

# Seeking the Lord



You will seek me  
and find me when  
you seek  
me with  
all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:13

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# At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications

*"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."*

1 Corinthians 2:13

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# Introduction

This teaching has to do with nurturing one's personal relationship with Christ with a view to spiritual transformation (growth in Christ-likeness). Too often discipleship is understood to be attending a special "discipleship class"; and mere attendance is the only responsibility of the disciple. At best, this would make one a disciple of a teacher, and not a disciple of Christ. A disciple of Christ must "attend" to fellowship with the Spirit of Christ. In one sense, this fellowship takes place in much the same way as the original 12 fellowshipped with Jesus of Nazareth. But, since Christ is risen and has sent His Spirit, this New Covenant relationship is better modeled after Jesus of Nazareth's relationship with His Heavenly Father. (John 5:19,30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49-50; 14:10) While on the earth, the Man, Jesus of Nazareth clearly had the habit of SEEKING GOD. (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16, 6:12)

# Spiritual Disciplines

Authentic relationship with Christ requires a disciplined devotional life in fellowship with the Lord.<sup>1</sup> It is probably for this reason that what some refer to as “holy habits”, have also become known as Spiritual Disciplines.

Various authors compile different lists, placing various disciplines in various categories.<sup>2</sup> The names attributed to the various disciplines and various categories also vary. This is just one example<sup>3</sup>:

## 1. The Inward Disciplines

Meditation / Prayer / Fasting / Study

## 2. The Outward Disciplines

*(Inward Realities Resulting in Outward Lifestyles)*

Simplicity / Solitude / Submission / Service

## 3. The Corporate Disciplines

Confession / Worship / Guidance / Celebration

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14 speaks of “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”, and Philippians 2:1 speaks of “the fellowship of the Spirit”. In this case, I am not making any distinction between fellowship with the Holy Spirit and fellowship with the Spirit of the Risen Christ, or fellowship with God the Father for that matter. Regarding “the Eternal Spirit” in Hebrews 9:14, both M.R. Vincent and A.T. Robertson agree that this refers to the Spirit of Jesus, the Christ.

<sup>2</sup> There are many wonderful books on the disciplines. Just some which I have read: “Practice of the Presence”, by Brother Lawrence; “Imitation of Christ”, by Thomas a’ Kempis; “Celebration of Discipline”, by Richard Foster; “Ordering Your Private World”, by Gordon MacDonald; “Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life”, by Donald Whitney; “Sacred Pathways”, by Gary Thomas; “The Spirit of the Disciplines” and “Hearing God”, by Dallas Willard.

<sup>3</sup> From “Celebration of Discipline” by Richard Foster

It is beyond the scope of this teaching to elaborate on each of these spiritual disciplines, as each one deserves a separate teaching. Alternatively, I would like to present the idea of *spiritual disciplines in total* as “**Fellowship with the Spirit of Christ**”, for these various disciplines are but methods for SEEKING THE LORD.

## *Fellowship with the Spirit of Christ*

### 4 Components

- **Desire**: An absolute pre-requisite, which arises out of a **sense of need** – namely, being “**poor in spirit**”,<sup>4</sup> and **love for the Lord**.<sup>5</sup>
- **Discipline**: Not in the sense of self-effort, but simply letting the Lord truly be the Lord of our lives, rather than allowing “the affairs of this life”<sup>6</sup> to usurp His place of preeminence each and every day.<sup>7</sup>
- **Direction**: Scripture reading, and scripture study give the proper direction and guidance to our “holy habits” / spiritual disciplines / fellowship with the Spirit of Christ.
- **Devotion**: “They were continually devoting themselves ....”<sup>8</sup>  
to “holy habits” / spiritual disciplines / fellowship with the Spirit of Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:3

<sup>5</sup> The connection between the two is demonstrated in the passage Luke 8:36-47.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 2:4

<sup>7</sup> Suggested Reading: *Tyranny of the Urgent* by Charles E. Hummel and *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:42. Greek: *proskartereo*, Strong’s #4242, steadfastly attentive to, constantly adhering to.

And of these four components, I'd like to focus on the first, for without "desire", neither "discipline", nor "direction", nor "devotion" will follow. So, this study is essentially about *desire to fellowship with the Spirit of Christ* – the **desire** to SEEK THE LORD.

# Poor in Spirit

The desire to **SEEK THE LORD** arises out of *a sense of need*. I believe that this *sense of need* is best described by a phrase which Jesus used to describe one of the Beatitudes: “poor in spirit”.<sup>9</sup>

In the New Testament, there are two Greek words which are both translated “poor”. The verb form of the first word means “to work for one’s daily bread” .<sup>10</sup> This is a “needy” person. This kind of person has no savings or reserves, and so must work every day in order to eat every day. The need for nourishment is solved by working. As long as one has work to do, he will be satisfied. We can translate this into the spiritual life in this way: One has a *sense of need* for spiritual nourishment; and that need can be satisfied by working at religious activities, that is, by having a religious job to do, some sort of service which will fulfil one’s *sense of need*.

