

O for a closer walk with God

By Bill Dyer

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Bible Text: Hebrews 10

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{?} I hope you have enjoyed your break. We come to the second part, then, of our subject, the responsibility of the individual. And well looked at the church, the individual in cultivating our walk with the Lord. Our success and achievement in this world as Christians depends supremely on our walk with the Lord, the effectiveness of our life and our service and however business, however zealous we may be depends, when you boil it all down supremely on our knowledge of God. All we can take with us when we leave this world is our relationship with the Lord.

So what we are dealing with today is the most important, it is the most precious thing in all of our lives, worth the greatest cost and sacrifice in order to achieve it.

When arranging for me to come and speak Gerard wrote to me, “We want our people to see that the fundamental thing is to know and enjoy God. That is it.” And he quoted Andrew Bonar, “Fellowship with God is not means to an end, but it is to do the end in itself.”

Robert McCheyne famously said, “What a man is on his own before God, that he is and nothing more.”

Man or woman or young person, what we are on our own before God, that we are and nothing more. Friends, our fellowship with God is the measure of us. Our fellowship with God is the measure of us.

As we have seen, a spiritual healthy church will help us to fire us with passion for Jesus, to inspire and energize us. God is our loving heavenly Father. He has planned our great salvation. What a price he has paid. The Bible says he rejoices over us with singing. How he must love us. I don't think we will ever grasp in this life just how much the Lord must love us and how he must value intimate fellowship with us. My presence shall go with you. That is always one of the great promises of the Bible. My presence shall go with you. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. What company. What encouragement he gives us. Draw near to me and I will draw near to you. As his children, we don't have to twist his arm to develop a closer walk with him. He has provided everything we need and made clear the way into his most holy purpose

and he invites us to come. The great curtain of the temple has been torn by God from top to bottom. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water, Hebrews 10. What a wonderful invitation. Unbelievable from the very throne of heaven.

No wonder {?} has written in his latest prayer letter, "This is a more wonderful privilege than entering the throne room of Balmoral or Buckingham palace and it is more powerful than anything that happens in number 10 Downing Street or the oval office. Tell me, is there a higher calling than to seek the Lord and then proclaim him to the world?"

And, of course, in addition he has given us his Holy Spirit to help us, to take the things of Christ and reveal them to us as we pray to present our prayers to the Father in groanings too deep for our understanding but a way that is acceptable to the Father and our mightily Lord Jesus reigns supreme in the power of an endless life, lives forever to intercede for us. So there we have got the trinitarian activity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit drawing us into a fellowship, what super abundant grace and provision to help us in our walk.

Friends, our meeting today isn't building false hopes. Our meeting today, the vision of this church to call this meeting isn't building castles in the air. It is not about futile gestures. This is about what God himself desires in his people and encourages us to embrace.

Perhaps you are uncomfortable about coming today. I don't know that anybody here today you felt a little bit unsure. Should you come, that is unworthy? Maybe you felt not good enough, you were not mature enough, not spiritual enough, not prayerful enough, maybe too worldly or just too busy and too cluttered. But look at God's super abundant provision for you. Let us never doubt that a closer walk with the Lord is gloriously possible and is exactly what he wants for every one of us.

So developing our devotional life, focusing on our quiet times particularly. This is our foundation and source of energy for our walk with the Lord.

Now there is no silver bullet. There is no magic formula. The Bible doesn't give us that. We are dealing not with a formula, we are dealing with a relationship. And remember there are some essential building blocks. What do we need for a satisfying quiet time? These are suggestions and nothing that I am saying is perfect and I have never managed to live up to the theory as well as I would like myself. So you are looking at a failure. If you are feeling a failure, friend, you are looking at another failure. I think that is the context in which we are meeting today. We are all out of our depth. But no less there are building blocks and this can be helpful, I hope.

First of all, essential, a regular time. Starting the day with the Lord. First thing in the morning is always the best. Jesus wakes up early in the morning wasn't he seeking his

Father? If we miss out here we probably miss something vital for the whole day. If we lose the battle here, we may lose it throughout the day. Discipline and routine, a regular time, are essential. So getting to bed early should be a key factor. I think that is a very practical and getting to bed early is a key factor. Ideally, have your quiet time alone before you pray with the family. First, a regular time, a quiet place.

