the revival of our spirit. We have the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit. Why does the Holy Spirit dwell in our spirit? He is there to teach us in all things and to bring us into Christ.

(8) The Spirit leads us in spiritual exercise

Exercise the conscience

When the Holy Spirit works in us, the functions of our spirit will begin to exercise. The Holy Spirit will enlighten our conscience, so that it can tell right from wrong and what pleases God from what displeases God. If we submit, forsaking all that would displease Him and obeying all that would please Him, then we would have a pure conscience before God. If there is no accusation in our conscience, we can live before God and we can have righteousness. Therefore Brothers and Sisters, we need to exercise the conscience in our spirit. We need to live with faith and a pure conscience. If we lose our conscience, it is like a ship that has wrecked. If we do not have a pure conscience, we will lose our faith. It is part of our normal Christian living; therefore, Paul said he was always striving to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. The conscience of a Christian needs to be exercised all the time.

Exercise the intuition

Not only is our conscience being exercised, our intuition is being exercised as well. The Holy Spirit will enlighten us with the light of revelations, allowing us to discern what is the will of God is. Hence we can walk in His will. How do we know what is the will of God? How do we know what is not the will of God? This is taught to us by the Holy Spirit in our intuition. We have already shared about that previously.

EXERCISING ANOTHER FUNCTION OF THE SPIRIT – FELLOWSHIP

This morning, we would like to share on one other function of the spirit, which is fellowship. Practically speaking the highest function of the spirit is fellowship. It is also the most fundamental function. The reason God quickened our spirit is for us to have fellowship with Him. God delights in having fellowship with man and He also abides in man. His fellowship with man and his abidance in man must take place in the spirit.

(1) Fellowship begins with salvation

From the moment you were saved, your spirit was revived and you began to fellowship with God immediately. Is it not the experience for all of us? Perhaps you were born into a Christian family. You could have participated in some Church activities. Perhaps you prayed and you had some knowledge of the Bible but you did not have fellowship with God. What you did was only external. In the depth of your spirit, you did not have any contact with God because your spirit was dead. But thanks be to God! The moment you were saved, no need to wait until the next day, at that very moment, your spirit was revived! You called out to Abba, Father immediately and you began to communicate with God. Every Christian has this experience. I do not think examples are needed to prove this matter. Our fellowship with God had already begun. Keep in mind that God does not only want us to have fellowship with Him at that moment, He wants us to fellowship with Him at all times. We are to fellowship with Him in the spirit. In this way, He can communicate more of Himself to us.

(2) The conditions for fellowship

Fellowship is based on two conditions.

The spirit must be alive

The first condition, we must be of the same nature and of the same status. God is spirit. That is His nature. If you were to have fellowship with God, you must contact Him through your spirit. You cannot have contact with Him through your body and you cannot have contact with Him through your mind or your will. You can only fellowship with Him through your spirit. Also your spirit must be alive. If the spirit is not alive, there is no means of which you can have fellowship with God. Therefore, the Bible says, “Deep calls unto the deep.” Only spirit can contact spirit. Not only must we be of the same nature with God, we must be of the same status.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in darkness, we have no fellowship with the light. II Corinthians 6:14 says, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?” It tells us here that righteousness and lawlessness cannot have fellowship. This is regarding status. We learn that only spirit can fellowship with spirit. However if you do not have a pure conscience, the fellowship between your spirit and God will be

hindered. God is light. If we believers walk in darkness, there is no means for us to fellowship with Him. Thus the Bible records in II Corinthians 6:14-18:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*“I will dwell in them
and walk among them.
I will be their God,
and they shall be My people.”*

Therefore

*“Come out from among them
and be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
and I will receive you.”
“I will be a Father to you,
and you shall be My sons and daughters,
says the LORD Almighty.”*

Do not think now that I have a spirit, I can fellowship with God whenever and wherever. It is true; you now have the basics to fellowship with God. Nonetheless, if you want to have true fellowship with God, you must be of the same condition as He is. He is righteous so you must walk righteously. He is light so you must walk in light. Yes, we cannot measure up to God, the difference is immense. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Unbeknownst to us, there is still much darkness in our “in the light” today. For this reason we need to enter into the light of life gradually.