But actually, this is not the word which Jesus used in His phrase “poor in spirit”. He used another Greek word, the verb form of which means “to be a beggar”.<sup>11</sup> In using this word “poor”, Jesus was not referring to a “needy person” who just needed a little helping hand just for today. He was referring to a “beggar” who had no real hope of changing his destitute situation. This

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 5:3

<sup>10</sup> Adjective: *penichros*. Verb: *penomai*.

<sup>11</sup> Adjective: *ptocho*. Verb form: *ptocheuo*.

person cannot meet his own need for nourishment by working, because he has no job to work. He must beg for his nourishment. We can translate this into the spiritual life in this way: One has a *sense of need* but realizes that the need can never be met by working at religious activities. One has no other option but to cry out to the Lord in that need. THAT is being “poor in spirit”. THAT *sense of need* creates a desire to SEEK THE LORD.



# Needing & Loving the Lord

In Luke chapter 7, we see there is a definite connection between this *sense of need* and loving the Lord. Let's read verses 36-47:

<sup>36</sup> "When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. <sup>38</sup> As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. <sup>41</sup> "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. <sup>44</sup> Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell

you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

# Captivity

In this story, we see that when the woman learned that Jesus was at the Pharisee's house, she **sought Him out**. This woman was “poor in spirit”: She knew she was a spiritual beggar. She knew she was a sinner. She knew her *captivity* to sin.

The apostle Paul wrote: “I see a law in my members (of my body), warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity to the law of sin** which is at work in my members.”<sup>12</sup> The connection between being “poor in spirit” and SEEKING THE LORD is the realization of our *captivity to sin*.

God's Old Testament people were well-acquainted with Captivity. They experienced:

- 400 years of captivity in Egypt
- 40 years in the Wilderness
- Approximately 400 years of living with the pagan nations of Canaan
- 70 years of exile in the Babylonian Captivity

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 7:23 NKJV. “in my body” – NIV.

Then in the New Testament, the Church experienced the Dispersion from Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The fact is, the Church never has and never will have a “Promised Land” in which to dwell here on this earth. Until Jesus returns, the Church will always have to be living “in the world” while not being “of it”<sup>13</sup> and under the world system of the “god and ruler of this world”.<sup>14</sup>

In Biblical typology, these physical captivities also represent **the spiritual captivities of the world, the flesh, and the devil**. The meaning of the Greek word translated *salvation*<sup>15</sup>, speaks primarily of the idea of deliverance from **the captivity of sin and death**.<sup>16</sup> The *sense of need* that creates a desire to SEEK THE LORD (like the woman who sought Jesus) is being acutely aware of these spiritual captivities of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The *sense of need* that creates a *longing* for heaven – a *longing* to be “set free from the futility and corruption of this creation”<sup>17</sup> – a *longing* to inherit the glory of our true home.<sup>18</sup> This *longing*, in turn, creates a desire to SEEK THE LORD.

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<sup>13</sup> John 17:13-15

<sup>14</sup> John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12

<sup>15</sup> *Soteria*

<sup>16</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>17</sup> Romans 8:20-21

<sup>18</sup> This idea of “longing” played a significant role in C.S. Lewis’ conversion to Christianity and in his writings. He called it *longing* for “joy”. The German literary term is *Sehnsucht*.

*Throughout the Bible, we see this longing in God's people:* Moses named his first son *Gershem*, which means “a stranger”, because he felt like “a sojourner in a foreign land”.<sup>19</sup>

In chapter 11, the writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us that Abraham lived as an “alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land ... for he was looking for a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”<sup>20</sup> He also tells us that all of God's heroes of faith “confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth ... desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly one.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Exodus 2:22

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 11:9-10

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 11:13-16

# Turning Captivity Captive

It is this realization that we are living in spiritual exile that creates a desire to **SEEK THE LORD**. This “longing” for the Lord’s presence can be seen in psalms written by “the Sons of Korah” during the years of the Babylonian Captivity.<sup>22</sup>

The Lord has a purpose in allowing His people to be brought into captivity – namely, to create in them a desire to **SEEK HIM** with all their heart. We can see this clearly in the Book of Jeremiah with the prophecies given to Israel while they were in the Babylonian Captivity:

24 “After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the skilled workers and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten. <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD asked me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” “Figs,” I answered. “The good ones are very good, but the bad ones are so bad they cannot be eaten.” <sup>4</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>5</sup>“This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. <sup>6</sup>My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not