Our generation is addicted to noise, isn't it, an unfamiliar and almost embarrassed by silence. But we have got to overcome that. We need a place without distracting noise where you aren't likely to be interrupted. For parents with lively children this can be very difficult as I am sure you know. Perhaps parents could share domestic duties in such a way that you could actually free each other in turn for a short time of quiet time. Domestic arrangements in the morning. We are all different. We are all under pressure, but maybe this could be a way in which we could free each other up for a few minutes one and then the other with the children, whatever.

For those who are moms and aren't working, I was interested to read somewhere that sometimes young moms with children will hold each other's children in turn so once a week and give each other an hour space when they can spend some time with the Lord and then another one will have the children. {?} sometimes practical ways.

Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles had a bigger family, I think, than any of you are likely to have. And husbands didn't do domestics in those days. She managed still regular quiet time. She would bring her apron up over her head and read her Bible and pray under her apron. And the children learned not to bother her while she was doing that. Where there is a will there is a way. We have got to be realistic.

For some who leave for work very early and maybe travel long distances to work, early morning quiet time may have to be very short. Maybe, possibly some may find it possible to read and pray on the train. They may be able to find regular solitude during their lunch break, maybe at work depending in their office or where they are, sitting in a car, maybe, during lunch break, going for walk in the park if you work in the center of London possibly. Or if there is no earlier time as possible, the quiet time may have to be at home at the end of the day. Some circumstances may have to be. But however difficult, we must fight for regular time and a quiet place. Discipline and routine seems to be absolutely critical.

Ideally what should be the content, then, of our quiet times? Well, again, may I just suggest {?} pause for a moment in worship and pray. Remember who you are and in whose company you are. Ask the Lord to be with you and to speak to you. Begin with systematic reading of the Bible. Whatever system you have got going through, going through a book, whatever you are going through, 99 out of 100 times I would say start with Scripture. Absolute {?} there is no substitute for it. Nothing can ever replace the Word of God. Then probably follow, if you are using some Bible meeting notes or Bible aids, probably then follow with that if you are able to do. But unless you have plenty of time I suggest don't try and read too much. Don't attempt to much. Quality is more beneficial than quantity. I have known people who have set themselves to read several

chapters of their Bible and they become in bondage to it. If that is the way the Lord leads you, well, fine, maybe. But for most people it just isn't realistic. Quality in the end is more important than quantity, just a sort of tick your conscience. Oh, well, I have read so much today. Far better to read a lot less and really get some spiritual benefit from it. But you have your passion of Bible reading and so on. Don't be a slave to notes and whatever. If the Spirit of God moves you in worship, moves you in confession and consecration and intercession, respond to his prompting. Don't lock yourself into bondage. Certainly try and read more of the Bible and keep up with your Bible reading notes and all late in the day if necessary. What you are seeking to do is to meet with God. Let his Word his speak to you and respond to that. And as you read I would suggest make a note if possible. I would {?} prayer diary {?}. Make a note of anything that particularly speaks to you upon your reading. What you may want to think about more and meditate upon later. Make that {?}. Write it down. {?} Write it down {?} used to say. {?}.

Prayer. Well, something from your reading should stir you to give you some material, some desire for prayer from your reading. Begin by praying through the main points that strike you in the reading. Then you will have a prayer {?} or a prayer list that you want to turn to, people and situations you want to pray for. But remember, meeting with God in intimate worship and prayer is more important than your prayer list. If the Lord draws near and warms your heart and nourishes your soul, welcome and embrace that opportunity above everything else. Of course, there may be some critical things happening during the day which we really must pray about before you rush off to work or take the kids to school or whatever. So what about more systematic prayer? What about your prayer list, the things you have written down you want to pray for? Well, it may have to wait until later. But you do need some system of prayer. You do need some form of prayer diary and to remember the people and situations you have committed to pray for. And you need a simple system of adding to that list. And make sure you do when you promise to pray for somebody, which me may all do, don't we? I will pray for you. Friends, make sure you do. It is so easy to say.

I haven't always kept it, but I have tried as near as I can to keep it. If I say I will pray for somebody I try to fulfill that. I believe we should. People look to us. You look at situations you have faced in your life. You take tremendous comfort at the fact that somebody else is praying for you.

So we do need some system, but we mustn't be in bondage to it if the Spirit of God moves us. But we must make sure that we supplement as I think I said. It may be clear.