Thanks be to God. He knows our condition. Therefore, He treats a babe according to the condition of babes, He treats a young man according to the condition of young men, and He treats a father according to the condition of fathers. He will not say, “I am a hundred candles bright but you only have one candle. You are ninety-nine candles short. I cannot fellowship with you.” He knows we are all babes. As long as we submit to what He has enlightened us, He will fellowship with us. While our Lord Jesus was on earth, the disciples often misunderstood Him when He spoke to them. When the Lord spoke regarding heaven, they thought it was regarding earth. When the Lord told them to be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, they thought the Lord was making a comment about them forgetting to bring bread. When the Lord spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, He was referring to their teachings. When the Lord talked about “this”, the disciples thought He was talking about “that”. But thank the Lord; He continued to have fellowship with them. Gradually the Lord would raise them up so that they could truly come to know Him.

Regardless of the condition of our spiritual measure, we need to be of the same nature and to be of the same status as He is. Even though our measures are different, it does not matter. If we are of the same nature and condition, we can have fellowship. In this manner, as we continue in fellowship, we will enter into deeper fellowship. As the Bible says, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” The Holy Spirit will transform us, conforming us into the image of Christ. This is the wonderful work of God.

The function of fellowship needs to be exercised all the time

Dear brothers and sisters, the function of fellowship needs to be exercised all the time. To exercise it means to use it. The more you use it, the sharper it becomes. If you do not use it, it will eventually lose its function. God has already given you a tool for fellowship. What you need to do is to use it in your everyday life.

(3) The practice of exercising fellowship

Here is the question at hand. *How do we use it?* To understand this matter, I think it is best to illustrate through some examples.

Fellowship with the Lord through prayer

The Bible shows us several ways to obtain grace. One of them is through prayer. Why do Christians pray? It is because prayer is a path to receiving grace. We always think that to pray is to make request. But making request is merely a small part of prayer. The reason Christians pray is to fellowship with God. God is spirit; therefore, when we pray, we ought to fellowship with Him in spirit. The Lord told a parable in Luke 18. Two men went up to the temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. He made his grand entrance to the temple. With his head up, he stood there and prayed, “God, I thank You. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” When he noticed a tax collector behind him, he continued to say, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.” The other man was a tax collector. He came to the temple and stood afar, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” The Lord then asked which one of these two men would be justified by God when they returned home? It would not be the Pharisee but the tax collector. It is because the Pharisee was just murmuring to himself. He was not using his spirit to pray. He was using his mind and his body to exalt himself. He was praying for others and for himself to hear. But God could not hear him. Therefore, this man would not be justified when he returned to his house. The tax collector cried out a voice of repentance from the depth of his heart and spirit. God heard his prayer. Therefore, brothers and sisters, the basic principle of prayer is fellowship. If you do not fellowship with God, your prayers will just reach the ceiling and fall right back.

Often times we make the same mistakes, especially when we pray in public. We often consider the people around us. *Do they think my prayer was beautiful?* Let me ask you this. Are you praying to others or to God? If it is not from your spirit, this prayer will not be answered. It does not count as a real prayer. Do you pray every morning? You may say yes, you do pray every morning. Then how do you pray? I remember when I first believed in the Lord, every morning I would be the first to wake up. I would go downstairs, lock myself in the room, kneel, and worship. I sang hymns, prayed, and read the Bible. I did this every morning. That was my morning devotion. At that time I heard if I were to read three Old Testament chapters and one New Testament chapter every day, I could finish the Bible in a year. And that was how I read the Bible. First I sang a hymn, then I prayed, and I read the Bible afterwards. In this way I had done my “job”. However, if you were to ask me what I read that day after I came out of morning devotion, I would not be able to tell you. I would have already forgotten. I did not have true fellowship with God. We rush to check in with God. Then we utter many words from our mouths. When we are done, we just check out from God. Have we used our spirit? We have used our head, we have used our mouth, and we have probably used our knees as well. But have we used our spirit? No, we have not. Therefore, the Bible says, when we come before the Lord, we need to lighten our footsteps and we need to open our hearts to the Lord. Before you pray, first get in touch with God.

If you have not done so, you just talk and take off. Have you prayed? No, you have not. God has not heard your prayer.

