GUILLERMO MALDONADO

Cultivating an INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP *with* GOD

EXPERIENCE
AND ENJOY THE
SUPERNATURAL BENEFITS



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Introduction

Today's world is full of knowledge to make scientific discoveries, develop new technologies, new physical, aesthetic, nutritional care, etc., but very few know how to deal with personal relationships. As a result, we see a society of individualistic, lonely people, broken relationships, and dysfunctional families. Many people are successful in their professions, finances, and business but have not achieved success in their relationships. The present generation is the most connected generation of all time. We can interact with people around the world just by picking up our cell phone. Everything you want to know is just a click away. However, this generation lacks true connections the most, as their relationships are ephemeral and superficial. Now more than ever, we need to learn to relate genuinely among human beings and with God.

Today, people can explore distant planets, put satellites in space, and deal with microscopic viruses, but they do not know how to solve their relational problems. *"And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world"* (1 John 4:3). This spirit has a very clear objective: to divide people and destroy our relationship with God. The Bible also calls this spirit *"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"* (Ephesians 2:2). This generation—which I call "the microwave generation" because they want everything instantly—does not understand strong relationships. This makes God not a priority for them; they do not want to take time to establish a relationship with God because they are after instant gratification.

This book is intended to open readers' eyes and show them the need to establish a relationship with God beyond attending Sunday service, watching online services, or doing quick, repetitive prayers. This is a call for you to break away from the enemy's deception, the influence of the spirit of this age, individualism, and self-centeredness. It is a call to reestablish our fellowship and intimacy with our heavenly Father. In return, you will develop strong and loyal covenant relationships, not only with God

but with other people, which you can count on in the good times and trials that life throws at you. You will develop a very close relationship with our heavenly Father so that you will never again feel alone, insecure, or lost in this world without knowing your purpose.

The intimate relationship with our heavenly Father adds meaning, direction, identity, security, a sense of belonging, and value to our lives. The difficulty is that few people are willing to walk the path that leads to fellowship with God. It requires an investment of time, demands giving up the mundane things in life, a strong commitment, and a high price to pay. However, the reward is priceless. It is a great opportunity to advance in your walk with Christ. Take it and transform your Christian life forever!

Chapter 1

A Call to a Relationship with God

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Moreover, He created man in His image and likeness. The man was the peak of His creation, and He left him for last because He intended to maintain a close and intimate relationship with him. Therefore, when God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, He would often come down to fellowship with them. One day, *"they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day"* and hid because they were afraid, for they had disobeyed the Lord (Genesis 3:8). On that day, sin separated man from God, and the relationship of intimacy between us was broken. However, as we can see, man was initially designed for intimacy and divine companionship, to live in a continuous and unbreakable relationship with our Creator. In other words, we were brought to earth with the intrinsic need to have a relationship with our heavenly Father. When God created us in His image, He also imparted to us His same capabilities such as thinking, feeling, loving, knowing, speaking, and understanding—which cannot be said for other creations. This was the only way God could feel the fellowship of man.

Similarly, God also placed the desire for fellowship within our spiritual and emotional DNA, all for the purpose of man becoming one with Him. The more man stays in fellowship with God, the more he becomes like Him. That said, we can establish that whoever we relate to or fellowship with the most is who we will resemble. That is why, when Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God, they also ceased to resemble Him and began to resemble someone else. In this case, satan.

God was not willing to lose the crown of His creation. In seeking to regain that communion and fellowship with man, God the Father designed a rescue plan. Since man had separated himself from Him through sin, the only form of redemption was through the sacrifice of a being human in nature but free from sin. This is why the Son of God came to earth as a man and was conceived in the womb of a virgin woman by the power and grace

of the Holy Spirit. His purpose was to restore man's relationship with the Father. Therefore, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus proclaimed: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"* (Luke 4:18-19). This "acceptable year of the Lord" refers to the jubilee expressed in the Old Testament. According to the law, debt slaves were to be set free and the land returned to its original owner every fifty years. Jesus is the one who brings jubilee to our soul, who redeems us and restores us to fellowship with the Father—something we had lost because of our debt of sin.

The first part of Jesus's anointing is to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom, which is an invitation to reenter that close relationship with the Father. It involves the miraculous transformation of the heart, for it is with the heart that we have intimacy with God. When the heart is broken, wounded, or hardened, it is difficult for us to have a relationship with Him. A sinful condition separates the human being from his Creator. Jesus came to restore man's relationship with God and show us that the Father is not an impersonal figure but a loving Father. He wants a close relationship with His people and intimacy with each one of us. Therefore, once we are saved, sin is erased from our life, and we can return to God's original intention, which is to have a close relationship with Him.

If we look closely at the relationship of intimacy in the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we will see that there are three well-defined features: fatherhood, the principle of headship, and companionship. God wants to share this with us, His children. He gives us His fatherhood so that we also give it to the millions of spiritual orphans in the world. He guides us so that we can learn to obey and provide direction to those who walk in darkness. He gives us His fellowship so that we can share with Him all things and take that same fellowship to the people who wander alone in the world. The fullness of man's heart is found in fellowship with God and other people. *"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 1:3-4).

Understanding What a Relationship Is

We have just introduced the theme and purpose of God in creating man, which is for us to have an intimate, personal, and continuous relationship with Him. However, given that we live in a society that does not know the profound value of relationships, this society may also be unable to grasp what a relationship is from the divine perspective. In fact, at the social level, relationships are changing while people are showing a tendency to isolation. Studies show that in 1990, each American had an average of ten friends.[1] Now, upon comparing two studies from 1985 and 2004, *Live Science* has found that in 1985 each person had an average of 2.94 close friends, and in 2004 the number dropped to 2.08.[2]

A genuine relationship is not about what each person can take from the other, nor how much they can benefit from getting close to one another; nor is it one-sided, where only one party contributes to the life of the other. A relationship is a correspondence, a deal. It is communication between two or more people, including talking and listening, giving and receiving. Simply put, it is a connection. Even science today recognizes that people are relational beings whose mental and physical health depends, in large part, on their relationships. Imagine then what a relationship with their Creator can mean to them. More than anything else, human beings need to connect with God, and that connection can only be made through a covenant. God does not establish loose or uncommitted relationships. A relationship with God involves a daily walk. It is a mutual commitment whose purpose is fellowship and complete unity—to become one with our heavenly Father.

A relationship with God is established based on love, obedience, fear of God, trust, communication, and commitment.

Only when the above foundations are established can two lives succeed in a relationship. This is so because a relationship with God is a state of

being. It is the place from which we operate, move, walk, live, and communicate with God and other human beings. In other words, it is something that cannot be simulated or done half-heartedly. We either have a relationship with God or we do not. If we say that we have a relationship with God yet there is sin in our life, then our statement is false. A relationship cannot exist that way. Likewise, if we say we have a relationship with God but there is unforgiveness in our hearts toward other people, that relationship is also false because His love is absent. Many people go to church, praise God, give offerings, and pray, but there is no evidence of Christianity in their life when they leave. That is not a relationship; that is mere religion, a set of rules and appearances that please men but not God.

To have a relationship with God, we need to know Him, and to know God, we need a relationship with Him.

As we will see, this is not such a simple subject. Connecting with the Creator and developing a relationship with Him involves much more than doing religious acts. It requires *knowing* God. And that knowledge does not come through natural means, nor by attending events or doing religious practices; it does not depend on how much we sing, pray, know the Bible, or give offerings. Organizations, churches, books, or preaching are not enough to know the entirety of God. Knowledge of God comes from revelation, which only happens through a relationship of intimacy. Everything with God comes by, through, and from a relationship that produces revealed knowledge of Him. God has revealed Himself through the centuries through a continuous and growing relationship with men and women who have responded to His call and pursued a relationship with Him. We have received everything from God because of our relationship with Him.

The word “to know” means “to ascertain the exercise of someone’s intellectual faculties, their nature, qualities, and relations with others.” It is

“to perceive an object or person as distinct from all that is not him or her.” God is distinct from everything that is not Him. A relationship with Him implies distinguishing all He is not and knowing all He is. In Hebrew, the word we translate into English as “to know” is *yadá*, whose meaning implies a deeper distinction. It means “detailed observation, minute care, and recognition; it is to be conscious of considering, understanding, discovering, respecting, and knowing intimately (as a man knows a woman intimately).” It denotes an intimate and close relationship with something or someone.

A relationship with God implies knowing Him, and knowing Him implies dedication to observe, contemplate, recognize, discover, understand, respect, and have spiritual intimacy with Him. Therefore, when God is not first, there is no relationship. All this cannot be done by praying from time to time or worshiping when we have the time or desire. In the Bible, Jesus taught this in Matthew 25 through a parable in which He compared the Kingdom of God to ten virgins. In this parable, the oil is representative of a living, continuous, and above all current relationship with the bridegroom. It is a symbol of the filling of the Holy Spirit. This parable reveals that the five virgins described as foolish did not have a permanent relationship with God. That was their deficit or the reason they could not enter the wedding with the bridegroom. There was a time when they had a relationship, but they were not consistent in it and thus did not keep enough oil saved for the crisis, nor did they have anything to continue with when the weariness and sleep of the night came upon them.

From the above, we understand that Christianity is like a marathon in which one not only has to start with strength and desire but must also know how to dose that strength to attack in the final stretch. If an athlete, for example, does not prepare for this stage, he is foolish and will not be able to complete the race. *“But he who endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matthew 24:13). Life with God is not for those who run fast, get tired, or give up, but rather for those who resist until the finish line; it is for the virgins who have oil in reserve to wait for the bridegroom and enter with Him to the wedding.

Relationship Guarantees Provision

All blessings such as salvation, healing, miracles, provision, and all we may need are guaranteed within our personal, intimate, and continuous relationship with God. We will not fear the future if we know Him because it is already provided for in advance. God will not withhold any of our rights, for our relationship with Him guarantees that our prayers will be answered. That is what Jesus promised. *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you"* (John 16:23). In this end time, we are living in a season of answered prayers. God wants us to return to that place of relationship with Him.

In the Old Testament, when God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, He led them into the wilderness. These people were so accustomed to living in slavery that they did not have great faith, but the Lord provided everything for them because of a covenant relationship. *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things"* (Matthew 6:31-32). Therefore, our needs such as our job, business, family, and career must become secondary because our priority is God.

The needs of believers begin when their relationship with God is broken.

You are a perfect candidate to receive God's complete and continuous provision. The only thing He asks of us is to pursue a constant and intimate relationship with Him, surrendering our hearts and seeking Him daily in prayer. This relationship is not complicated, nor is it only for certain people. As I said, it is not difficult, but we must also be prepared to offer our part.

In the natural, as long as my children maintain a relationship with me, I will supply for their needs because the relationship we share gives them the right to expect provision. *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want"* (Psalm 23:1). If something is lacking, such as food, drink, clothing, shelter, or money, it is because this principle has been broken or violated. The

people of this age want several things but do not want God. They do not want a relationship with Him. They have time for everything *but* a relationship with God. If we do not put our relationship with our heavenly Father first, all our needs will remain unmet.

The relationship is where our rights and privileges come from.

Called to a Relationship

"God is faithful, by whom you were called ***into*** *the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1:9). The gospel is an invitation to enter into fellowship and relationship with Jesus Christ. In verse above, the word *into* indicates that fellowship or communion is a desirable end for its own sake. Preaching and teaching are successful only if they achieve that end. We have been called out of the world and *into* a relationship with the heavenly Father. It is not just any call; it is a special invitation from God to be with Him at this time and for eternity. Before we were saved, God took the initiative again and again to reestablish that relationship. After accepting Him and receiving His love and salvation, however, God expects us to draw closer to Him, pursue that closeness with His presence, and seek to know Him more.

We, too, must lead others to pursue that relationship, preaching *"that which we have seen and heard* [for that is our mission and] *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"* (1 John 1:3). All our activities, both personally and in the church, should revolve around this end —to have a stronger relationship with God and take that revelation to others. For example, when we evangelize, it shouldn't be to have more people in the church but to have more people know God. When we worship, it is not to entertain people with music but to lead believers into a more intimate relationship with God. When we distribute food to the needy, it is not to advertise the ministry but to show people God's love and to have the opportunity to make it known to them. No religion in the world requires its

followers to have a personal relationship with its founder. Only the Christian faith demands a personal relationship with its founder, the Lord Jesus Christ, because He has risen, His tomb is empty, and He lives forever.

Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with God.

Relationship with God: A Priority

If Christians truly had God's perspective on relationships, we would know that we cannot be right with Him without that daily communion. Jesus knew this, so He prioritized it and taught His disciples the same thing. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"* (Matthew 6:33). Therefore, the relational principle in the Kingdom is a vital force in the life of a believer. Without a relationship, there is no life, virtue, or power. Power emanates from that relationship, healing the sick, casting out demons, and delivering the oppressed, always in blessing. According to the divine order, priority determines the flow of blessing, and the blessing always flows downward. As we can see, God's power is not simply a theoretical principle. It is transmitted through intimacy. Many people use God's principles without knowing Him. This is a severe mistake. We must be sure to operate in miracles, signs, and wonders that come from our relationship with God.

That which we put first will be our god. If we put the Father first, He puts us next. God will always be our only option when His supremacy is established in our hearts!

Our God is very jealous and will never want to take second place. This is because, in His heart, we occupy first place. God has given us priority over the rest of His creation; He made us in His image and likeness and took the initiative to have a personal relationship with us, which He does not do with any other creature. Therefore, God demands to be first in order of importance. First in time, place, and order. That is why I choose to give Him the first hours of each day, without measuring time, without putting anything first in my heart or mind. I give Him my complete and undivided attention. He is the most important thing to me, and I prove it to Him daily. I give Him my complete adoration, surrender, and submission in everything. In my home, I have a specific place to pray, read the Word, and worship God. And that is my favorite place!

God must come first every day. From the moment we wake up until we go to bed, we must talk to Him. The first hour of the day is key; our first prayer, worship, and thanksgiving should be to Him. In general, everything important in the Kingdom must be a priority for us because it is always linked to the eternal and not the natural or passing. That to which we give first place, to which we dedicate most of our quality time, love, and attachment, becomes our god. So, when the crisis comes, we need to be sure that this "god" we have given priority in life is the one we can turn to and will solve our problems. Nothing natural can take that place. Therefore, our priority in life must be God.

Most believers do not have a relationship with God. Others have lost that relationship because they neglected it. They have put their relationship with God in second or third place and, thus, have grown cold. They are fallen believers, even if they don't know it. Now, all their activities go through work, family, the gym, their business, and entertainment, but not God; they think that believing in God and going to church every Sunday or once in a while is enough to say they have a relationship with God. If most of our time is dedicated to anything else but God, there will be no relationship. For God, nothing exists if He is not in the first place. Today, Christ is calling believers to return to their first love (see Revelation 2:4).

A Two-Dimensional Relationship

We must learn to be practical and spiritual at the same time. One should not take away from the other. When we are hungry, for example, we do not pray. We eat. That is practical and considered common sense. Therefore, we fall into error when our spirituality starts to overcome our practicality. Human beings tend to become so organized, filled with unnecessary rules, that we lose practicality or common sense. In that case, we cease to be relational and become mechanical instead, detached from God's love.