Now assuming you do manage an early morning quiet time, in addition, try to build into your day brief moments when you can remember the Lord. Lift your heart to him. {?} Read or remind yourself of a Scripture. This is the value of memorizing Scripture, something I have always found difficult. I haven't got a good memory. I have never found it easy. Some of you will find it easier than others. But it is so helpful to have the Word of God in your heart that during the day some day that you can just lift your heart to the Lord when surrounded by the mad rush of our godless world and the pressures of

life, a world rushing towards hell. Take a moment if you can during the day to thank the Lord for saving you and keeping you in his incredible love.

Perhaps you ought to lift your heart for your family. Just remember them, too, during the day or whatever. Even on the busiest days there are usually brief moments when you can touch {?} with our heavenly Father, moments when he nudges us. He reminds us who we are, that we are children of the King. We are in the world, but we are not of it. And so we are helped just to keep a Christian perspective, little nudges, little moments when we can touch base with him. Particularly maybe moments to remember or meditate upon your morning Bible reading. Something that struck you, some Scripture which you have memorized. Psalm 119. Oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it all day long. Well, you may not meditate it all day long, but you might go and meditate on it for a moment, just for a moment, just a little break.

Without being crude can I say even a visit to the loo, just that moment. Just remember who ... I am a Christian. {?} the office {?} with everything. I am a Christian. I am different. Just to touch base with the Lord can help it. Scripture can be like a long lasting sweet. A sweet is that you tuck under your tongue or in the corner of your mouth and every now and again you remember it is there and you bring it out and you suck it and enjoy its freshness.

I don't know if that illustration or this. My father-in-law who is now with the Lord, an interesting character and could have been the subject of a book, a modern Billy Bray, really. He {?} brilliantly with John Wesley. He is a tough early boxing champion and a Yorkshire butcher. They don't come much tougher. He was wonderfully saved after the army, saw action, saw a lot of action out of 1100 in the Wellingtons in York, only about 100 survived, but 1000 of his friends died, just a tiny handful survived. He was one of those who survived. So a hand to hand combat, basically, very tough Yorkshire butcher, wonderfully saved at about 35 years of age after some years after the war. He truly lived for Christ. His hours of work, seven o'clock in the morning he was in the shop and he was usually there till about 10 o'clock at night without any serious break. But he was up at six o'clock, an hour before for his hour with the Lord and his {?} in the shop, reading and praying. And though he worked so incredibly hard, frequently during the day his mind would be on his morning reading and other Scriptures. Between customers in the shop he would be thinking and praying and singing hymns occasionally. He would maybe just jot down one or two thoughts. Then he would be off in his van. Mom would look after the shop and he would be delivering meat to his customers around Barnsley. And he kept a bit of paper. Often it was just a meat bag, one of this white meat bags and he would keep it under his {?} hat as he was going from house to house and then he... out it would come as he would stop at the van, he would.... out would come his meat bag and {?} and then back again and off he would go on his rounds.

Just before 7:30 he would exchange his butcher's coat for a jacket. He would call at the church or a chapel, a gospel hall and preach and give a Bible study from the notes he had made on his meat bag or whatever. Then about 8:30 he would continue his butcher's round and eventually he would get home and then he would have to scrub out his shop

and that... to scrub out a butcher shop, greasy, it is seriously hard work. And hopefully he would get through by about 10 o'clock but he would be put at six o'clock the next morning and he lived like that for 30 or 40 years. Every Sunday afternoon for 30 years he took a Bible study in his church and he usually preached once or twice on the Lord's day as well. You appreciate how little time he had for preparation. He did it on his feet, on the hoof, just during the day. His Bible reading was feeding himself and he was making notes and that is how he was able to sustain and he was a fine preacher and under demand all the time, not just Sunday, but several days during the week, several evenings during the week at different homes and chapels and gospel halls.

He used to say... we used to say he was as strong as a bull, but his real strength was his joy in the Lord. He almost always continual intimate fellowship with the Lord and meditating on Scripture. And because of this he was able to recognize the nudges and promptings of the Holy Spirit, sensitive to God.

Christine, my wife, tells me that her dad at times when he would be up in the night and the Lord would wake him and show him that somebody was ill, somebody was dying. In the middle of the night he would go and find that they were. They were dying. He would go and pray and lead them to the Lord. But he did that, lead them to the Lord, pray with them.

Needless to say he was utterly fearless in witness for Christ no matter what or who he was speaking to. Many from that tough mining community who never went near a church would have found church a totally foreign culture would come into the shop, though, to ask a prayer. They would talk about the Lord. They would continue witness. The shop, he said, was his pulpit and his land. They would be given tracts to read and there would be sweets and tracts for the children as well. And hundreds, if not thousands, heard the gospel, more than all the ministers put together in {?} heard the gospel from him.