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<sup>22</sup> Psalms 42, 43, 84, 137

uproot them. <sup>7</sup>I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. <sup>8</sup>“‘But like the bad figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten,’ says the LORD, ‘so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials, and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. <sup>9</sup>I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a curse, and an object of ridicule, wherever I banish them. <sup>10</sup>I will send the sword, famine, and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors.’” Jeremiah 24:1-10

*This passage is called **The Parable of the Two Baskets of Figs**: In the Lord’s eyes, the “Good Figs” were the captives of Judah, that is, the Jews who were taken into the Babylonian Captivity. What was “good” is that there they would develop **“a heart to know God and return to God with all their heart”**.<sup>23</sup>*

In the Lord’s eyes, the “Bad Figs” were the Jews who remained in Jerusalem. They did not go into captivity and did not develop a desire to seek and know the Lord. These are the people who mixed with the pagan inhabitants who had moved into the area from Babylon, Assyria, and Persia. These people were the Samaritans, who were disdained by the Jews.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back

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<sup>23</sup> v. 7

<sup>24</sup> 2 Kings 17:24-41

to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:10-13

This passage tells us what we should learn to do while in Captivity:

- Call upon the Lord.
- Pray to the Lord.
- Seek the Lord with all your heart.

14 “I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” Jeremiah 29:14

This is what happens when we SEEK THE LORD:

- We will find the Lord.
- He will “restore our captivity” - “turn again our captivity”. He will “turn captivity captive”.<sup>25</sup>
- He will set us free from the captivities of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and cause us to desire to be captive to Himself and His kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” <sup>4</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says

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<sup>25</sup> Psalm 68:8; Ephesians 4:8



about the houses in this city and the royal palaces of Judah that have been torn down to be used against the siege ramps and the sword <sup>5</sup> in the fight with the Babylonians: 'They will be filled with the dead bodies of the people I will slay in my anger and wrath. I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness. <sup>6</sup> "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. <sup>7</sup> I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. <sup>8</sup> I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. <sup>9</sup> Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise, and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.' <sup>10</sup> "This is what the LORD says: 'You say about this place, "It is a desolate waste, without people or animals." Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more <sup>11</sup> the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever." For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,' says the LORD." Jeremiah 33:3-11

*This is what life is like in the Captivity of the Lord:*

- We receive revelation of the Lord and His plans and purposes.<sup>26</sup>
- We receive health and healing, peace and truth, restoration and rebuilding, pardon, and purification.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> v.3

<sup>27</sup> vv. 4-8

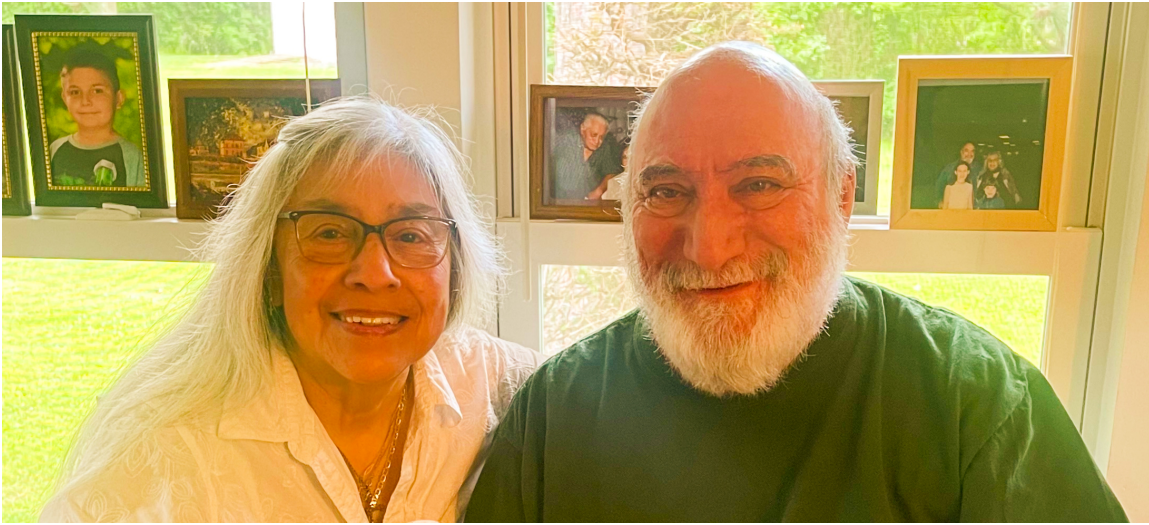
- We become a witness of the knowledge and glory of the Lord to all nations.<sup>28</sup>
- Our thanksgiving and praise become a sound of joy and gladness, the voice of the bride and bridegroom.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> v. 9 and Habakkuk 2:14; Mathew 24:14

<sup>29</sup> vv.10-11

Bill & Frances Furioso  
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... [www.AtChristsTable.org](http://www.AtChristsTable.org)

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