The symbol of the Christian faith is the cross, which is composed of two crossed beams. One is placed vertically and supports the other, positioned horizontally. The vertical beam points upward and symbolizes our relationship with God, while the horizontal beam symbolizes our relationship with our peers or other human beings. This leads us to deduce that our relationship with God is the foundation that sustains our relationship with the people around us. If one is out of place, the other will also be out of place. The vertical beam without the horizontal one is not a cross, and the horizontal beam will not find a place to stand if it lacks the vertical one. The same thing happens in our personal life. Everything on earth reflects heaven. The visible reflects the invisible. Our relationships with the people around us will always be proportional to our relationship with God. If our relationship with God is dead, our relationships with people will also be dead. If we are cold toward God, we will be cold toward people. This exposes our spiritual condition. Light and darkness cannot coexist (see John 1:7). It is impossible! That is why God separated the light from the darkness.

If we have the wrong attitude toward our brothers—such as unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, or hatred—we will be excluded from fellowship or communion with God. Fellowship is a place of trial by fire. That is the reason why many people run away from it. They don't want to be with other believers because that's where they are tested the most. Our relationship with God is meant to take us somewhere. As God goes to us, we go to people.

Every corporate relationship is the result of our relationship with God. The way we serve God is the

way we will serve people.

Our relationship with God will determine our service. This is God's commandment, ratified by Jesus: "'*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these*" (Mark 12:30-31). If we do not love people, we most likely do not love God because when we love God, we love what He loves, and God loves people. When our relationship with God is not right, we are not sensitive to the needs of people because our hearts are hardened. Some of us are so busy that we do not have time to serve, to love other brothers and sisters with the love we receive from God.

The Church will grow when this revelation enters man's heart and we prioritize our relationship with God. Only then will we be able to love His people as He loves them. Jesus did so, as a human on earth, so that we may follow His example. *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"* (1 John 3:16-17).

This demonstration of love toward one's neighbor is the test that separates those who are of God from those who are of the enemy. When Christ returns in glory to judge the nations, *"He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me'"* (Matthew 25:41-43). When our brother was in prison, in the hospital; when he had marital problems or problems with his children; when one of his relatives died; when he had financial difficulties, was out of work, had no food; when he became discouraged or sick, had problems with his business—did we stand by him and love him with the love that comes from our relationship with God?

When we love people as God loves them, we will be like God and live with Him. His passion, His heart, His desires, His burdens, and His pain will be ours. We will see people as He sees them. This is how it was with Christ when He walked this earth. On one occasion, for example, seeing that people had been following Him for days to learn His teachings, *"Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way'"* (Matthew 15:32). Jesus's primary mission was not to come and feed people, but that did not prevent Him from having compassion for their physical needs because He loves people and cares about their complete well-being. For that Church—the bride of Christ—the Lord comes.

We must love God as much as He loves us, and people as much as He loves them.

Answered Prayers

In this book section, I want to share testimonies of people who have learned the value of a relationship with God, developed a life of prayer and communion with Him, and seen the fruits of that relationship, even in critical moments. You will read testimonies of people from different parts of the world—men, women, young, old, married couples, families, businesspeople, athletes, ministers of the gospel, and more—who have been able to see their lives transformed by the power of their relationship with our heavenly Father. This will inspire you to long for that relationship with God and decide to dedicate yourself to cultivating that life-changing intimacy with Him.

> My name is Blanca Onoa. I have been part of this house for more than 18 years. During that time, I have become a woman of prayer and developed my relationship with God as a Father. When I first arrived at the church, I was intoxicated, thinking I was going to a club. I fell asleep on the floor, and they picked

me up. My process was fast. That same Saturday, I was baptized, and I was already attending the welcome party on Sunday. There, I learned to pray to communicate with my heavenly Father. Having a prayer life has saved me! During my Christian walk, I gave up liquor and cigarettes and left the world entirely along with all deception of the enemy. In answer to my prayers, God brought all 37 members of my family His way. My son, a womanizer who practically lived in the clubs, was saved and delivered. Today, he is a pastor. As for my relationship with God, I feel He has given me His love and empowered me. When I go out to evangelize, I embrace people, and His presence is manifested. God saved me from the worst. For that, I thank Him and my spiritual father. Before the pandemic, I met a person dying in a hospital because he had fallen from a third floor after touching a power line. The shock affected his brain. I brought him an anointed cloth and put it on the part of his skull that had been fractured. I fed and followed up with him, praying for him daily. Today, he is completely healthy! God is so good that this man's family, upon seeing this miracle, also came to the feet of Jesus. Through prayer, everything in my life has been a product of God's hand. Today, I can say that I have a life of intimacy with Him. He is my Almighty Father, who is always with me. Glory to God!

• • • • • • • •

My name is Hugo Gonzalez. I am from Veracruz, Mexico. For most of my life (25 years), I had to deal with bisexuality due to abuse I had suffered as a child. My process was hard and time-consuming, but the Lord had mercy on me in every area of my life. I didn't know how He would do it, but He did! In my early years as a believer, I didn't have an intimate relationship with God. I knew He had healed me of colon disease, and I had accepted Him as my savior. However, I still struggled with alcoholism; I would do embarrassing things when I was drunk. After a few years, I was diagnosed with a level 4 cancerous

tumor in my head and given six months to live. My sister was with me, and we decided not to accept that diagnosis and believe God had something else for me. She bought me the book *Jesus Heals Your Sickness Today* and brought it to the hospital. I started reading it and clinging to the revelation of what God could do. After much back and forth, I was operated on and moved to intensive care. Everything had gone well! Supernaturally, my recovery was immediate. Reading the book, I could see how the enemy had wanted to kill me. I learned how to fight with unclean, demonic spirits that only work to possess you and lead you to death. I could understand why I could not be free before. That day, I decided to pray to the Lord and have a real relationship with Him. The book led me to pursue that relationship with God, where I could know Him and have revelation of His power. During my time in the hospital, I connected to the services and nourished myself through the preaching, but most of all, I began to raise my altar before the Great I Am. In my relationship with God, I could see His love's magnitude and power, which led me to be transformed and empowered to receive my miracle. One day, in the middle of my six-month sentence, I logged on to the broadcast of a conference the church was hosting that weekend (CAP, the Conference of the Apostolic and Prophetic). An apostle was preaching and said, "There is someone in the hospital with cancer. God is going to heal you." I felt that word was for me! At that moment, I had an encounter with the presence of God, and I was completely free. He healed me! Now I want to preach, evangelize, and heal the sick. I no longer have anything to be ashamed of or hide, nothing to prevent me from giving my testimony because God saved me and healed me. Moreover, He freed me from all sexual bondage and addiction. I owe all this to God and to the fact that, in His presence, I received revelation of His love and power.

Practical Activation

If you have never had a relationship with God, the first thing you need is to be sure that you have received Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior. To that end, I invite you to repeat this prayer with me:

> *Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from You. Today, I repent for my whole life away from You. I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that You raised Him from the dead. Forgive and cleanse me so I may have a relationship with You. I ask You to save my soul and write my name in the book of life. On the day I die, I know that when I open my eyes, I will be in the arms of my heavenly Father. In Jesus's name, amen!*

If you long for a personal relationship with God, I invite you to practice the following:

- Right now, wherever you are, make a covenant with God to pursue and develop an intimate relationship with Him that grows daily. Do your part by committing to make this happen. Say a prayer like the following:

  > *Heavenly Father, on this day, I come into Your presence. I ask You to forgive me for not putting my relationship with You first and failing. Today, I commit myself to having a close relationship with You, to seek Your face in intimacy, to seek Your guidance and direction, and to depend on them daily. I ask You for the grace to be able to do so and that if I fail, your Holy Spirit will help me pick myself up so that I can get back on track and continue without fainting. All this I ask in Jesus's name! Amen!*

- Keep a journal in which you can write down your personal experiences with God to see your growth. Write down everything the Father reveals to you and the changes you see in your life once you begin your relationship with Him.

- In addition, I recommend you examine your relationships with your family, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Write down your conclusions in that same journal.
- Develop a plan to heal your relationships with God's love and power that flows from your relationship with Him. Forgive the offenses and pains that people have caused you throughout your life. Let the Holy Spirit heal your wounds.

Chapter Summary

- God created man in His image to have an intimate relationship with Him. However, man heard the voice of satan and sinned against God. That sin separated us from the Father.

One will always resemble the person with whom they have fellowship.

- Man has an intrinsic need for a relationship with his Creator.
- With His work on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus restored our relationship with the Father and changed our hearts. The wall that separated us was torn down, and now it is up to us to know Him and become intimate with Him.
- A relationship with God is founded on love, obedience, fear of God, trust, communication, and commitment.
- The three features of the relationship of the Godhead are fatherhood, the headship principle, and companionship. That same relationship is what we need to develop with God.
- A relationship is a correspondence or intercourse between two or more people. It is the communication process where we talk with, listen to, and give and receive from one another.

- What we put first becomes our god. Therefore, our relationship with the Father must be a priority.
- Having a relationship with God implies knowing Him; knowing means dedicating ourselves to observing Him, contemplating Him, recognizing Him, discovering Him, understanding Him, respecting Him, and having spiritual intimacy with Him.
- A relationship with God guarantees the provision of everything we need because He, as a Father, provides everything His children need before they ask Him for it.
- Our goal as children of God is to maintain a two-dimensional relationship—vertically with God and horizontally with our neighbors. The relationship with God is what sustains the relationship we have with the people around us.
- Our relationship with our family, friends, and others is directly proportional to our relationship with God.

Every relationship we establish comes from our relationship with God. As we serve people, we will serve God.

Notes

1. Stephanie Pappas, "7 Ways Friendships Are Great for Your Health," Live Science, January 08, 2016, https://www.livescience.com/53315-how-friendships-are-good-for-your-health.html.
2. Robert Roy Britt, "Americans Lose Touch, Report Fewer Close Friends," Live Science, June 23, 2006, https://www.livescience.com/846-americans-lose-touch-report-close-friends.html.

Chapter 2

Knowing God Through Prayer

All religions on earth have a god, a supreme being whom they worship, but not one of these gods is considered a father to their followers. No religion requires a relationship between its founder and the believer. Neither has any founder given their life for their followers to restore the relationship between them. In general, religions offer many benefits but do not demand personal and exclusive devotion as our God does. Only in Christianity is faith given by "knowing" God and developing an intimate relationship with Him. God always takes the initiative to seek us out and make Himself known, but we must respond and long for a relationship with Him.

The Necessity of Knowing God

Knowing God is not a one-time experience. We cannot say that we already know Him simply because we've accepted Him as our Lord and Savior. Although we have had a first encounter with Him, which has changed our lives, we still have much more to know about Him beyond that. Our faith in Christ begins with a personal covenant or contract we make with Jesus Himself, and it develops throughout an eternal relationship. *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3). This relationship is personal, present, progressive, and living because the knowledge of God has no end. It is an eternal exercise.

In fact, knowing God in His totality during a single lifetime is impossible because He has no limits; nothing and no one can contain Him. We only know certain aspects of Him as we experience Him in our spirit. Therefore, everyone knows different realms of God, and everyone has their own unique experience with Him. Since ancient times, we have seen how God reveals Himself in a personal way. He would never reveal Himself to a group of people, but rather He would call one man and reveal Himself to him separately. So it was with Abraham, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and

even Jesus. It is the same today. Every person must seek God's revelation for themselves.

God is attracted to us by relationship, because through relationship He reveals Himself.

God is not known through books, reading, studying, school or university, but through relationships, face-to-face communication, dedicating time, commitment, sacrifice, and surrender day by day. Therefore, when the relationship with God is broken, the first thing that is interrupted is communication. A relationship is, in itself, an experience of practical and experiential knowledge. Take a relationship between two people, for example. The only way to know another person in the natural is through the daily, practical experience of conversing, spending time together, discovering each other, getting to know each other, and allowing oneself to be discovered by the other person. Relationship with God is knowing and experiencing the One in whom we have believed, as He makes Himself known to us, revealing His heart, plans, will, and purposes for our life. To know God is never again to say, "Lord, if it is Your will…" because by having a relationship with the Father, we know His will, and we pray firmly in that knowledge, without a doubt.

Knowledge is the absence of doubt.

When we know the Father, a desire to please and serve Him arises, for every relationship bears fruit in mutual service. From that relationship comes obedience to God because we learn that He has full knowledge of all things and that His plans for our lives are the best (see Jeremiah 29:11). However, it is necessary to clarify that, in the case of a relationship with God, obedience is not an option but a condition for it to exist. Therefore, it

is important to know Him and trust Him. Moreover, since the relationship with God is not from equal to equal, but from greater (God) to lesser (the human being), we must submit ourselves in obedience to Him. God is our Father, the Creator of the whole universe and the human race, who created us to have a relationship with Him. We exist by His desire and for His purpose. Therefore, anything contrary to obedience is rebellion; it cuts off our relationship and separates us from Him. Disobedience determined that the relationship between God and Adam was broken forever.

Without obedience, there is no relationship because no man can serve God while having a spirit of disobedience.

We must know the following: in a relationship with the heavenly Father, we human beings (fallible and earthly) encounter the absolute truth. However, as our capacity is limited, we can only manage a progression in the knowledge of that truth. We cannot know everything at once. Therefore, we must make our relationship with God a constant and never-ending quest. In Hebrew, “to know” alludes to an “experience,” which is lived in continuous time. Knowledge never remains stagnant. Our knowledge of God is always constant and growing. The end-time church has a knowledge deficit of God, which is why it does not progress in the truth. This is because there is no intimate, continuous, and permanent relationship with God. The questions immediately arise: How can we develop this kind of relationship with God? How do we come to know God? I will answer from my own experience. For example, I write all my books so the reader can simply find the theory or explanation of eternal truth. I also add practical application so they can immediately walk into that truth. I am particularly interested in you finding that revelation ready to put into action in this book. So, here is the key to this chapter.

God Is Known in Prayer

While the key to knowing God is as simple as having a prayer life, prayer is not as common among believers. A study by Pew Forum Research shows that of Christians who attend church weekly, only 59 percent pray daily, and of those who go once or twice a month, only 30 percent pray daily.[1] It is evident that the church lacks knowledge of God. We urgently need to get back to prayer! Knowledge of God can only come through prayer, and prayer is all about developing a relationship with the Father. The prayer that results in a relationship is that which takes place in the "secret place" where we meet with our Father. Prayer is the means *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"* (Ephesians 1:17).

Our relationship with God is developed through prayer. No one can claim to know God if he does not communicate with Him daily.

Praying implies establishing a place where we can have communion and fellowship with God daily, without interruption. Communion, therefore, is so intimate that it cannot be done in public; it requires a private, unique space where the Father and each human being are alone to know each other thoroughly. The Bible calls it the "secret place." There we can speak to the Father, open our hearts to Him, worship Him, and above all hear and know Him. Jesus taught us about this "secret place," saying, *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly"* (Mat-thew 6:6). In the Old Testament, God refers to the same "secret place" in Ezekiel 7:22. David also knew that place; therefore, he said, *"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom"* (Psalm 51:6). All that God is has been transferred to us through prayer when we spend time with Him in communion and fellowship.

When we know God in prayer, it brings us into communion with Him and gives us revelation.

Knowing God in prayer affirms our faith. Once we know Him, nothing can keep us from Him. That is the knowledge that sustains us through crisis and adversity. Paul bore witness to this when he said, *"For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day"* (2 Timothy 1:12). The assurance we have amid adversity comes from a place of knowing who God is and who we are in Him and for Him. Once we know who God is, we cannot doubt Him.