No matter how hard we work, friends, there is a way. Where there is a will there is a way to fellowship with Christ, to meditate on his Word. It has been said the busier you are and the more hectic your world the more you need to cull daily spaces of silence and solitude. They may be brief, but try and cull into your day those precious moments when you can remember the Lord and who you are.

And in addition to a daily pattern of quiet times, can I suggest try and plan for one or two longer slots each week. Perhaps secure an hour one evening mid week when you can have some arrangement with your husband, your wife or whatever, when you can have an hour, maybe go up to the bedroom, go out for a walk or something, just have an hour midweek, time when you can be free from all distraction for a longer period and not under pressure getting to work. Spend these times either using, perhaps drawing on the notes that you have made during the week, things that have struck you from your Bible reading which you want to think more about, or particular situations you want to pray for.

I was a minister I had more time for this. But I found personally it was always helpful to have two lists, the Christians I wanted to pray for and situations, but I also had a separate

list for unconverted. I wanted to make sure I was always praying for the unconverted. So I secured that {?} separate list and for me I would go for a walk. I would go for a walk. Good for the body, but I would be calling on the Lord and devote an hour just to pray for unconverted people. I could be deeply moved for them.

Friends, but, again, and all of this and how we use our prayer time, how we formulate, discipline in the end. It is all leads to a greater end. We are looking and longing for the Lord himself, close fellowship with him in felt experience. These are usually the life changing moments for Christian. And most of us will have and can point back to, can remember life changing moments. Very often they are those moments when the Lord himself draws near. It is then that maybe a young person hears a call to the ministry, a call for the mission field, a call to Christian work, a call to maybe to help with the youth work in the Church or offer themselves to the elders or deacons with some greater responsibility.

A young fellow came to me very busy young man, a busy family, work responsible job, a man who was overloaded and he came to me and got in touch with me and he said, "I just feel God has been so good to me. Is there something more I can... I would like..."

He is still running important youth work in the church to this day. Moments when the Lord touches you. Moments when the Lord draws near.

Often these are life changing situations. Well, you can be still and know that he is God when you can hear the still small voice.

Don Whitney said we need to find the place to be alone to hear the voice of him whose presence is unseen, yet more real than any other.

Now these are some of the building blocks. They all sound fine in theory. It is good to have an ideal goal and routine and discipline. And all very helpful, but friends, we all know that life and spiritual life is never that simple, is it? So let's try and just at least unearth a few of the challenges that we are likely to face. The most obvious one by miles is, of course, pressure of time. However can I cope with this? I am just too busy. The demands are just overwhelming. I just do not have space in my life. I have to travel to work, bringing piles of work home. All I can say is I understand at least a little of what some of you are going through. Within my own family, my own children and their partners, a lawyer, a high flying hospital consultant, a head master and other teachers. All hugely pressurized work, bringing work home, massive amounts of it. And how do you cope? Active involved in our church and maintaining a close walk with the Lord.

And there is simple answer, friends. All I can do is what I have pointed to this morning. Where there is a will there is a way in Christ. And the Lord can make those moments with discipline try to find space, planning, thinking, it can be done even with the busiest of lives. But it is not easy, but we are fighting for something that is really precious. And with God's help we can even overcome these demands that so many of you are struggling

withy. I mean, we can talk all morning about this. I realize this is for many of you the biggest issue if you like the elephants in the room.

Then as people we are different. Our circumstances vary greatly. Some people love system and order and routine. Some people are incredibly disciplined and run their lives like clock work. Others are more chaotic, spontaneous and creative or a mixture of both. Women are usually better than men at talking to the Lord right through the day and sharing quite naturally with him even the smallest details of their lives. They may come very close to praying without ceasing. Praying women practiced twittering long before the social media gurus, didn't they? Praise God for it. Men tend to focus on fewer and bigger issues. And probably don't pray as frequently. We don't multitask as well as our sisters.

There is danger in trying to force yourself into a pattern or routine which doesn't work for you. If you do force yourself it can become a sort of mechanical slog and you end up failing and filling yourself with guilt and this can take away your freedom and your spontaneity and your enjoyment of the Lord.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones often emphasized know yourself. We are different. Allow for some flexibility. That is not a let off. That is not a cop out. However we are made, some routine and discipline is essential. But not that you become so stifled that you are robbed of the very spiritual benefit you want to achieve.