Fellowship with the Lord through morning devotion

How do we conduct our morning devotion? I really like one particular hymn “Nothing Between, Lord”. It is Hymn 570 in your Hymnary. It was written by E. H. Hopkins. He was a servant greatly used by God from late 18th century to early 19th century. He was one of the main speakers of world renowned conventions in Keswick. The focus of these conventions was “the overcoming life”. The first stanza reads:

*Nothing between, Lord, nothing between,
Let me Thy glory see,
Draw my soul close to Thee,
Then speak in love to me.
Nothing between, nothing between.*

He had very close fellowship with the Lord. I often begin my devotion with this hymn. When I come before the Lord, I would like to take a moment and quiet myself, hoping there would be nothing between me and the Lord. I ask Him to show me His glorious face, to let me hear His gracious words. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between.

In James 4:8, it says “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” If when you come to pray before God, you are in such hurry and start mumbling, you have not quieted yourself, entered into the presence of God, drawn close to Him, and asked the Lord to take away all the separation between you and Him, so that your spirit may see His glorious beauty and your ears be opened up to hear His voice. If you have not opened your heart to the Lord in this manner before you pray, your spirit has not been exercised. Brothers and sisters, our spirit needs to be exercised, exercised to fellowship with God. If we exercise in such manner, we can have close fellowship with Him. He can speak to you and you can pour out your soul before God. Therefore brothers and sisters, when we pray, what are we using to pray? Are we using our voice? Are we using our mind? Both of these will not be able to reach God. You need to open your spirit and there needs to be nothing between you and God. Only then you can have fellowship with God. Everything that is from God is given to us through fellowship.

Fellowship with the Lord through Bible reading

How do we read the Bible? Praise and thank the Lord that we do read the Bible. Some Christians don't even read the Bible. On rare occasions that they do, they might read ten chapters when they feel like doing so. They might not read a single word for days when they don't feel like doing so. Why do we read the Bible? Is it to understand the Bible? I often say every Christian is a theologian. We would interpret the Bible as we read; therefore, every Christian is a theologian. Is it not the case? What do we use to read the Bible? We are using our minds and we are full of head knowledge of the Bible. If this knowledge is accurate, well, thank the Lord. But I am afraid most of it might not be accurate. This type of Bible reading will only puff up our head. Are our feet just as big as our head? Often times we have big heads and small feet – plenty of head knowledge yet little walking with our feet.

How do we read the Bible? We should use our spirit to read the Bible. Why does the Bible always say that we need to meditate upon the words of the Lord? That is to say, not only do we read it, we ought to meditate upon it. Mary, the mother of Jesus had this virtue even though there were many things that she did not understand – when the angel spoke to her, when Jesus spoke to her, she did not

understand. The Lord stayed behind in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. After she found the Lord, she said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." Jesus replied, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Thank the Lord, He obeyed Mary and returned home with her.) She did not understand. But she had this virtue. She would remember it in her heart and meditate upon it. In this way she was able to enter into the will of God. Therefore when we read the Bible, not only do we read, not only do we memorize, we also need to meditate. When we read the Bible, it is not just for gaining knowledge. Of course, we need knowledge but reading the Bible is for the growth of our life. Just like collecting manna every day, this manna is our food for the day.

Thank and praise the Lord, I read the story of George Muller. George Muller was a German. He later went to England and God used him to open up orphanages. Solely by faith he did not ask for provision, did not tell anyone of his needs, everything was depended upon prayers. He was a man of great faith. He clearly saw over a million prayers answered throughout his life. Somebody asked him, "Mr. Muller, you must have this gift of faith." He said, "No, I only have the grace of faith." He read the Bible over 100 times. He was a man of discipline and so his Bible reading was also of great discipline. He told us what he did every morning. Before his daily devotion and prayer, he would spend ten or fifteen minutes before the Lord and draw near to Him. Then he would read one verse in the Bible. He would take verses that were easier to meditate upon. For example, if he wanted to meditate upon the Gospel of John, he would only read one verse – read the verse two or three times – and meditated upon it. Then he took the thoughts of his meditation and turned them into a prayer. Sometimes that would lead him to confession and repentance and sometimes that would lead him to praises and thanksgiving. That verse would then become his food for the day.