Knowing God is powerful; it sweeps away unbelief and affirms our faith. Knowing Him brings us to the point of no return. If we truly know Him, we will never again doubt His promises, power, and presence. Therefore, when we see a Christian filled with God's power who does not doubt but is filled with faith, we know that he has an intimate relationship with the Father in prayer. While corporate prayer is mighty, it cannot exist if it is not based on personal prayer, where each receives revelation and knowledge of God individually. Jesus received revelation from the Father through prayer, and before bringing it to His disciples and the people, He spent hours in intimacy with God. *"He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed"* (Luke 5:16). When His disciples saw this, they asked Him to teach them how to pray (see Luke 11:1).

The supreme motive of our prayer is to know God. Everything else is a consequence of that knowledge.

The Purpose of Prayer

Many Christians do not pray because they do not know the purpose of prayer. They do not find meaning in it, which is why many think it is an activity without clear objectives. But if we recognize God's purpose in establishing prayer as a condition for a relationship with Him, we can persevere in it. Praying will lead us to know Him, progress in the truth, and break the limits that doubt keeps us bound in. The main purposes of prayer are:

To Know God

The average Christian considers prayer as taking a few minutes to thank God and present our personal needs to Him—at most, to ask Him for other people. While praying for others and being grateful is fine, this is not prayer's true purpose. God designed prayer to allow us to enter a realm of relationship and intimate knowledge with Him; that is why it cannot be mechanical. It is not the product of formula nor guided by a series of laws or rules; neither is it a series of vain repetitions. Prayer has a life of its own. It progresses, advances, and deepens. It produces a genuine relationship with the living God. King David prayed to God, saying, *"I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies"* (Psalm 119:125). And he also sang, saying, *"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So, I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory"* (Psalm 63:1-2).

Without a relationship with or the knowledge of God, prayer becomes a chain of vain repetitions, words that do not go beyond the ceiling, which lose their meaning because they are outside their scope. God does not answer unrelated prayers. That is why we see many people who pray but do not get God to answer their requests. They don't realize that the purpose of praying is not to ask but to know God. That is why people do not like to pray—because they do not have a relationship with God and do not know Him. Without a relationship, prayer is not possible, much less a strong bond that lasts over time. In fact, from personal experience, I have found it difficult to pray when my relationship with God has been broken.

Where we are in our prayer life is where we are in our relationship with God.

We can easily verify that we are empowered every time we enter into prayer and meet the Father. In that secret place, the Spirit of God fills us with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The more we know God, the more things become possible; we find fewer limits to unleashing the supernatural on earth. Therefore, we should not worry so much about asking for what we need but about knowing God, His power, and His promises. If He promised us something, He has the power to do it; if we know Him, we will not doubt He will do it. For example, He promises that we will be healed of every disease by the blood of Jesus Christ; but we cannot walk in healing if we do not know Him as healer nor have revelation of the complete work done by Jesus on the cross.

Knowing God leads us to perform acts of faith, because prayer is where God's children are empowered.

I pray that you may perform acts of faith as a product of your knowledge of God. I pray that the spirits of wisdom and revelation will be released upon your life and that you will experience God and progress in His truth. I declare that people who read these words will conquer new territories in the knowledge of God. Their doubts will disappear, and they will perform acts of faith in every area where they could not believe before because they did not know God well enough. From the place of God's knowledge, He will answer all their prayers. The answers will be accelerated!

Affirm God's Existence

The origin of prayer is God. If He did not exist, to whom would we pray? When we pray, we affirm that God is real, that He exists, and that we believe in Him. The Scripture says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

The purpose of prayer is to affirm the existence of God to be filled with faith.

Turn Things Around in the Spirit

When the doctor says the disease is terminal or pregnancy is impossible, when the bank says the house is lost and bankruptcy is imminent, when we are on the verge of divorce, when we have a child on drugs or in delinquency, prayer is there to make a difference; it gives God the right to work in our crisis or impossible situation. Prayer opens the heavens, changes the atmosphere, and gives the Holy Spirit permission to work miracles and win the battles the enemy brings into our life.

Knowing God in prayer leads us to win the battles of life.

When we pray, everything that was against us turns in our favor. Prayer lines everything up for victory. Prayer defeats the hosts of evil in the heavenly realms and opens the heavens. *"Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"* (Matthew 16:19). Therefore, Paul encouraged the Ephesians, saying, *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness*

of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Change the Spiritual Atmosphere

A substantial part of prayer is worship. To worship is to reverence and honor God; it is something we give to God that expresses our heart's gratitude for who He is. Worship attracts God's presence and has the power to change the atmosphere of the place where we are, be it home, church, work, business, school, university, etc. In that atmosphere of the Father's presence, anything is possible! That atmosphere has the power to bring breakthroughs to all areas of our lives and make possible what is impossible for man. It must begin by teaching believers to pray until prayer becomes a way of life. When the atmosphere of a church, a house, or a city changes, miracles begin to happen.

I have seen many miracles happen in my life, but I know that none of them were related to me but my prayer life. God has used me to manifest His miracles because I have a personal and intimate relationship with Him daily. That relationship changes the atmosphere of any place I go. Therefore, if you need a miracle or want God to use you to work miracles, the key is to approach Him and pursue it. When you do, miracles will follow you wherever you go.

Every miracle we receive comes through prayer.

Rise Above Our Reality

Amid problems, circumstances, illnesses, and fears, we need to know what prayer is and how to activate it because it is the only thing that makes us see things as God sees them, from above and from a position of faith and power in the spiritual realm. God not only sent Jesus to save us but *"raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6). Here I must pause to explain that reality is different from the truth. Problems exist and are real, but God is the truth and is above reality. The real is temporary, but the truth is eternal. That is why, when we

pray, every problem loses strength or diminishes its power over us because the Spirit of God lifts us above reality—which can refer to sickness, poverty, loss, pain, etc.—to an atmosphere where God's truth reigns; where there is healing, provision, comfort, and peace; and where everything is possible. It is not a matter of denying reality but of rising above it and changing it with the power of God.

No one can rise above the level of their prayer life.

If we want to achieve a breakthrough in any area of life, let us go to our secret place and pray. An intimate relationship with God brings more breakthroughs than a lifetime of hard work. The breakthrough we have been waiting years for can happen in an instant if, instead of fighting, we dedicate ourselves to building a relationship with God.

Lead Us to Continuous Victories

This generation doesn't know how to pray, which is why darkness is so thick over the land and in many churches. We are no longer seeing the power of God at work. Unfortunately, this is not surprising, considering how many believers are not praying. If we pray from time to time, we will have occasional victories; but if we pray continually, our relationship with God will constantly increase. We will live from victory to victory over every attack that the enemy wants to bring into our life. *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"* (James 5:16).

I always live in prayer. That is the driving force behind me, my ministry, and all the miracles that occur when we go to the nations. There is no event, conference, or preaching for which I do not prepare myself with prayer. I immerse myself in His presence, worshiping, fasting, asking God to reveal Himself, empower me, change the atmosphere, and much more. When I see the miracles, the people saved, the sick healed, the captives set free, I see the fruit of those hours of fasting and prayer in the presence of God. I follow Jesus's example, and that is what He did.

Conclusion

If we want to see God manifested in our generations, we have to pay the price of surrendering to a life of prayer, where our priority is to know the Father. That is what a genuine relationship with God entails. It is not a matter of saying many words but of having a heart dedicated to knowing Him daily in the different aspects of His personality. We cannot pretend to know the infinite and almighty God with a couple of minutes of prayer a week. He is the absolute, eternal, and endless truth; therefore, to know Him is a progressive experience. This is the true purpose of prayer. There, we will be able to progress in His truth; rise above all reality of sin, sickness, and poverty to change the atmosphere of every home, church, and earth; and see God's supernatural over our lives. One of the fundamental conditions for having his relationship with the Father is absolute obedience to His will, which arises from a need to please Him always.

Answered Prayers

Next, we will learn about two cases of people who developed a personal, intimate, and progressive relationship with God that changed their life, family, and ministry. Thanks to this relationship prayer with the Father, you will see that there was a before and after in their lives.

> I am Pastor Konstantin Zotof from Russia. I have been under the spiritual covering of King Jesus Ministry for five years. Before, our church was very different, but since we started seeking God, everything changed to the supernatural. The intimacy with Him moved me, as a leader, to a new dimension, a deeper level of seeking His presence, and I began to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit. We now maintain a powerful atmosphere of worship and prayer in the church. We have learned that the relationship with God is always developing and must continue to reach deeper levels. It all started from the encounters with God that we had here at King Jesus Ministry. From that, God began to manifest Himself and move stronger than ever. He took us into a new dimension as a family and as a church. We have been experiencing more amazing miracles. Even during the pandemic, we could see the

hand of God moving with power on our behalf. Apostle Maldonado said that those under the mantle of this house, we would not suffer and would see the hand of God during this worldwide tribulation. And we have seen God's protection. When everything around us was at a standstill and in crisis, we saw a multiplication of souls and our finances. In fact, the growth was so great that we had to go out and look for a bigger place that could receive all the new people. Today, we can buy two buildings without incurring debt and no longer need to rent more space! God gave us the growth and what we needed to embrace it and not lose it! We are seeing many miracles by the fire of the Spirit, which has ignited the ministry. We seek God, knowing that He will move on our behalf. He has provided everything for us through our relationship with Him and has intensified the number of miracles, signs, and wonders. When we call people to repentance and salvation, God does something new. We have seen many people come to His feet. At first, we had some opposition from other ministries who do not believe in miracles or the supernatural and reject the fivefold ministry. Still, God is doing something in Russia, building a new generation of ministers who recognize the supernatural and the power of a fundamental relationship with God. We have seen God activate us and stir up the fire, passion, and supernatural power. All glory be to the Father!

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My name is Etelvina Calel. I live in the city of Miami, Florida, USA. I have always believed in the power of having a relationship with God. That is why, through the years, I have cultivated my intimate relationship with Him. Because of that, I have been able to see how God has manifested Himself in our lives with power. When I was pregnant, my water broke at 20 weeks. My baby ran out of amniotic fluid, so I had to be rushed to the hospital. When they checked me, the diagnosis was devastating. The surgeon told me, 'I'm sorry, but I'm going to

deliver a dead baby. She has a zero percent chance of survival. We're just going to take it out, show it to you, and that's it.' But we didn't give in to that diagnosis. My husband called the church and our network. Our brothers in faith began to pray for my baby and me, declaring that she would live in Jesus's name. I also cried out for my daughter. Many times, God had revealed Himself to me in intimacy, and I had seen His glory manifest in the midst of it all. I knew He was with me and that He would not let my child die. While the doctors were deciding whether to operate or wait, I began to pray. I told Him, "Father, I love this baby. She is a gift that You gave me, Lord." So, the doctors decided to wait. They took me to a room and left me there, monitoring my progress. I was in the hospital for seven weeks. During that time, I did nothing but pray and believe that God would work. I asked my husband to bring me a book by Apostle Maldonado to read. He brought me a book that testified to a pregnant mother who had gone through something similar, and God had worked. That increased my faith to believe that the same would happen with my baby. One day, one of the doctors came to me and said, "And you? Your baby hasn't come yet, has she?" The next day, another doctor came to me and said, "I don't know what is happening, but you have fluid." He said, "At this moment, you have 1 to 1.5 liters of fluid. You're going to have your baby!" It was God! I know it was God! He put that fluid in supernaturally because they hadn't put anything in all those days. That week, my faith soared. I said, "Wow, Father, how amazing is the power of prayer and relationship with You!" I got the amniotic fluid back supernaturally. God put it there! God resurrected and saved my baby! She was born at 27 weeks gestation by cesarean section. The doctors were amazed because she was born breathing alone, as premature as she was. God created her perfect. We have a God of miracles who is alive. He is an almighty God and the giver of life! Honor and glory be to Him! Everything is possible! We now have our daughter completely healthy. She weighs 12 pounds, and her name is Esther because she has been chosen for such a time as this. She is the product of my

relationship with the Great I Am. Today, she is a healthy, strong little girl and the most remarkable testimony I have to the power of my relationship with God. When it came time to ask Him for that miracle, the door was open, and His ear was attentive. We just had to believe that He would do it!

Practical Activation

- If you feel that your relationship with God is weak or that you have lost your relationship by not maintaining a prayer life with the Father, pray with me the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, today I regret that I have not prioritized our relationship. Forgive me, give me the grace to change, and renounce all I have put before You. Today, I commit myself to praying for one hour daily, in the same place and at the same time. I want to know You and hear Your voice. I want my faith to grow, affirm Your existence, change the atmosphere in my home, rise above this reality, and live in victory. Give me the grace to know You more and more each day. Thank You for this new opportunity. In Jesus's name, amen!

- Continue to write down your daily experiences with God. If you see yourself getting stuck, ask the Holy Spirit for help.
- Commit to praying for one hour daily in your "secret place." Set aside a special time, always at the same time and place.
- During that hour of prayer, spend about 15 minutes entering God's presence with thanksgiving and worship. Use anointed music that draws you into God's presence.
- Take another 30 minutes to read the Scripture, pray for evangelism and soul winning, for your pastor, the authorities in your country, your finances, relationships at home, church, and work.
- Finally, take the remaining 15 minutes to present your personal needs, declaring that all are met. Use that time to give all the glory to God, reaffirming your faith and assuming absolute confidence

that He will supply everything you need; He will work the miracles you need in your finances, health, relationships, and so on.

Chapter Summary

- Your faith begins by making a covenant with Jesus and is developed through an eternal relationship, which is personal, ever-present, living, and progressive.
- Having a relationship with God is knowing the One in whom we have believed. Knowing Him has no end; nothing and no one can contain Him. We can only know Him in parts or aspects and experience Him in our spirit and daily life.
- Knowing God and having a relationship with the Father implies absolute obedience. Here, obedience is not optional but conditional.
- When we know God, we desire to please and serve Him. Every relationship bears fruit in mutual service.
- We know God through prayer. This implies establishing a place of communion with Him.
- Knowing God unlocks faith, empowers, and removes doubt. Knowledge is the absence of doubt.
- To know God is to know absolute truth, progressively, through a relationship with Him.
- The purpose of prayer is to know God, affirm His existence, turn things around in the Spirit, change the spiritual atmosphere, lift us above reality, and lead us to ongoing victories.

The supreme motivation of our prayer is to know God; everything else is a consequence of that knowledge.

Note

1. Pew Research Center, “Belief in God among Christians by frequency of prayer,” Religious Landscape Study, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/christians/christian/frequency-of-prayer/#beliefs-and-practices.

Chapter 3

Jesus's Prayer Life

Throughout Scripture, we see how the prophets and most notable men of antiquity knew God. Abraham knew Him through offering his only son as a sacrifice, the son God had promised him. Moses knew Him face to face in a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. David knew God through worshiping alone while shepherding his father's sheep. In the New Testament, we see Jesus confirming His identity as the Son of God through prayer; that was where He received the revelation that God was His Father. Therefore, when Philip, His disciple, asked Him to show them the Father, His answer was, *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works"* (John 14:10).

Becoming one with the Father through prayer leads us to do the works of God.

Jesus called God "Father" because He had a relationship with Him; in fact, God Himself had called Him "Son" when He revealed Himself at His baptism. *"Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'"* (Mark 1:11). We can call God "Father" if we have received that revelation. That is, if He has called us "sons" in that intimate relationship in the "secret place" of prayer. As I mentioned earlier, this distinguishes Christianity from the world's religions; it is the only religion that demands a personal relationship with its founder. That is why unbelievers do not call Him Father—because they do not know Him, nor does He recognize them. Their relationship with the Father remains broken since Adam dragged humanity into sin.