A word about the spiritual battle. We are vulnerable because we all recognize our weakness in private prayer. McCheyne said you can embarrass anyone by asking them about their prayer life. Friend, you could embarrass me by asking me about my prayer life as I could embarrass you. We all know that we fall short because it is the most precious thing of all and we struggle. This is an area where we are most likely to beat ourselves up and where the devil is most likely to beat us up as well. Try and overwhelm us with guilt and condemnation. It is always going to be an area of spiritual warfare. And we must withstand that. We are failures. We are weak, but the Lord helps us and we look to his Spirit to help us and encourage us. The important thing is we have a desire. That is why the first one was so important, the first talk. The Church, by God's... will give us the desire to have a closer walk with the Lord. If we have that desire, the Lord will help us through those times when we have been beaten up, the times when we just don't feel like a quiet time, we don't feel like praying.

Speaking of this Dr. Lloyd-Jones spoke of how when attempting other tasks we can be fresh and full of energy, but the moment we turn to prayer we get heavy and lethargic. He put it down to spiritual forces. Clearly the devil would prefer us to do anything rather than wrestle in prayer. At such times I found it helpful to stop and forcefully resist the devil and pray against him in Jesus' name. Have you ever done that?

You will find when you just can't concentrate, you can't focus. You are tired. You have got no energy. Stop and pray against the devil. You may find that it makes a bigger difference than you expect. And also when spiritually cold and discouraged I sometimes

stop and remind myself of God's blessings and retrace his providential leadings for my life. I literally count my blessings and name them one by one and praise God for them. And I find this wonderfully reassuring and heart warming. And then I can return to prayer and then the present and the future look very different in the light of all that God's faithfulness and loving kindness to you. Help to warm your heart.

When we are struggling in prayer if Bible reading hasn't put you in the right frame of mind to pray, it can be helpful to turn to, say, a favorite song or a favorite passage which you know warms your heart. It can be helpful also to read and meditate on a favorite hymn which expresses heart felt worship. And you know that there is help there. You don't have to be tied in. Be free. Be spontaneous. Look for ways to draw encouragement from the Lord.

It is interesting Michael Ball at Keswick I think this year he said he was afraid his spiritual life would be in danger when he became bishop of {}, you remember. And he was so anxious about this he said, "I wept my heart out. I fought for time alone each day. It was an anchor for my soul. You have got to be inventive to keep your spiritual life vibrant." I think that is very sound advice. You have got to be inventive to keep your spiritual life vibrant. He says, "I fought for it." And the fear of losing it he wept bitterly. I think that, to me, is preaching reality. We must fight to keep our spiritual life fresh and lively.

I know some people are creatures of habit. Are you like that? You just wind yourself up in the morning like clock work and each morning you just keep going through the day just like the old clock ticking away. But we are not all made like that, are we? Variety for many of us is a slice of life. Most of us need some fresh stimulation. And no routine should be set in concrete. The Bible doesn't require that. Look at the variety of worship and prayer and experience just in the book of Psalms alone. Tremendous variety. There are your devotional aids and Bible readings. If you enjoy Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, well exchange it for {} of faith. Bishop Wyles' daily reading. A. W. Tozer, the new day by day and many others. Your elders and leaders here will help you if you want something fresh. You are so blessed with the English language. You have so much that is rich to encourage us in our devotional life.

You may have limited time to read beyond the Bible and {}, but if and when you do read beyond that don't just read theology to enlarge your knowledge. Of course it is helpful to read theology and doctrine and increase your knowledge, absolutely, but don't just read that. Also read history and biography and spiritual experience. Read the biographies of Whitefield and Wesley and Spurgeon, McChesney and Brainerd and Henry Martin, Jonathan and Sarah Edwards, the Welsh Communitarian Methodists, the best of the Arminian Methodists.

Did you ever come across Wesley's veterans? It is now in paperback, seven volumes. Quite {}, very precious, warmly recommended in the Banner of Truth book I was reading the other day. Seven {} the men who worked with Wesley and it recalls not just

their activity, but their experience of God, their knowledge of God, their walk with the Lord.

{?} reprinted and wonderful spiritual content. And then there are people like William Brownwell and Jonathan Fletcher, those who came a little bit later. And all these whether they are Arminian or Calvinistic, they knew God.

Never forget that Lloyd-Jones was basically a {?}, a Calvinistic Methodist, but he also loved the Arminians. Read those whom God has dealt with at a deep level who truly knew God. In these godless and discouraging days we need some of these to keep our hearts warm and pure from the godless world and to keep our expectations high, looking to God to rend the heavens and come back to us again in mighty revival. Only then will we be able to persevere and wrestle in prayer for him to come back to us again.