When I read this story, I began my learning. Every day I read one verse, sometimes not even one verse. Then I would meditate upon it for ten minutes or so. Through the Bible, I was fellowshiping with God. That verse would become my food for the day and I would meditate upon whenever I have a spare moment. Thank the Lord. I have been doing this for a long time and it is very helpful for me. Therefore brothers and sisters, even when we are reading the Bible, we need to exercise our spirit. We need to have a humble spirit. We need to have a spirit of a child. We need to have a pure spirit before Him so that we can see God.

Fellowship with the Lord through listening to preached words

Aside from that we have the listening of the preached words. We are all expert listeners to preached messages. We have listened to countless messages throughout our life, to a point that we would start make comments. *Mmm... This message is okay to listen to but that other message is just not that good.* How do you listen to messages? Of course, you use your ears. Do the words come in from one ear and exit through the other? Do you use your heart and mind to listen? Why do so many people after listening to numerous messages had not profited their spiritual life? Based on the preached words they listened to, they ought to be spiritual giants. Instead they are still like babes. Why? It is because we did not use our spirit to listen to these messages – our spirit was closed. For this reason we have heard but the words had not entered in. The Bible says "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand." Why? Your spirit has not opened up. If when we listen to a message, we come with an open spirit, even simple words could plant an eternal fruit in our spirit. I am not trying to defend the preachers but the listeners also have responsibilities. Do not push all the responsibilities onto the preachers. If you do not use your spirit, the word of God cannot enter into you. Why can't the preacher deliver the words? Because what he has encountered are closed spirits. If the spirits of all the brothers and sisters are open, even those who could not preach would be able to preach. This is the experience of

all the brethren who had preached before. Therefore, you must use your spirit to listen. Not only would you gain the benefit, even the preacher would receive grace. What can a preacher boast of? If the spirits of brothers and sisters are closed, whatever he speaks would be of no use. It is all because of the mercy of the Lord. Brothers and sisters, even as we listen to the messages, we need to use our spirit!

Fellowship among members

What is “fellowship?” The apostle John said they were in fellowship with the Son and with God. They wrote to report the outcome of such fellowship, so that others could have fellowship with them. In that way their joy would be full – “that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” (I John 1:3-4) Brothers and sisters often gather to have fellowship. What kind of fellowship is that? It is a fellowship of spirit and spirit. It is not a fellowship of body and body and it is not a fellowship of mind and mind. It is a fellowship of spirit and spirit. What God has fellowshiped to you, you fellowship that with brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters would also fellowship what they received from God with you. As a result, our joy would be full. This is fellowship.

Exercise continuous fellowship with the Lord in our daily life

Regarding abiding in the Lord, this is what we all hope for. I remember the two years after Brother Nee was saved. He read Brother Lawrence’s work *The Practice of the Presence of God* and he began to practice. Brother Nee relied on his “memory” to fellowship with God. But oftentimes his memory failed him. Once he left the door, he would forget. It is very hard to rely on your “memory” to fellowship with God. When you are busy, you will forget. In the morning it appears that we are abiding in God. Yet at night it requires quite an effort to abide in God as we are about to go to bed. We have travelled all around the world during the day and returning is hard. If we learn to fellowship with God in spirit and form a habit of it, we do not need to use our mental power to remember it. The Bible tells us that those who believe in Him, abide in Him, and He in us, thus we are in fellowship with Him. For this reason, if we know how to exercise our spirit, abiding in God would be a normal thing and losing the presence of God would be an abnormal thing.

God gave us a very precious spirit. Unfortunately many of God’s children do not know how to use it. You ought to know spiritual living lies within the spirit; changes are to originate within the spirit. Brothers and sisters we have only one hope and we have one prayer. This time as we gather here, let us not just keep these words in our minds, let us start exercising godliness. If we exercise in such manner, the will of God can be accomplished on us. And God will be glorified.

Lord, we thank and praise You. It is Your immense grace that leads our gathering here. We believe Your Holy Spirit will transform these words into our living. We thank and praise You because Your Holy Spirit dwells in us. The teaching of Your anointing continues to teach us how we can walk in the spirit. Through this renewed spirit, we can have fellowship with Your Spirit. May Your will be accomplished quickly. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.