A person who does not pray is a sign of a broken relationship with God.

Jesus and Prayer

When Jesus came to earth, He did not teach a doctrinal theology but a relational one. He modeled for us a life of continuous relationship with the Father on which the rest of His relationships depended. In this regard, Jesus told His disciples, *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:15). He spoke from a position of total trust, as one who knew the Father intimately.

Christianity is the relational theology that Jesus taught us.

We know that Jesus knew God because He called Him "Father" and taught His disciples to seek God in prayer as their "Father": *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"* (Matthew 6:9). The word "Father" is the translation of the original Hebrew *abba* and means "source of unlimited life." When we say that God is our Father, we are expressing that He is our original source of life and that we have unlimited resources in Him. If we look at the "Our Father" prayer, we will see that Jesus does not use the word "God" but "Father" because that was what God was for Him on earth. We, too, can say that God is our source of life and everything we may need; as long as we have the revelation that He is our Father and that we are His children, then everything is possible.

The closest Jesus could get to the Father, as a man, was in prayer.

Jesus prayed because He was living in a dimension that had changed due to the fall of man and where He was not God but just another man. The Spirit of God was not on earth as it had been in Eden. I often ask myself, what must it have been like for Jesus to know eternity, to be an eternity, and then suddenly pause from that dimension to enter another full of sin, darkness, sickness, death, and limitations? Jesus had to divest Himself of His investiture and cease to be God, King, and Lord. The only atmosphere He found that closely resembled that place from which He came was in prayer. Prayer is where the atmosphere of the heavenly dimension is activated, darkness is dispelled, and truth reigns supreme.

To understand Jesus's passion for prayer, we must understand Him in His humanity. Let us remember that Jesus *"in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1), but on earth, He was a man with the same vulnerability as any other. He had a mortal body and emotions; He became tired, hungry, and thirsty. But when He left His place of prayer, *"the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all"* (Luke 6:19). His life and ministry depended totally on His relationship with the Father through prayer. When Jesus finished praying, He left empowered to do on earth what the Father was doing in heaven. He recognized this when He said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner"* (John 5:19). Where did Jesus see what the Father was doing? In prayer. Jesus would never have said this in His divinity, but as a man, He knew that it was impossible to do anything supernatural without the Father. He acknowledged it again and again: *"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me"* (John 5:30).

Our relationship with God in prayer leads us to realize that without the Father, we are nothing. This is the most significant revelation for a

Christian. That is why Jesus made sure we understood that we must abide in Him when He said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). We need to be connected to the vine because the flow of new life is in that relationship with Jesus through prayer. Once separated from the vine, we dry up and can only wait for death.

Jesus is the model for knowing God through prayer.

I can say, as Christ said, that without the Father, I am nothing. I can do nothing without His grace upon me. This is a revelation in my spirit; no one has to educate or remind me of it. The Holy Spirit reveals it to me through daily prayer, as He did to Jesus. That's why I wake up every morning intending to seek His face and pursue that relationship through prayer. I know that, without His power, I cannot function for a day or even an hour. Today, I can say that, by His grace, God has used me to impact nations, perform miracles, save millions of souls, raise the dead, and so much more. But I also know and have always known that it is not because of my ability but because of my relationship with Him. I do everything He shows me in prayer. It is there where God empowers me. His presence changes the atmosphere in my life and everywhere I go. I am empowered in prayer as Jesus was. I just follow His example. I am what I am by God's grace. This is also how Paul, Christ's apostle to the Gentiles, understood it. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"* (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Do you have the revelation that Jesus had? That He was nothing without the Father and could do nothing without Him? If Jesus as a man said that, we can't do much either. Let us learn to live in the spirit of prayer so that we do not go about blindly, thinking that we can do something good in our own strength. Living in prayer doesn't only imply a verbal practice; living in prayer is an attitude or a spirit. Sometimes I am not speaking, but my spirit is in prayer. I live in that constant attitude. I talk to the Father all the

time. In fact, this is a season in which I have gone through some very difficult situations. I have been persecuted, falsely accused, criticized, betrayed by many people, and abandoned by others. Still, God's presence sustained me and continues to do so through my relationship with the Father, in constant prayer. I am so grateful to my Lord that I am still standing! I never stop seeking His face every day because I know He is the only thing sustaining me.

Silence is a form of language before God that only He understands.

The Search Evidences Our Desire for God

God almost always initiates the relationship with man, but it is man who must pursue God and seek to develop that relationship. The life of Jesus teaches us that His relationship with the Father was one of continuous search; it is something that is pursued, longed for, and treasured. Sometimes, what leads us to seek God is the absence of His presence; that is when we understand that we cannot live without it. Many people say they desire God's presence and even sing David's psalm, *"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple"* (Psalm 27:4). But how do we know that this desire is genuine? Only when we take action, when the search for His presence is continually repeated over time, even when we are no longer living in times of distress or tribulation, is our desire made credible.

Jesus sought the Father tirelessly. The Father had initiated that relationship with Him since He was a baby (see Luke 2). A clear example of this happened when Jesus went to be baptized and the Father, from heaven, said to Him, *"You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased"* (Luke 3:22). Jesus knew that His point of encounter and intimacy with the Father was prayer in that "secret place" He later taught His disciples. That is why He spent so much time in prayer. During His baptism, Jesus prayed (see Luke 3:21). Before choosing His disciples, Jesus prayed (see Luke

6:12-13). In the mornings, Jesus prayed (see Mark 1:35-36). After ministering to the people, *"He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed"* (Luke 5:16). When feeding the multitude, Jesus prayed (see John 6:11). The night He walked on water, He came from praying (see Matthew 14:23-25). At the last supper with His disciples, Jesus prayed (see Matthew 26:26). Before He was taken prisoner, He was praying (see Luke 9:28-29). On the cross, Jesus prayed (see Luke 23:34). And so many more times, in so many different ways! Jesus prayed aloud, softly, crying out, silently, in adoration, in supplication, conversationally. Today, according to a study by the Barna Group, things have changed a lot: 94 percent of Christians say they have prayed at least once in the last three months, 82 percent of adults who pray tend to do so silently and alone, 13 percent pray audibly, only 2 percent pray audibly with another person or group, and only 2 percent pray collectively in a church.[1]

The credibility of a desire is evidenced in the search.

An efficient way to illustrate a genuine desire to seek is to follow what happens when a man falls in love with a woman. The proof of his love or interest is seen in how he seeks her and tries to win her over with acts of love and service. The man goes after her and tries to be where she is, to make her feel important, beautiful, special, and unique. If we say we desire an intimate relationship with God, the question is, where is the evidence? Do you seek God every morning? Do you show Him how important, special, and unique He is to you? Do you get up every morning to pray? In short, where is the evidence of your desire?

Prayer, Covenant, and Sacrifice

The way to prove our desire to establish a relationship with God is through a sacrificial covenant. God will never enter a relationship without a covenant. In a relationship, we need to understand the value and power of the covenant. The word *covenant* does not relate to "associate" but to a "joining" by blood. God prioritizes that which is "joined," not "associated."

Many people want the partnership to gain the power and benefits of a relationship without the sacrifice that the covenant demands. But that can only last for so long. In the long run, God will always demand a genuine, personal sacrifice within a true relationship because He never establishes a relationship with strangers. He offers and demands a covenant. In modern terms, we would call it a "commitment," which is a total consecration and dedication to Him born in prayer.

There is only one way to become one with God—
through covenant.

In Western countries, relationships tend to be superficial because we do not understand the true meaning of covenant or sacrifice; we only think of self-satisfaction and personal benefit. The covenant relationship demands giving everything. It is the exchange of life between two people to become one, the uniting of hearts, and a mutual investment of time and sacrifice. That is the kind of relationship God offers and demands.

In covenant, we get to know the other person well,
which is why God demands covenant relationships.

A biblical example can be found in the life of Abram (later Abraham), a man of idolatrous background (see Nehemiah 9:7). Abram would never have known God intimately by staying within Ur of the Chaldeans, a purely idolatrous people. God had to take him out of that place and reveal Himself to him to establish a relationship. When Abram responded by leaving his home, his family, and his people to follow God and seek His presence, he was then able to join Him in a covenant relationship (renouncing to all the gods of his father and his people). Thus came the moment in the relationship between God and Abram when Jehovah "*brought him outside*

and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Then He said to him, 'I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it'" (Genesis 15:5-7).

When God calls a man, He always takes him out of his environment.

Abraham came to know God through a sacrificial covenant (see Psalm 50:5). Once he received revelation, he began to pursue God to enter a covenant and sacrificial relationship. The test of that covenant came when God asked him to sacrifice the only son He had given him (see Genesis 22:2). Abraham did not hesitate because he already knew who God was, thanks to the personal and intimate relationship they had established. He knew that a covenant always demanded sacrifice. The word *sacrifice* comes from the Hebrew *korban*, which translates as "a sacrifice offered (or to be offered) to God" (see Mark 7:11). Abraham's sacrifice appealed to God and led Him to say, *"By Myself I have sworn… because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"* (Genesis 22:16-18).

The story of Abraham and Isaac reflected what would happen with Christ. Jesus also proved His covenant with the Father through sacrifice when He gave His life on the cross for all of us. Jesus lived and died as a man in a covenant relationship with God. In fact, as He laid down His life on the cross, His last words were addressed to the Father, asking forgiveness for those who crucified Him (see Luke 23:34); claiming His presence (see Matthew 27:43); and finally surrendering His spirit in prayer, covenant, and sacrifice (see Luke 23:46).

The Appearance of Christ

Jesus's covenant relationship with the Father reached a peak when Jesus laid down His life on the cross, endured unspeakable suffering, and died, only to be resurrected on the third day and then raised to heaven in glory and majesty. But much like Abraham when he offered Isaac, the story does not end there. The covenant between Jesus and the Father implied that, through Jesus's sacrifice, all of humanity would be saved from the yoke of sin and, after the generations that God would establish, Jesus would raise up the remnant of believers who maintain a covenant relationship with Him through prayer. This is what the Bible calls the "rapture" or the "appearing of Christ" (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10).

The most important qualification for the bride to go with the groom is that she has an intimate relationship with God.

Not every believer is the bride of Christ, although only time will show the distinction between who is and who is not. If you believe that Jesus is coming, this is the time to pray more, strengthen and deepen that relationship, keep your covenants, and offer more sacrifices. You must be prepared to go with Him! Do not be deceived; someone can go to church, pray, dance, shout, offer, and not be intimate with God. In that case, there will be no possibility of going with Him. Jesus, in this regard, told His disciples, *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:22-23). With the expression "I never knew you," He was implying that He had never been intimate with them or had a close relationship. Those people will not go with Christ at the rapture because they do not have a covenant relationship with Jesus.

Miracles, signs, and wonders do not qualify us to be the bride; what qualifies us is intimacy—we know Him, and He knows us. Even signs and wonders *outside* of intimacy with God do not qualify us because they were never a condition of approval to go to heaven in the first place. They are a sign of approval to develop ministry on earth, but they do not guarantee that we will go with Christ. If we want to go in the rapture with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must begin by committing ourselves to an intimate relationship with God, involving covenant and sacrifice, and have that relationship reach and influence our brethren and people who do not yet know God. We must also do this with a sense of urgency because Jesus is coming soon! He said of Himself, *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"* (Revelation 22:7).

Conclusion

Jesus is preparing His remnant, the bride without spot or wrinkle, who will go with Him to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb in heaven. He came to earth to pay the price of our salvation with His blood. As a man, He established a covenant relationship with the Father, which He proved by His life of prayer and His sacrifice on the cross. He did it all. Now, it is up to us to answer His call. Jesus invites us to establish an intimate relationship with the Father that involves covenant, commitment, and exchange of life with Him. Are you prepared to make a covenant with God to become one with Him? Are you ready to pray an hour a day? If your answers to these questions are yes, go after God and make a commitment to Him right now.

Many people want to pray daily or want to pray for hours but don't know what to say. Barna Group research shows us that of Americans who pray regularly, 62 percent pray in thanksgiving, 61 percent pray for the needs of their family and community, 49 percent pray for personal guidance in crises, 47 percent pray for health, 43 percent pray for forgiveness of sins, 37 percent pray for peace, and 24 percent pray for the nation and government.[2] The percentages are so diverse that it is evident that Christians need guidance in this area. In my case, I pray every morning, offering God the first fruits of each day. My priority is always Him. I long to worship and bless Him. When I get up, I look to heaven and thank Him for life and Christ. In my prayer, I always address the Father as His child, acknowledging His fatherhood and authority over me. I ask His forgiveness

for every fault and sin in my life because I cannot enter His presence if I am not clean. Once the blood of Christ cleanses me, the channels are open to gain access to His presence. I begin by worshiping Him, visualizing myself in His presence, in intimacy with Him. I place my affection on God, and I spend a lot of time without looking at the clock or letting anything distract me. Once I have had that intimacy and have poured my heart into Him and He into me, I then present my personal needs to Him. I pray for my spiritual children, parents, and natural family and intercede for those in pain. I pray for the situations that the Holy Spirit puts in my heart, for the nations, the rulers, and the world's evangelization. By the time I realize it, two or three hours have already passed because time does not exist in His presence. Then, I give glory to the Father, praising Him, thanking Him for listening to my prayers, knowing that the rest of the day I will be blessed, that I will continue in Him, and that the atmosphere of His presence will continue to change everything around me.

Answered Prayers

Jesus taught us the right and proper way to build a ministry, a family, a leadership, and a life. Everything we want to build of lasting and blessed nature must be based on our personal and intimate relationship with the heavenly Father. As He did, so must we. The following are testimonies about how to follow Jesus's example, which can lead us to true success in ministry and our personal lives.

Pastors Luis and Wanda Nunez of Brooklyn, New York testify about how their prayer life transformed their ministry:

> I am Pastor Wanda, and with my husband, Luis, we have been in ministry for over six years in Brooklyn, New York. King Jesus Ministry has helped me seek God and know Him more. Here I was equipped for evangelism and discovered my prophetic calling. The books, teachings, and conferences led me to hunger to know more of God, to discover the supernatural more profoundly. Thanks to those teachings, my relationship with God has changed a lot; I learned to declare and prophesy what God has shown me in prayer, which has led to my husband's salvation and brought revival to our ministry.

> Before, my husband was not a believer, but I prayed for him until God did the work. Then, I sowed the books for him to receive revelation and be equipped through a relationship with the Father. It is shocking to know that there is a ministry that teaches what the Bible says, operates as Jesus did, and believes in the power of God and the Holy Spirit. I knew God had an assignment for my life! We started doing meetings in our home and opened our church three years later. Now we are part of King Jesus Ministry. I have been able to see the power of God through cultivating that intimacy with God and can testify how my husband has grown in his calling.

Pastor Luis also testifies:

> When I was converted to the Lord, I started reading Apostle Maldonado's books, and they led me to appropriate a hunger to grow in God. They helped me stay connected and learn about the processes in my spiritual life. Seeing that miracles began to take place when I preach under the power of God also increased my hunger for God. It is like water flowing from my spirit. Every time the apostle writes a new book, I read it immediately because it is like eating directly from what God is speaking to him in his personal life of intimacy with the Father.