Let me finish quickly with a final challenge and encouragement. True evangelical and reformed spirituality which is the same, of course, as New Testament spirituality is more than just knowing our Bibles and understanding correct doctrine, vital as that is. To be truly biblical we need both, both head knowledge and heart knowledge.

Paul Cook has given a strong warning. He says, "There has been a tendency in reformed circles to confine God to the pages of Scripture as though because God has spoken and made himself known through the Scriptures he no longer deals directly and personally with man. This can easily lead to what the Puritan Walter Craddick described as a frozen knowledge of God. The knowledge may be correct, yet lacking any personal acquaintance with God. We are in danger of making God remote. The Bible tends to take the place of God and consequently the Holy Spirit. And so we no longer deal with God himself as a person. We shut God up in a book. But the function of Scripture is surely to bring us into community with the living God," end of quote.

Remember Gerard's words to me. We want our people to see that the fundamental thing is to know and enjoy God.

Friends, this is our plea today. This is what it is all about today. When we develop a closer walk with God we are likely to experience more than just a frozen knowledge of God.

Young missionary Simon {?} working in war torn Burundi his life has been in danger many times. He wrote this in his diary. "God has blessed me with times of unbelievable intimacy. Why I have wept with love for him, joy in him, desperation for friends and family who are currently rejecting him."

Like many of you, sadly, I have known times of formality and dryness and coldness of heart devoid of any experiential reality. Those times have been far too often, but thank God I can say as many of you can I have also known times of such intimacy and immediacy in prayer that I, too, have wept bitterly for my sins, wept to the immediate experiential reality of the blood of Christ cleansing me there and then, feeling that I knew

myself to be cleansed and accepted at that very moment, enjoying a felt salvation, overwhelmed and amazed at God's love and provision, the precious blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin.

Friends, tears of joy, assurance of salvation, a taste of heaven, oh, yes, the Lord is inviting us, inviting you to something far more wonderful than just a frozen knowledge of God.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones argued that experiential knowledge is the only true knowledge, because all doctrine is about God himself and must lead us into knowing him. And Noah Davis writing *{?} Evangelical Times* some months ago quoted concerning Lloyd-Jones that suddenly he, Dr. Lloyd-Jones felt surrounded by God's presence and the love of God was poured into him, giving him amazing assurance and degrees of joy and light he had never known before in his Christian experience. For a number of days this overwhelming joy stayed with him. A while later he had an even greater experience of God's felt presence and the reality of his love. You can read that little book, I think, by *{?}* about Dr. Lloyd-Jones. His wife, Mrs. Lloyd-Jones, said he spent much time seeking and enjoying the Lord in private prayer. There were many times when the Lord drew so near to him that he needed to leave his study and talk with her in the kitchen. He did this to reassure himself that he was still on earth and not in heaven.

Friends, there is something real going on there. A man of that ability, a medical man, a man of the brain almost the size of Texas if he needed to go and talk to his wife in the kitchen to assure him he was still on earth, there is something real going on.

Many of us have read the great Jonathan Edwards being overwhelmed by the presence of God and bathed in floods of tears as the Lord opened him to the glories of the gospel, the glories of Christ and a heart warming experience in order.

Let me just quote you an Arminian Methodist William *{?}*. This is a farmer in Cornwall who was illiterate until he was 65. He couldn't read or write. When he could write, this is what he wrote. "I sometimes had seasons of remarkable visitation from the presence of the Lord. One night in bed I was so filled, so overpowered with the glory of God there had to be have been a thousand sounds shining at noon day. The brightness of that divine glory would have eclipsed the whole. I was constrained to shout it out for joy." Again he wrote, "I again received the impressive seal and the earnest of the Spirit in my heart, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. I was changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Language fails in dealing with the faint description of what I then experienced, the Lord coming near."

D. L. Moody. I can only say that God revealed himself to me and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand.

Friends, these experiences of the Lord are, perhaps, exceptional. They are not essential to our spiritual walk. We cannot manufacture them. God sovereignly touches and God sovereignly blesses his people in experiential ways as he chooses, but anyone who is

faithful in their quiet times, anyone who is truly desirous of a personal relationship with the living God and seriously develops their walk with the Lord is sure to know a much closer, more personal, more intimate and, yes, more experiential relationship with our Lord.

Draw near to me and I will draw near to you.