Apostle Frank Hechavarria is a beloved spiritual son God gave me more than twenty years ago. He came into the ministry at a very young age and, since then, has been faithful to God, me, and his family, thanks to the fact that he learned to develop a genuine personal relationship with the heavenly Father. Over the years, this relationship has borne fruit and marked his spiritual and personal growth, giving him greater responsibility in the ministry. Today, he is fulfilling his ministerial calling as an apostle with all the trials and signs of a genuine child of God. In every crisis and trial we have gone through as a ministry, his relationship with the Father has shown him the path we must follow to be part of the remnant that prepares the way for the second coming of Christ. The following is his testimony:

In my life, prayer occupies a very important place because it is about having communion with the Father. Since I came to the way of the Lord and gave my life wholeheartedly to Him, I have been able to see again and again that, while we allow ourselves to be consumed by our needs and expectations, the Father only longs to have true communion with us. Moreover, if you were to tell the Father how much you long for the miracle you are asking for, He would respond by telling you how much He longs to have intimate communion with you. This happens because He already knows that your miracle is done. You just have to focus on Him. The foundation of my prayer life I have learned over the years; I learned it from my spiritual father, Apostle Guillermo Maldonado. From my experience, prayer is not a religious exercise we practice for convenience, or to get something in return, but a personal relationship with our heavenly Father. It has nothing to do with objects, profits, petitions, or repetitions. If we want to know the Father, we must pray to develop an intimate relationship with Him. And yes, it is true, it is not an easy thing to achieve, at least not in our strength. But you can be assured that even when we fail, He is always ready to restore that relationship.

I like to look at it this way. Imagine having the opportunity to meet someone you really admire—someone in the world of sports, business, religion, movies, or any other area of interest—someone you admire. After months, years, or even a lifetime of waiting and believing that this encounter wouldn't be possible, something happens, and suddenly you have the person in front of you. Indeed, you want to learn from that person, ask them questions, maybe ask them for a favor, or just spend time with them and take a picture at the end of the day. I'm sure you wouldn't miss that date for anything in life, right? You would tell your family and friends and make all the arrangements in your schedule, week, and month, if necessary, to avoid missing it. Well, let me tell you that, every day, you and I have the opportunity of a lifetime: to meet our heavenly Father. He waits for us daily to commune with us, His children. What would you be willing to do not to miss that appointment?

I want to share a testimony with you. A few years ago, while I was in communion with the Father, He spoke to me and told me that He would provide for my family and me to pay the mortgage on our house. I believed His sweet voice and burst into tears as I listened to Him. At that time, my wife and I wanted to buy a home, but we had a considerable amount outstanding in our current house. However, as I heard His voice, the Father also gave me a plan and a time frame in which this would happen. As I told Him how much I loved Him, without seeking anything from Him, God already had my miracle in mind. I believed Him immediately with all my heart. After carrying out the plan and instructions He gave me that day, we watched this miracle happen. My wife and I and our children believed Him and watched it happen. How much would we have had to suffer, save, and struggle to get the money, the house, and everything we needed if we were to do it on our own? Thanks to our relationship with Him, God gave us everything because He takes care of those children who seek daily intimacy with Him. He is a wonderful Father! All glory be to Him and His beautiful Son, Jesus.

The greatest miracles my wife and I have experienced in our family have resulted from our relationship with the Father. Prayer has forever changed our lives. Today, I pray that it will change yours as well. If you have lost the passion for being with Him, I pray that the flame will be rekindled today. I pray to the precious Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen you again to be with your Father. Prayer is the most direct way Jesus had, while on earth, to connect with the Father. It is for us as well. Let us embrace it today as never before.

Practical Activation

- If you recognize that until now, you have not had a covenant relationship with the Father, you need to start today. There is no time to waste in indecision or doubt. Jesus clearly showed us the

way. If you want to be like Him, follow Him, do as He did, and be part of the bride that will go with Him, pray this prayer with me:

Heavenly Father, I want to have a covenant relationship with You. I no longer want a superficial, once-a-week relationship or to just sing, dance in church, and then go on my own, with nothing changing. I don't want to visit You only on Sundays at church. I want to live in a personal, progressive, and constant relationship like the one Jesus has with You. Therefore, today I commit myself to seek You and give You spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, offerings, and renunciation of all that separates me from You. Today, I surrender my life, reasons, arguments, and desires to enter a covenant with You, a true covenant to dedicate myself completely to You. Jesus, give me the grace to remain and persevere as a faithful remnant, as the faithful bride who watches in prayer. Amen!

- If you started your prayer journal, don't put it aside. Keep writing down your experiences with God. That will help you see progress and encourage you to keep going when the temptation to give up comes.
- Also, it's important to share with others the urgency of pursuing a relationship with God. You will be able to impart your passion to others and form a group of people pursuing the same thing.

Chapter Summary

- Jesus maintained an intimate relationship with the Father through prayer. As a man, He knew that God was His source of life; without Him, He could do nothing. In prayer, He received the revelation that He was the Son of God. There, He knew Him and affirmed His existence.
- Jesus taught a relational theology, not a doctrinal one. All His relationships on earth depended on that relationship: His disciples, His family, the crowds, the religious, and others.

- Prayer is where the atmosphere of the heavenly dimension is activated here on earth. Darkness dissipates, and absolute truth reigns.
- Jesus sought the Father tirelessly. He is the perfect model of how to know God through prayer.
- Living in constant prayer is an attitude that is not always verbal. Silence is a language before God that only He understands. It goes from spirit to Spirit.
- Jesus showed us that His relationship with the Father was one of constant seeking and unrelenting desire. God always begins by calling man, and man must respond by seeking a relationship.
- The credibility of a desire is evidenced by the momentum of the search.
- God only enters a relationship with man when a covenant of sacrifice is involved.
- In God's language, the covenant is a union made with blood. It is the total consecration and dedication of both parties, born in prayer.
- Jesus proved His covenant and obedience to the Father through the sacrifice on the cross. His sacrifice implied the salvation of man and their liberation from the yoke of sin.
- The second coming of Jesus will make the difference between those who have a relationship with Jesus (as Father, Lord, and Savior) and those who do not.
- Jesus comes for a bride who remains vigilant and keeps herself pure, in covenant and relationship with the Father.

Notes

1. "Silent and Solo: How Americans Pray," Barna Group, 2017, https://www.barna.com/research/silent-solo-americans-pray.
2. Ibid.

Chapter 4

The Seven Levels of Fellowship

The distance between society and God grows with each new generation that passes. We can see how our previous generations were centered around the church. They grew up knowing about God in schools, churches, and society. Nowadays, people are more secular. Christian faith is considered traditional. People favor being neutral in faith so as not to offend others. Children do not grow up hearing about God unless their parents are firm and active believers in their faith. The Barna Group found that the number of Americans attending church weekly is one-third less than in 1993. This study made way for another that differentiated groups between practicing, non-practicing, and non-Christians. It was found that the group of practicing Christians had been reduced significantly. In 2000, it was 45 percent, and today it is 25 percent. Half of these people became non-practicing, while the other half let go of their faith altogether and became non-Christian (atheist, agnostic, etc.).[1] This decline clarifies that God has been reduced to a vague idea or fleeting thought. There is no longer any *firm* knowledge of God present. That is why people are more inclined to evil, and we see the circumstances in the world today. Now more than ever, we need a church that has revealed knowledge of God. A church without revelation has no light. It is as distant as the world but does not know it.

In ancient times, God was known as someone to be feared and worshiped. When Jesus came to earth, so did the revelation of His fatherhood and friendship (see Matthew 6:26; John 15:14). This revelation never ceases to grow. On the contrary, throughout the centuries, the Holy Spirit has revealed more and more aspects that God wants to share with humanity to make Himself known and revealed. For this generation, the aspect to be revealed is fellowship with God. In this end-time, the enemy does all he can to separate God's people from Him. However, at the same time, the Holy Spirit is revealing more mysteries about how to know and get closer to God. So, let's start with the question we are currently facing: What is fellowship?

The Mystery of Fellowship

The first thing to establish about fellowship is its meaning. This word has developed different meanings in the Western world, making it difficult to understand it in a worldly *and* biblical sense. Allow me to illustrate. The marriage rate in the United States today has declined to 50 percent of what it was in 1970. Currently, more people choose not to make a lifetime commitment to another person.[2] However, we see an inversion in countries such as China and Russia. The marriage rate has increased, but the divorce rate (4.7 per thousand population) is double that of the United States (2.5 per thousand population).[3] In this case, people continue to grow disconnected from each other, and it is safe to assume that it is because no one understands what fellowship truly means—the church included. In this distortion, the church hasn't been able to learn how to have fellowship correctly and, in turn, has neglected to pursue it with God and among believers.

The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines fellowship as "companionship," a "community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience between equals or friends," and "the quality or state of being comradely."[4] In other words, fellowship is an attachment between two friends, persons, or communities of the same interest. The biblical definition goes a little deeper into what this notion consists of. The word "fellowship" comes from the Greek word *koinonia,* which describes two or more people having things in common, joined together, joint participation, contributory help or contribution, communion, partnership, association, sharing together, spiritual fellowship, and intimacy. The Holy Spirit's goal is to bring this revelation of fellowship to the body of Christ, not just to the few who continue to maintain a relationship with God through prayer, but to the majority who have lost it. His desire is *"to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 3:9).

From all the above, we can affirm that the fellowship God seeks with man is the state or the place where we are in partnership with God, sharing and participating together, in communion, in intimacy with God, with hearts joined together, in or by a covenant. We can also define the nature of fellowship as a covenant word because it implies the same kind of unity that

the Father has with Jesus. Without covenant, there is no fellowship, and where there is no fellowship, there is no relationship. Therefore, *fellowship* is undoubtedly a covenant word, not written in a contract but in the heart. That is why, in the book of Psalms, when God was preparing to judge the earth, He first said, *"Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice"* (Psalm 50:5). In the Amplified Bible, He says "godly" instead of "saints." This word doesn't necessarily mean those of God status, but rather it is God's way of describing those who are *devout* toward Him. One who is devout is so deeply committed that they surrender their life to another, which for God is a companion. In this verse, God implies that His judgment will not fall upon them; instead, His protection will.

Fellowship is a deeper aspect of the covenant; therefore, we cannot say we have fellowship with God if we are not in covenant with Him. Fellowship arises between two people who have a personal and ongoing relationship in which both have committed and sacrificed to the point they live entirely in a covenant. *"The secret [of the wise counsel] of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will let them know His covenant and reveal to them [through His word] its [deep, inner] meaning"* (Psalm 25:14 AMP).

In a covenant, the joining of hearts and the giving of hearts takes place.

Take relationships between human beings, for example. We know that a person can't get to know another by socialization alone. Socializing barely scratches the surface of what a relationship could be. If two people base their relationship on qualities such as these, the relationship becomes superficial, which cannot be considered genuine. Superficial relationships only offer temporary connections and perhaps occasional contact to share some common interests. There is never anything personal or deep involved. It does not change us nor demand anything of us.

On the other hand, fellowship requires one to know the other because they are constantly joined through a daily, genuine, and committed relationship. Their glue is a covenant and simultaneously demands mutual investment. It is the exchange of two lives. *"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common"* (Acts 2:44).

Fellowship with God is real, tangible, supernatural,
and only possible through a covenant in Jesus.

Some believers want everything from God but don't want to give anything themselves. They are unwilling to give up their vices, sins, selfishness, hobbies, or way of thinking. For them, the idea of exchanging anything is absurd and unnecessary. But this is hardly true. Exchange is the minimum requirement to find fellowship with God. Fellowship is a legal exchange between Him and us. In fellowship, we give Him all of ourselves, and, in turn, He fills us with His presence. There exists nothing outside of Him. All people or circumstances are forfeited of every claim they may have over our minds. We are free to know Him, worship Him, change our atmosphere with His presence, and read the Word. We enter a continual state of sharing, giving, and receiving to the point where we are transformed. It changes our way of thinking, imparts identity, and empowers us. This is a place of sweet fellowship we don't want to leave once entered. It demands everything from us, but once we reach it, it is worth everything we give up.

If you want a close relationship with God, you must transition from having simple, superficial, and occasional social contact to practicing a covenantal fellowship. When the Church understands fellowship, it is faithful to God and willing to invest itself in believers and its community. It becomes a voice that conveys peace, security, and authority, an obvious trait of having spent time in fellowship with God, for even our voice changes when we spend time with Him (it is why demonic spirits are so subject to the sound of our voice). Furthermore, upon practicing covenant fellowship

with others, which reflects our fellowship with God to others, God fulfills His promises and releases His blessings.

When we have continual fellowship with God, we become like Him; we are empowered and strengthened.

The Seven Levels of Fellowship

Having Things in Common

As believers, we have the same Lord and Savior but also the same enemy. Therefore, we must believe that everything that affects or hurts God affects or hurts us. And anyone who is God's enemy is our enemy as well, and vice versa. But what do we have in common with God? Most people see God as someone very distant with whom they share nothing, but the truth is, we share more commonalities with God than we think.

To begin with, all people come from God. He is our originator, and the Word says He made us. *"So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them"* (Genesis 1:27 AMP). That alone joins us to Him in an eternal way, which remains a mystery for religion and science. However, the most precious thing we have in common with the Father is Jesus. Today, we have in common His blood, His forgiveness and salvation, His acceptance, and the love that embraces us upon seeking a relationship with Him.

Until people have the revelation of who they are and where they come from, they cannot have fellowship with God.

This is the first level of fellowship where what we have in common with Him is genuinely transcendent; however, our fellowship remains incomplete if we only stay at this level. While it is a fact, sharing things in common with God only keeps us at the relationship's surface. The depth comes with the following levels of fellowship.

Joined Together

Once we establish the things we have in common with God and they become a revelation in our hearts, we can move on to the second level of fellowship, whereby we are joined together with God through a covenant. Without a covenant of commitment, we can't have a relationship with God. This covenant is not only established through the blood of Christ, but by the spiritual sacrifice we make when we decide to leave the things of the world, die to our flesh, and consecrate ourselves to God. It is a progressive covenant that must come from us because God wants to ensure that we will rely on and always go to Him, no matter the circumstance. The covenant is the glue that sticks us together with God, creating an unbreakable bond founded on mutual trust.

Without a covenant of commitment, we cannot have fellowship with God.

The same applies to other believers in a parallel perspective. *"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another"* (Romans 12:4-5). The purpose of being joined together is to supply, help each other, nourish, minister, grow spiritually, and achieve maximum unity as the body of Christ. *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually"* (1 Corinthians 12:27).

If you have already received the revelation that God is your creator and you come from Him, this is the time to make a covenant with Him. I encourage you to commit yourself to God right now in a covenant of mutual surrender; then you will become one with God.

Partnership

The next level of fellowship is partnering with God. A partnership in the business world consists of joint ownership of something, where all parties equally assume the profits, risks, and losses. When God created man, He gave him the power to rule and subdue the earth (see Genesis 1:27-28). However, upon committing the first sin, Adam lost that authority. Jesus regained it when He came to this earth while also bringing the kingdom of God.

When the kingdom was established on earth, responsibilities between man and God emerged, and a partnership was formed. That way, when Jesus returned to heaven, He could leave us in charge. Our partnership with God expects us to take up responsibilities such as governing His creation, expanding His kingdom, preaching the gospel, and upholding ministry and service to the people. Our part in fulfilling these expectations is to commit ourselves to pray, fast, obey, live, worship, serve God and others, tell others about Jesus, manifest His power in miracles, signs, and wonders, and fight for justice and the weak (see Matthew 5:6,10; James 1:27; Deuteronomy 10:17-18). When we do our part, God fulfills His to release His supernatural power, presence, and resources. In fellowship with God, He gets the glory and the credit while we get the benefits.

In a less broad sense, we are partners with God in bringing our family, friends, and co-workers to the feet of Christ, in casting out demons and imparting spiritual deliverance to His people, in releasing His power to heal people's sicknesses and diseases, in defending the weak against their oppressor, in fighting for justice where justice is lacking, in feeding the hungry, sheltering the naked, visiting those in prisons and hospitals (see Matthew 25:35-40), and most importantly, we are God's partners in the discipleship of believers (see Matthew 28:19). It is so powerful to know that our "partner" in our personal, family, work, and ministry life is God Himself!

Sharing Together

Once Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples, along with the believers, continued "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46-47). That is what Jesus taught them. If you are in the presence of God, sharing with Him is an unmistakable sign of fellowship. It is also often an indicator of our relationship with others. When we fellowship in the presence of God, we share our hearts, insecurities, fears, joys, and secrets we keep. God, in turn, shares His nature, His life, and more. This is how we can identify true fellowship because it is impossible to share all this with a person you do not know, do not trust, and with whom you do not have a personal, continuous, and deep relationship.

The art of fellowship is sharing.

This is important to clarify because some believers want God's blessings but are unwilling to share anything with Him; they do not open their hearts, bring their family, or share God with others. Many believe that they are automatically in good standing with God by simply going to church on Sunday and giving an offering. Then, when crises come, they don't understand why God allows them to suffer or why He doesn't do a miracle. But take a moment to ask yourself, would you do it if someone who has not kept in contact with you for a long time without warning demands that you help them and expects you to wait on them? The same applies the other way around when you have friends with whom you never share quality time, whom you never serve or help in their need, yet expect them to come to your rescue when you have a crisis. If you never share your life with God, why should He intervene?

I like to share a meal with my spiritual and natural children. As mentioned before, as believers we have many things in common, such as our faith in Jesus and the call to extend His kingdom and manifest His power. Therefore, we cannot be strangers to each other in our daily life. Still, true fellowship comes from daily sharing life experiences, paying the price of serving God and people together, sharing suffering when attacks come, and sharing joy when God gives us victory personally and in the church.

Joint Participation

The apostle Paul had this revelation of participation in his relationship with Jesus, which is why he wrote to the church in Philippi that he wanted to be found in Christ *"And this, so that I may know Him [experientially, becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Him, understanding the remarkable wonders of His Person more completely] and [in that same way experience] the power of His resurrection [which overflows and is active in believers], and [that I may share] the fellowship of His sufferings, by being continually conformed [inwardly into His likeness even] to His death [dying as He did]"* (Philippians 3:10 AMP). Another version uses "participation" in place of "fellowship." This participation refers to "sharing" Christ's sufferings to reunite humanity with the Father. Paul says that he is in the task of "[laying] *hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"* (Philippians 3:12). This implies that there is joint participation in salvation where Christ takes us, and we accept Christ. So, if we have fellowship with Christ, we also participate in His sufferings. That is true fellowship!

Believers don't like this teaching of participating in Christ's sufferings because they don't like to suffer in general. They believe that to participate in His sufferings we must undergo the same crucifixion and whippings He did. While it is true that in some parts of the world, there are believers who are beaten, imprisoned, and even killed for the sake of Christ, this is not the only way to participate in His sufferings. The sufferings we are subject to in the name of Christ can be divided into two types: the suffering that comes from fellowship with Christ and His righteousness (also known as the suffering of the flesh) and the suffering that comes from unrighteousness (also known as the disobedience we commit against God). It is essential to clarify these sufferings and emphasize that without them, there is no fellowship with God.

Suffering for Righteousness

This suffering identifies us with Jesus: "*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*" (1 Peter 4:1). The suffering of the flesh is not receiving whippings or imprisonment (at least not for believers in the West). This suffering refers to denying Adamic nature, the old self,

the sinful nature, and the old man. "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20). "I have been crucified with Christ" is the same as saying, "I am with Jesus in anything that comes against Him; I will not be moved, I will not desist, I will not run away. I will remain with Him, paying the price of having Him live in me, and I no longer live." Even though He had the power to save Himself, Jesus still bound Himself to that cross in obedience to the Father. Today, we are given the same choice: to attain fellowship with our Lord through sacrificial obedience.

Denial of the self is a sign of having fellowship with Jesus through the participation of His sufferings.

To sacrifice for righteousness—to stand in righteousness before God—means that our carnal nature must be crucified because we cannot have fellowship with Christ without going through what He went through, without suffering what He suffered. And just as Jesus gave Himself willingly, so must we. Jesus knew this, for "*though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*" (Hebrews 5:8); therefore, when instructing His disciples, He told them, "*And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me*" (Matthew 10:38).

This is what Paul taught his disciples in the church in Rome, "*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin*" (Romans 6:11-13). To share Christ's suffering is to be "dead to sin." What does it mean to be "dead to sin"? It means that when sin is presented or offered to you, it doesn't produce any reaction or have any control. When you are dead to sin, it no longer has the power of attraction over you because your flesh is mortal and crucified with Christ.

Jesus had no sinful nature, but He did have a divine nature. This was the principle that Jesus operated by during His time on earth. He denied Himself as God: *"who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God"* (Philippians 2:6). He could have chosen to be God, but He denied Himself and chose to be a man instead. He decided to die to who He had been before coming to earth and suffer, as a man, scorn, scourging, and death on the cross.

If we want fellowship with God, we, too, must die to what we think, feel, and want so that He may live in us. A continued denial brings us to the place of knowing that it is not us living and doing but Christ Himself in us. To our mind, this seems both illogical and impossible because the difference between Jesus and us is that He had the revelation of why He suffered what He did. Therefore, for a person to choose to die to their flesh, they must know for whom and why they are dying. If we do not know, we cannot die.

Denying oneself is a daily sacrifice.

Suffering for Injustice

This is the suffering that Jesus wants to spare us from, the suffering that brings us nothing but bitterness, resentment, regret, guilt, and remorse. The apostle Peter wrote about this suffering to his disciples in Pontus and other regions, advising them: *"let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter"* (1 Peter 4:15-16). Disobedience to God always brings sufferings that have nothing to do with those of Christ. They do not come through fellowship with God, nor do they bring us closer to Him. This happened to the prodigal son, who despised his father and squandered his inheritance in vices and bad friendships. *"But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. …And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything"* (Luke 15:14,16). That is the suffering of disobedience and injustice.

Communion

In the original Greek, the word *communion* means "to dwell in a tabernacle." Still, the Bible points at a deeper meaning, implying that it is to dwell in intimate communion with the risen Christ and become one with God, just as Jesus did on earth. *"That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (John 17:21). Jesus was one with His Father, who also came to restore that unity for us. There is a place in fellowship where we become one with God and inhabit with Him the same space through intimate communion. A practical way to understand this kind of communion is the marriage between a man and a woman. When two people marry, the union can only be sealed with the consummation of the sexual act. This union occurs on a physical, spiritual, and emotional level. This is a natural reflection of the mystery of spiritual communion with God.

The mystery by which communion with God empowers us is revealed through the right relationship and unification with Him.

As believers, we are one with Christ in His death, resurrection, and life itself: "[He] *raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6). To be one with Christ is to be one with the Father. God wants us to understand that through the blood of Jesus, He is as one with us as He is with Christ. This means that when we speak, God agrees with us and backs us up with His power. He will work His Word when it comes out of our mouths. In that unity, we are like God. Allow me to clarify. I am not saying we *are* God, but we think, speak, and act like God as His ambassadors on earth. In communion, God merges with us, and we with Him; this is how people see the continuation of God's life in a human being. He gives us the authority to act in His place from our intimate communion because it is there that we become one with Him. If you are one with God, whatever you declare will happen; you will have the power and

authority to rule and reign over creation, sickness, demonic spirits, and more on this earth.

Communion with God gives us identity because becoming one with Him leads us to know who we are and our origins; it connects us with our source and ends our uncertainty, insecurities, and fears. Identity has nothing to do with our profession, occupation, gifts, talents, or preferences. It has everything to do with our essence and origin as beloved children of God, worthy of being loved and capable of loving God and others. In this intimacy with the Father, any sense of rejection in our inner self disappears under the power that comes from knowing that we are children of God.

Intimacy

This is the deepest level of fellowship. *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3). God created man for intimacy, to have a close relationship with Him. Furthermore, He gave us the ability to be intimate with another person as an earthly reflection of something eternal. Intimacy means being known for who you are, without filters or masks. Intimacy is vulnerability; it exposes our innermost being, our secret place. Our heart was created for intimacy; therefore, we feel that longing and lack when we are not intimate with God or another person. If you know someone intimately, you know them beyond the surface; you know what others don't know about them. This is the level of relationship God wants us to have with Him! He wants a unique, deep, intimate relationship with you! He wants to know you and make Himself known.

To know God intimately is the supreme quest of every human being.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit reveals new aspects of God for us to know and advance in our intimacy with Him as our Father. Today is the time to decide in

accordance with the times that we live in. There is no more room for spiritual lukewarmness. The challenge today, in a world entirely inclined for self-centeredness, unrestraint, and the exaltation of the "I," is to die to the flesh so that Christ may live in us and we may have a relationship of full communion and intimacy with the Father. Today is the time to leave behind superficial and temporary relationships to commit to and seek God with all our hearts. What level of fellowship are you at today? How long have you been at that level? Are you willing to pay the price to go to the next level of fellowship with the Father? Do you want to get out of the spiritual stagnation that has stopped your relationship with God? Today is the day! This is the time and the hour!

Answered Prayers

Dear reader, to inspire and challenge you to seek that next level in your relationship with God, we will look at two powerful testimonies of what it means to develop the different levels of fellowship with the heavenly Father on a personal and ministerial level. We will see how that primary relationship permeates all our relationships and projects we undertake. Fellowship with God is not just to stay within the four walls of our place of prayer but to reach out and impact everything around us. Let's read these testimonies:

> My name is Anita, and together with my husband, David Gutierrez, we have our ministry in Dallas, Texas. The new level of our intimate relationship with God today has led us to hear His voice and see where He is leading us. And we know this is just the beginning. We have seen God move in the most radical ways three years after our conversion through cultivating an intimate relationship with Him. We needed guidance and empowerment, so we came to King Jesus Ministry. Here, we were taught how to access and be in the presence of God, the importance of our relationship with Him, and we learned to give Him the priority. At that time, I lost my stepfather, father, and mother, and I don't know what my life would have been without my relationship with God to get through that pain. When we came to the Lord, our marriage

was broken, our family was broken, and our business was about to fail. We had nothing left but to surrender to God. Little by little, as we deepened our personal relationship with the Father, He began to restore first our marriage, then our family and business. And He gave us a ministry through which we helped drug addicts, drug dealers, and prostitutes. Today, we see the fruit of new and free lives that have been changed and are hungry for God. Our ministry has a special anointing to help these people spiritually and help them prosper in every area of their lives through a constant relationship with God.

As soon as we were converted, we started reading Apostle Maldonado's books and attending his conferences. Our son was going to be a professional soccer player and instead decided to dedicate himself to God's service. He graduated from college and is now on fire for God, helping our ministry. God blessed us financially. Today, we see the fruit of our prayer life and what God is doing in our ministry, how the Holy Spirit is manifested in our midst. Our company, which when we came to the ministry was five days away from closing, today is double what it was and does in one year what we could not do before in fifteen. We paid all our debts, and everything is a blessing. We want to help expand the kingdom of God because we see people who have been Christians for twenty years who have never been delivered. During the pandemic, the Lord spoke to us about helping another ministry in Colombia to build two temples. There, they are also experiencing a great revival.

Prophet Ernesto Lopez has been a spiritual son of Apostle Guillermo Maldonado for more than twenty years. Since coming to King Jesus Ministry, he has not ceased to grow as a person, husband, father, spiritual son, and servant of God. As his intimate relationship with the spiritual Father has grown, so has his process in the ministry. He began as a leader at a beginner level and has now reached the fullness of his calling as a prophet of God for this house and the nations, bringing the fresh word from heaven, preaching Jesus with demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit, with miracles, signs, and wonders. His life is a testimony of what a personal

relationship with the Father does and never ceases to grow. The following is a brief account of what his personal relationship with the Father is like:

> If I have to describe my relationship with God through prayer, it is that every day I wake up very conscious that God is real in my life. Each new dawn, I worship and exalt Him as my King and Lord, acknowledge His greatness and His power, affirm His wisdom and majesty; I declare myself in total dependence on Him, on His faithfulness, His love, and His mercy. In my secret place with God, I raise my hands in absolute surrender and declare that He is my Father, my source of life, sustenance, and strength. In a loud voice, I confess that I am His child and that, as such, I have rights and privileges and none of this is in my strength or by my merit but by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I acknowledge that His blood cleanses me and gives me access to the throne of grace and that I am accepted and forgiven, being as righteous by faith as Jesus is in His nature. Throughout my life as a Christian, I have always sought to know God more. I have searched His word and prayed constantly. My relationship with Him has grown and gone deeper than I initially knew. Today, I can say that I have a relationship with the heavenly Father that is intimate; I commune with Him, I share all of me there, and He does too. Days ago, I was seeking His face, and suddenly His presence became so real in my life that I could not get up from where I was kneeling. Then I heard His voice saying, “Let Me use your body to cry out for this new generation.” Immediately, I began to intercede, and the Holy Spirit led me to deliver every area where the enemy had placed his curses on this generation. I saw how they came out of spiritual prisons where the identity of many young people was distorted; they were made to believe that they were what they were not, with concepts and ideologies full of lies, falsehoods, and many other things. I felt holy anger and began to declare and prophesy that Jesus had come to save and rescue what was lost. Then, I saw that all were affirmed on a high mountain where God gave them protection. I knew that God had worked and that prayer had

been effective. The next Sunday, I was at church serving in the three services we have. And it turns out, every person I talked to, mostly young people, testified to me that they were going through difficult trials with their identity, that they were being attacked with false doctrines, and that the enemy was trying to trick them into turning back. Glory be to God that Jesus is never late! I know these are the people I had been praying for and that God was working, as they could see the enemy's deception. This generation will be preserved as part of the end-time remnant, including all our families and children.

Practical Activation

- If you know that what you have achieved in intimacy with God is not enough, and you want to go a step further and take your relationship to a deeper level of fellowship and total intimacy with Him, then pray this prayer with me:

Heavenly Father, I come before You today with an open heart. I know that my relationship with You can grow and deepen even more. I thirst for You—my soul longs for that intimate connection with You in prayer. I am willing to crucify my flesh and die so that Christ may live in me; I am willing to shrink so that He may grow in me more and more each day. Holy Spirit, come and fill me, cleanse my heart of all hidden sin, wash me with the blood of Christ, and take me to new levels of revelation of the person of Christ. Lead me to that place of intimacy where I may know the Father and share my life with Him in complete communion. I pray this in Jesus's name, amen!

- Continue to record in writing those new experiences in intimacy with the Father.
- Share your relationship with God with people who don't have it personally, in your social networks, at family gatherings, and with friends.

- Unleash the power that comes out of that intimacy to heal and free others. God empowers you to bring the reality of Christ to the world.

Chapter Summary

- Today's generation tends to distance itself more and more from God, the church, and their faith. Children are not growing up hearing the Word of God as they used to.
- In this end time, the Holy Spirit is revealing God's mysteries to know Him more.
- Before, God was known as someone to be feared and worshiped, but today, the Spirit brings the revelation of His fatherhood and friendship.
- The dictionary defines fellowship as camaraderie, association, and attachment among friends. The Bible describes it as two or more people having things in common, joined together, joint participation, contributory help, communion, partnership, association, sharing together, spiritual fellowship, and intimacy.
- We can't get to know people just by socializing with them. This just scratches the surface of a relationship. These types of relationships are based on occasional contact and do not change us or demand anything relevant.
- Some believers want everything from God without giving anything of themselves. They do not give up sin, vices, hobbies, selfishness, mentality, time, or anything else! They are not willing to exchange life with God.
- The seven levels of fellowship are:
    - Having things in common: God is our origin, salvation, and Father.
    - Joined together in covenant and sacrifice: Without the covenant of commitment, there is no relationship.

- Partnership: Joint ownership of something in which everyone equally shares profits, risks, and losses.
- Sharing together: In life with God and other believers, we share our hearts, insecurities, fears, joys, and secrets with God, and in turn He shares His nature, mentality, holiness, power, and eternal life.
- Joint participation: In the sufferings of Christ (suffering for righteousness and injustice).
- Communion: Becoming one with God and dwelling together in intimacy with the risen Christ. It gives us identity and puts an end to insecurities and fears.
- Intimacy: Knowing one another. It is to be known inside, for who one is, without filters or masks, and in complete vulnerability.

Notes

1. "Signs of Decline & Hope Among Key Metrics of Faith," Barna Group, March 4, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church.
2. Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Max Roser, "Marriages and Divorces," Our World in Data, https://ourworldindata.org/marriages-and-divorces.
3. World Population Review, "Divorce Rates by Country 2022," https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/divorce-rates-by-country.
4. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "fellowship," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fellowship.

Chapter 5

The Purpose of Fellowship

Can a Christian or the Church exist without fellowship? Is it possible for anyone to grow without fellowship? What is the purpose of fellowship, and why is it so important? In this chapter, we learn the answers to these questions and more, according to the purposes of fellowship God proposes in His relationship with each of us. As we established in previous chapters, the kingdom of God is built on relationships, which cannot be superficial or temporary. They must be built from a place of covenant, commitment, and sacrifice. Human beings were created to function based on relationships. Many young people today, for example, join gangs because they are made to believe they are a family. Among Christians today, though the experience of fellowship has been mostly in church gatherings, a study conducted by the Barna Group shows that only 41 percent of Generation Z (people born between 1997 and 2012) say they want to return to Church in person by the end of the COVID pandemic; and only 42 percent of Millennials (people born between 1981 and 1996) prefer the in-person church experience.[1] Nowadays, the Church is losing fellowship.

Christians are well acquainted with church structure and organization because that is what abounds around us. Usually, churches begin with a small congregation of believers with a certain level of relationship. At this stage, there is a substantial amount of fellowship, and, as they grow in number, they also become more organized to carry out their work together. However, that which brings order can also destabilize Christian relationships, causing fellowship to cool. For example, we often see organization and structure, instead of people, imposed as the channel through which God's power passes to save, heal, deliver, and disciple. That is the way most churches operate today. I am not saying that organization is bad or negative, but if, over time, it becomes the agent that controls and restricts the power of God, something is not right. When an organization ceases to be the channel in which God's power flows and begins to control that power instead, fellowship is lost. The Church begins to function as a

company, and it shows because the congregation is no longer close to each other. The Holy Spirit is also extinguished in the name of order. In Western countries, certain operating mechanisms based on organization and structure are considered standard for society. However, it is important to know that this does not include the kind of fellowship relationship God demands. We can have an organizational structure, but if the motivation and purpose are not to have a relationship with God and our brothers, it will fail.

When people come to our ministry, they feel they are part of a family because the relationships here are present and alive. We work to make it so! Unfortunately, this is not the case everywhere. I knew a pastor who established and built a church with a congregation of over a thousand people, raised a leadership, and even bought his building. As he grew hungrier for God, he wanted to hear things from the Holy Spirit, to flow in miracles and deliverance. Then, he began to listen to my teachings; the Holy Spirit worked, and this pastor began to see what God was doing in him and his congregation. However, when the denomination found out, they forbade him to continue and threw him out empty-handed. They took away the building, the people, everything he had built. This pastor went into a deep depression, then eventually was diagnosed with cancer and died. The denomination destroyed him because it was more interested in maintaining organization within their group than in a relationship with God and the people.

The structure and government of the Church should be based on fellowship; that is God’s way.

The organization is necessary, and when it is well directed it is a blessing because we know that where there is no order, there is confusion and chaos. But the living flow of God’s power is in fellowship, not order. This is non-negotiable. An organization that is well-conceived establishes order without extinguishing fellowship; rather, it is placed at the service of relational fellowship between God, His children, and believers. Therefore, this is an issue I deal with all the time. I have a large local church and over

five hundred churches in sixty countries. To prevent the organization from being above all, from the beginning I have established a structure in which all the people under me are in fellowship with God, with me, and with others. Of course, I cannot relate directly and closely with thousands of people, so I train leaders to care for them under a relational theology where fellowship is a priority.

From the moment organization becomes a priority,
the fellowship ceases to exist.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not die for religious institutions or buildings. He died to restore fellowship between God and man. We serve a people-oriented God. Therefore, why would it be right to prioritize organization or structure over believers or the Holy Spirit? The center of Jesus's sacrifice was the supernatural love of God, and you cannot love people supernaturally from the institutionalization of the Church. If we understand the purpose of fellowship, we will understand its power and what it does.

The end-time Church must be an entity that works in
love and relationship.

The Purpose of the Fellowship

The purpose of fellowship can be divided into the following areas:

To Bring Transformation

After the fall of man, God conceived fellowship to bring transformation to our lives and return us to our previous state before the fall, where we shared full communion with the Father. In general, fellowship with the Father leads us to experience a total spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional

transformation, accompanied by visible manifestations. This means that we begin to become, on earth, what we are in heaven. *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

As long as you keep in fellowship with God, you will continuously be transformed.

In fellowship with the Father, we are changed, prospered, and continually blessed; we become kinder, gentler, more patient, humble, and healthy. When I started my ministry, I wanted to change a specific area in my life, but it was difficult for me to do so on my own. I did many things to get rid of it, but nothing happened. I prayed, fasted, and even sowed, but nothing! One day, while fellowshipping with God in His presence, the Holy Spirit led me to surrender in that area. That day, I died to myself before God, surrendered to Him on the altar, and sacrificed my flesh. That is when the Father came and changed me, transformed that area of my life that nothing else had been able to change. In His presence, I was totally transformed! He delivered me to such an extent that I only realized it months later because I no longer responded to provocations as before.

To Know God Intimately

In Chapter 2, we dealt with the subject of knowing God through prayer. This prayer life leads us to a level of fellowship whose purpose is to know Him more intimately. It is a cycle that feeds on itself, always seeking to reach the highest levels of fellowship—communion and intimacy (see Chapter 4). Therefore, we can explain the process of knowing God with the following formula: prayer = relationship = fellowship = intimate knowledge of God.

One of the marks of knowing God is loving your brothers.

In a relationship with another person, the more time we spend with them, the more we get to know them. As we share time and develop trust, we open our hearts, investing all that we are and have in that relationship. We develop attachment, affection, and love for each other. It is the same with God; the more time we spend in fellowship and prayer with Him, the more we get to know Him. During this process, the first thing that comes out of God is love because that is His essence, and He imparts it to us. In that level of relationship, what one is, in essence, rubs off on the other. That is why I feel His love in me every time I come out of fellowship with the Father. His love makes me more caring. I love God and people more, and it is visibly manifested.

If you are young, you must understand this revelation of fellowship to seek it with God and be wise in choosing friends. This is the time when you develop the friendships you will have for perhaps the rest of your life. If we look at the world today, fellowship is a scarce commodity. This world is so devoid of love. People are hurting and looking for someone to love them. The *New York Post* reports that 1 in 5 men in the United States admits to not having a single close friendship; this number has grown from 3 percent in 1995 to 15 percent; and of those who say they have at least six close friends, the percentage has dropped from 55 percent to 27 percent. Among men and women, only 59 percent can identify a person as "their best friend," compared to 77 percent in 1990.[2] We are not the only ones who can benefit from this revelation. As we can see, the world is also in desperate need of God's love.

To Produce the Likeness of God

An *Insider* publication reveals that sharing life with someone for a long time changes the way we see the world, the way we act, and the way we think. In these situations, psychologists have observed that a shared mind is generated between couples (whether it is a marriage, friendship,

partnership, etc.) and is reflected in five aspects: they develop a private language, stop self-censoring, start to sound alike, start to look alike, and share a mood of their own.[3]

Becoming more like the person we spend most of our time in companionship with is inevitable. As human beings, there is always an innate desire and tendency to be like our equal, which is often expected. The Bible says that this is also true on a spiritual level. For example, people who worship idols become like them. *"They have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them"* (Psalm 115:7-8). Likewise, when we fellowship with God, we become like Him. Moreover, God desires to be like you because you were made in His likeness.

As children of God, we are co-heirs of the Father with Christ, meaning we are made equal to Jesus. *"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"* (Romans 8:17). He is our Father; we are His children; if we share the same relationship, we have the same rights as Jesus. Fellowship is the means by which God imparts His image and likeness to us. We will see this in more detail in the next chapter.

The same thing happens among brethren. We impart ourselves to one another when in fellowship and acquire a likeness. If you live in fellowship with God, you will resemble Him in how He speaks, looks, moves, walks, thinks, acts, loves, and more. If you do not fellowship with God, you will cease to see yourself as Him. You will be turning away without knowing it. Maintaining the likeness of someone with whom you are not in fellowship is very difficult. Are you spending time in fellowship with God? Are you becoming more like Him? Is He your priority? With whom are you spending the most time in fellowship?

To Appropriate Power

Power is your inheritance as a child of the heavenly Father. Still, its use is only lawful if you are in a relationship with Him *"who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"* (Ephesians 3:20). Divine relationships generate

power. That is why the devil works tirelessly to stop them. As far as God is concerned, people desire the power that comes from a relationship with Him, but not the relationship itself. The truth is that God's power is transmitted through intimacy with Him, though it can also be usurped illegally (see Matthew 7:20-21).

Jesus prepared His disciples to receive the power of the Holy Spirit by instructing them to wait for Him together. *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'"* (Acts 1:4-5). *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven…and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:1-2, 4). Power comes by virtue of fellowship with the Father, *"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

Relationship with the Father gives us the power to act as He does and the authority to do so in His name. Authority is the right to exercise power and act as and on behalf of another. Jesus gave this authority and power to His disciples: *"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you"* (Luke 10:19). He gave it to them because He had a fellowship relationship with them.

All aspects of God's power are available through fellowship.

Additionally, God has given us a commission that can only be fulfilled with the power of knowing God intimately through fellowship with Him. It is impossible to complete the great commission in our human strength, but knowing God at an intimate level leads us to do impossible things. It makes us courageous and bold and capable of supernatural love: *"the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits"* (Daniel

11:32). The person who knows God intimately will do mighty works that have never been done before—miracles, signs, and wonders. David, one of the men of the Old Testament who had an intimate relationship with God, knew this when he said, *"Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies"* (Psalm 108:13). How can we say we know God when we don't dare to pray even for a headache?

I live this every day. As I pray in the presence of God, He is imparting power to me to carry out my assignment. When I fellowship with God, I come away with an influx of His power that He transmitted to my spirit in our place of prayer. Then, I am ready to go and impart that power by healing and freeing people who are bound by spirits of disease, addictions, abuse, and so on. When I do that, I see people healed, saved, and set free. I have even seen thousands of miracles, signs, and wonders in one event.

Before giving you power, God asks for a relationship.

To Bring Forth God's Purposes

So it is with people and us. During the creation of man, God gave birth to His purpose in fellowship with Himself (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit): *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'"* (Genesis 1:26). During one of my fellowship times, God told me to go to Ukraine. I didn't know that at that time the country was at war—bombs exploding everywhere and great turmoil. But the Lord told me, "Go now because the window for preaching the gospel will close." I obeyed and preached to five thousand young people in a one-time event. The Lord told me to teach, train, empower, and activate those young people because they were the generation that would bring revival to that nation. My fellowship with God led me to birth a revival in a war-torn nation.

I received my calling, purpose, and vision for ministry—being in His presence and giving birth to God's plans—in moments of prayer and

fellowship with God and with spiritual leaders who prophesied over my life. I can also testify to this purpose in the local Church. Often, I meet with leaders to fellowship with them, whether in a restaurant, at home, or a gym. There, as we talk, God's purposes emerge and are brought to light in those moments of fellowship. Sometimes, they are personal issues. Other times, they are issues of vision, ministry, family, etc.

To Produce Answered Prayers

God desires to answer our prayers because He wants to give us happiness. *"Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full"* (John 16:24). Today, we have many unhappy believers because they do not see their prayers answered. They get frustrated, thinking that God does not hear them or does not want to give them what they ask for. The truth is that God is willing and able. The problem is not Him. Often, Christians pray more for what we want from God than for a relationship with Him. And therein lies the error. As you seek God in prayer, you will see more prayers answered because that is, among other things, the purpose of fellowship. What is your prayer request today? Family? Health? Finances? Your children? God is your Father, your unlimited resource. He has anything you need, whether it be healing, joy, peace, provision, or deliverance, and "*in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you*" (John 16:23). The only condition He requests is that you fellowship with Him.

To Assimilate and Integrate into God

While at first glance the words *assimilate* and *integrate* may sound the same, they provide slightly different roles in the process of fellowship with God. Combined, they create a subtle cause-and-effect relationship that unlocks an important aspect of fellowship with God that can shift our perspective of ourselves and our roles before God. The word *assimilate* means "to absorb into the cultural tradition of a population or group; to make similar."[4] This means that in fellowship, we are made similar *to* Him. We are assimilated by Him. He imparts to us His culture, values, and even His person; in turn, we are changed. Eventually, after enough assimilation, we are integrated into each other. The word *integrate* means "to combine

into one.” This is the most beautiful part of fellowship with God because this is where He takes us in, flaws and all, and combines our person with His to make one complete, spiritual being. There is no integration without assimilation. Thus, this final purpose of fellowship is to be absorbed by God and become one with Him. When we integrate with God, we are part of Him, and He is part of us.

The purpose of integration is equality.

When you integrate with a person, you receive their characteristics through fellowship with them. In integration with God, you acquire His image. You manifest God’s characteristics daily along with all His virtues. God’s intention, from the beginning, was that man should be the same in heaven and on earth; he should dominate and operate in both realms. That is why he gave him two natures—the human and the spiritual.

Let me give you an earthlier example to illustrate this revelation. Today, it is possible to live in a country and not assimilate the culture, the way of thinking, or the way of living. I know people who have moved to live in the United States and never learned to speak English or adopted the customs of this nation. As a result, they do not integrate into the culture. This is also possible in the spiritual realm. You can be a Christian and not assimilate God; you do not think like God or live as one lives in the kingdom of God. The cause is the lack of fellowship with Him; it may be that you pray, but you do not worship, you do not give yourself completely, you do not let yourself be assimilated by God, nor do you assimilate Him. In fellowship, every time we worship God, we are integrating ourselves and becoming part of Him. As incredible as it may seem, there are many Christians who pray but do not know how to worship the Father in spirit and truth; they never become one with Him.

In my case, I can testify that I live in fellowship with God, and when I begin the day that way my attitude, mood, strength, mental acuity, and focus are more aligned with Him. Any decision I make will be good. If, on the other hand, there is a day when I do not spend time in fellowship with

the Father, I feel horrible, irritable, and moody. I don’t feel confi-dent about making decisions and will most likely have to revisit them later. That time of fellowship with the Father is as important as my need for air!

Conclusion

Your journey with God begins with a daily commitment to develop fellowship and fulfill God’s purposes. These are the purposes of fellowship with God and what you should seek every time you approach Him in prayer. But I also encourage you to seek human relationships, friendships, and more that have the same purposes. We are social beings created to relate. We must know the scope of the relationships we establish and the purpose of each one, beginning with our relationship with the Father.

Answered Prayers

Apostle Dublas Rodriguez has been my spiritual son for over twenty years. He and his wife have shown sustained growth over time that can only be attributed to their deep and persevering relationship with the heavenly Father. I have been able to wholly entrust Apostle Dublas with numerous tasks, for I know that the Father backs him with the power of the Holy Spirit. Below, he shares his testimony about his life of fellowship with the Father.

> Having an increasingly intimate, deep, and ongoing relationship with my heavenly Father is a priority and necessity, as I have received the revelation that everything we are and do comes from our intimacy with Him. Since I gave my life to Christ, many things have taken place because of seeking to be closer to Him every day. I have been able to experience His grace, favor, provision, protection, healing, deliverance, power, strength, comfort, encouragement, wisdom, and so much more. But this is not something that can be experienced overnight. We must learn that fellowship with God is a lifelong work, a relationship that grows, strengthens, and deepens with the small gestures of each day. For example, I pray every day, consistently, and one of the first things I do when I go into His

> presence is worship and honor Him. No matter what situation I am going through at that moment, no matter how hard it is, how sad, tired, or overwhelmed I am, I never go into His presence to complain or to do anything other than first express to Him the thankfulness that is in my heart for Him, for who He is and what He does. That moment is very special for me because what I do is affirm God for all that He means to me. There, I express all I have come to know about Him, the revelation that the Holy Spirit has given me, and what I have experienced in daily fellowship with Him. Then, I present my life to Him, willingly placing it on His altar, asking Him to forgive all my faults, humbling myself before His presence, knowing that as His child, He always receives me when I go with a repentant heart. I do not claim to be perfect or better than anyone; on the contrary, I recognize my absolute dependence on Him, His love, guidance, strength, and wisdom. I immediately take hold of the hand of the Holy Spirit, for according to Romans 8:26, though we do not know how to ask as we ought, He still intercedes for us. Then, even if I have things I want to ask for, I give the Holy Spirit the right to guide me to pray as He knows best. As a result, different kinds of prayers arise—cries, surrender, and intercession for others. In those moments, I hear His voice or make war for a situation that demands it. In other cases, God has given me a word that has sustained me in a determined moment when I have had to wait for the miracle to be released.

Pastor Michael Rodriguez has a testimony that powerfully illustrates how to develop a relationship of fellowship with the Father—how it is done in the family and applied to daily life and ministry as a way of life.

> I have learned to have a relationship with God through the way our spiritual father, Apostle Maldonado, does and teaches. He has always been my inspiration in this aspect. As a priest in my home, I have led my family to seek God as the most important thing. I have learned the power of unity in prayer by praying as a family. My wife and I often agree and fast in communion for

certain things, and every time we do, the breakthrough is immediate. We have had so many accelerated breakthroughs. We have seen God's intervention in numerous situations. Our relationship with the Father has allowed us to see His power at work instantaneously many times. We have seen people healed, people set free. We have had family breakthroughs, where my relatives have come to the feet of Christ.

Personally, every day I wake up, and the first thing I do is thank God. I seek His presence through worship and repentance of my sins. I pray in tongues to enter more quickly into the Spirit realm. During all these years, I have learned many things, although I have also made and learned through my mistakes. I can give two very important keys that I have learned: to enter the presence and listen to the Lord. We can pray, worship, and do spiritual warfare, but the hardest thing is to take the time to listen to what God wants to say. Before, I prayed a lot but didn't listen to Him. Then, I learned that God always wants to speak to us, direct us, teach us something, and set us free. When we listen to Him, it closes the circle of fellowship with the Father, and He shows you things of yours, personal things, or gives you direction for your family. That's a key thing for me because, amid uncertainty, He gives me instruction for what I need to resolve. This has helped me learn the importance of listening to God's voice in prayer, even if it means being in silence. And when God speaks to me, He always gives me clear instructions to put into action.

Another valuable fact I can give about fellowship with God is that it is not just about praying in the morning, but rather an attitude throughout the day. It is praying without ceasing in a permanent attitude of fellowship with Him. I have always learned to take God into account for everything and to pray in the Spirit so that He is part of what I do in every situation. Prayer for me is to show total dependence on the Lord. All the testimonies I have already given in the past are the product of prayer and the search for the Lord. This summarizes my pursuit of the Lord—living in fellowship with Him, hearing His voice,

fulfilling His purpose, and much more. Yet I am only halfway there because I know this search will never cease. I will seek Him until the end of my days.

Practical Activation

- If you recognize that you have not known how to have a relationship of fellowship with God, whether you have been a Christian since you were a child or for many years, you do not have to continue living this way. The Christian life is not one of defeat or conformity; it is neither natural nor tied to earthly laws. You can live a full life in which you see the hand of God working miracles in your heart and everything around you. I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Heavenly Father, today I want to start over. I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from You. Today, I repent my whole life away from You; I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that You raised Him from the dead. Forgive me and cleanse me to have a relationship with You that is fellowship. I want to share my life with You and be assimilated into You so that we may be one. Amen!

- Now, make a new commitment to pray for one hour a day, with the firm purpose of seeking that fellowship relationship with the Father.
- Make a covenant with God to be assimilated into Him so that He can bring transformation into your life, and you can always live in answered prayers.

Chapter Summary

- Christians know church structure and organization, but not a relationship. As a congregation grows, people begin to drift apart, and fellowship cools.
- An organization without fellowship is not of God and will fail. Order is necessary, but it should never displace the relationship and

cohesion of the Holy Spirit that makes us family.

- The purposes of fellowship are:
  - To bring transformation. To bring us back to our "pre-fall" state. Only fellowship with God keeps us in continual transformation.
  - To know God intimately. The formula to explain the process of knowing God is: prayer = relationship = fellowship = intimate knowledge of God.
  - To produce the likeness of God in us, our character, mindset, purpose, and more. We will always become more like the person with whom we spend the most time in fellowship.
  - To appropriate power transmitted from God to us in the intimacy of prayer. Divine relationships generate power.
  - To bring forth God's purposes. His purposes are always related to the people around us and the world. We cannot fulfill His purposes if we do not have fellowship with people.
  - To produce answered prayers. God answers on a relationship basis. God is willing and ready to answer our prayers, as long as this is not the only reason we seek Him.
  - To assimilate and integrate with God. In fellowship, we are absorbed into the Father's presence, and He is absorbed into us. It is a process of mutual assimilation and integration whose purpose is equality.

Notes

1. Carey Nieuwhof, "3 Shocking Statistics That Show How Quickly, Radically (and Permanently?) Church Has Changed Since 2020," https://careynieuwhof.com/3-statistics-that-show-how-quickly-radically-and-permanently-church-is-changing-in-2020.
2. Adriana Diaz, "Men suffer 'friendship recession' as 15% are without a single close pal," https://nypost.com/2021/07/07/friendship-recession-15-of-men-are-without-a-close-pal.
3. Erin Brodwin, "Science says these 5 things happen to couples who have been together a long time," May 18, 2015, https://www.businessinsider.com/couples-have-a-shared-mind-2015-5.
4. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "assimilate," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assimilate.

CHAPTER 6

The Father-Son Relationship

In the previous chapter, we touched on the theme of the likeness we acquire as we deepen our relationship with God through assimilation and integration with Him. In this chapter, we see the ultimate expression of that likeness, revealed through a special Father-son relationship that every Christian needs to receive. Many have the revelation of their salvation—that is, the work of Christ on the cross—but they have no revelation of being as much a child of God as Jesus is.

Let us begin by taking a closer look at the declaration that God made in the first book of the Bible: *"Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to **Our likeness**; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"* (Genesis 1:26). The word *image* in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word *tselem,* which indicates "the resemblance or representation of a substance," "a shadow" in the sense of being "an imitation of something," and "a duplicate, likeness, or replica" of something or someone. All these meanings imply an emphasis on the external appearance. Likewise, the word *likeness* is translated from the Hebrew *demuwth*, which can mean a "similarity of features, shape, figure, form, and pattern" in the spiritual, physical, and moral sense. When God created Adam, He based his identity on His form, substance, and pattern. In him, He implanted His own supernatural DNA and lineage. This was God's initial intent for the human race—to replicate Himself in a being who would reflect His *image* and *likeness* on earth. For Adam, the image was instantaneous, but the likeness would have to be continued. As long as he remained in fellowship with the Father, he would continually become like Him.

Though Adam was the first son to carry the DNA and lineage of God, when he sinned, that DNA and lineage became severely altered. Since then, man has come to resemble something else entirely. A liar, a thief, an adulterer, powerless, limited, and ignorant. The likeness was lost and the

image distorted. The consequences of Adam's actions made it so that all of us born into this world will need to experience deliverance in our spiritual DNA. We must be born again to break free from the condition we were brought into, but once we do, we must also remain in continual fellowship with God to maintain His original likeness. This is only possible through Jesus Christ. He came to restore the relationship with the Father with His death as the payment for the deliverance of our spiritual DNA. That was the first part of His anointing, which He confirmed as, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed"* (Luke 4:18).

Fellowship with God is accepting Him as the Father and yourself as His child.

Some people have difficulty accepting this because of their turbulent relationship with their natural father. In some cases, those fathers were abusive, and others abandoned or mistreated them. Therefore, trusting, surrendering, and opening their hearts to God as a Father is very difficult for them. *Act for Youth* presents a series of statistics from the government and other organizations that demonstrate family structure and relationships today. Regarding family structure, data shows that only 66 percent of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 live with both parents, 24 percent live with just their mother, 5 percent with their father, and 5 percent with neither. It also shows that the connection between parents and children is associated with several health indicators. Close and positive family relationships that generate open communication keep children healthy and help prevent drug use and violent behavior.[1] This demonstrates how much the world needs God's fatherhood and a true relationship with Him.

Jesus, the Model of the Father-Son Relationship

As the Son of Man and the Son of God, Jesus came to model the relationship between Himself and His Father. He demonstrated that it is possible to be a man yet still be in full fellowship, assimilated and integrated, with the heavenly Father. As we saw in Chapter 3, this relationship was developed and maintained through Jesus's prayer life. Today, He has left us the same pattern He used in His relationship with the Father while on earth. With this in mind, we can recognize two fundamental aspects of the Father-son relationship: identity with the Father and equality with Jesus.

Identity

This is perhaps the most difficult mentality to break among non-believers and believers. I'd like to begin with the basic definition of identity, which is the fact or state of being. According to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, *identity* is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual."[2] More to the point, the *Real Academia Española* defines identity as "the quality of being identical."[3] This meaning fits the Latin derivation *idem*, which means "[being] the same." Everything in God begins with origin and identity. As we established at the beginning of this chapter, your identity comes from the image and likeness of God, for He created us with the purpose of reflecting Him. Thus, given that the concept of identity denotes the quality of being identical with someone or something, we can also say that we are identical to God. It is time for the church to step into the undeniable truth that we are duplicates of God on earth, for God intended it to be that way from the very beginning with the creation of Adam. Made in His image and likeness, given authority and dominion to rule and govern the rest of creation, and an open channel to access the Father directly, there is no further proof needed to identify ourselves with the Father.

As His children, we come from the Father, the originator of all things. This inevitably stirs in Him the desire to fellowship with us. But how does this Father-son relationship begin? It all begins in prayer.

Jesus's life was based on His identity as a son and His relationship with His Father through prayer.

In prayer, we are given the revelation of God the Father. Who is God to you? Jesus taught His disciples that to pray as He did, they had to have a relationship with the Father; therefore, He showed them that they should begin by addressing Him directly. *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"* (Matthew 6:9). The art of prayer will always be based on a relationship with the Father. I can personally attest to this, for the strength of my faith is tied to who God is to me. He is my Father!

If God's identity as Father remains unknown, prayer will be routine and lifeless.

The word *father* comes from the Hebrew root *ab*, which means "source of life." The most common expression is *abba*, which is used as a way of calling a father with affection and intimacy. It is the equivalent of the English word *daddy*. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines *father* as a "founder," "originator," and "source."[4] The place of origin where all things begin—in both the natural and spiritual realm—is the Father. How much more significance does the heavenly Father hold, who is not just the originator of all things visible and invisible but all humankind? *"For us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live"* (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Father is one of the names of God, and it is associated with various other aspects that contribute to that name, such as unlimited, infinite, devoid of nothing, self-sufficient, and the source of life. This shouldn't instill the idea that He is distant and untouchable because of His nature. On the contrary, He is a loving Father who provides for His children in abundance. Calling God by the name *Father* not only makes our relationship with Him more intimate, but it arms us with the promise that He will never forsake us—He will always provide for us and take care of us

"for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:32). We can confidently say that the Almighty God, the great I Am, is our Father. Therefore, we must approach Him thus. Jesus did not say to pray, "God, my friend" but "our *Father*" because that is the revelation He wanted to give us and the key to recovering our true identity. When you pray, make sure you have this revelation of God as your Father. As long as you do, the devil cannot dispute anything you declare within that jurisdiction.

Your needs only begin when you stop your fellowship with Abba.

If you do not embrace the revelation of God as your Father, nothing will change in your life. You will continue with the same insecurities, fear of rejection, and lack of self-esteem. You cannot reach an intimate relationship with God because insecurity is anchored in the absence of identity. In this case, you need to ask yourself who you see yourself as. Do you see yourself as your Father or something else? Seeing yourself as your Father wills you to be like Him, act like Him, and think like Him. But most importantly, believing that you are the same as your Father is believing in His DNA that He placed inside you, which endorses the supernatural dimension of God within you and makes up the total value of who you are—a child of the heavenly Father.

Before we move on to the next point, I want to emphasize a fundamental aspect of the revelation of God as Father—honor. When we know our identity in God, we honor Him on the level of who He is as a Father. You must know that the Father demands honor as the One who has preeminence in the relationship. *"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? says the Lord of hosts"* (Malachi 1:6). This practice of honor to the Father begins in the natural with our biological or foster father. Think about it, if you do not honor your natural father, whom you can visibly see, then how much will you honor your heavenly Father, whom

you cannot see? When you honor God as your Father, you have access to His unlimited resources at any moment.

Honor gives us access, privileges, and rights.

In prayer, we receive the revelation of being a son. It is one thing to have been created by God but another to be His son. A son greatly differs from any other believer. For example, a son maintains a continuous and progressive Father-son relationship with the Father because they know that they cannot be considered one without being in fellowship with Him. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12). When one stops connecting with the Father, they stop being a son. We see this with Adam's expulsion from Eden. His disobedience had separated him from the Father, and the fellowship was immediately broken. Take his behavior upon being discovered by God after falling into the first sin, for example. Instead of seeking His presence, Adam *"heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden"* (Genesis 3:8). Instead of behaving like a son, he behaved like a stranger. Likewise, a son also knows their origin and where they are going, just as *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God"* (John 13:3). A son walks in obedience to the Father, assuring them they will have His attention every time they address Him. And most importantly, a son knows they have rights, privileges, possession, dominion, and inheritance, and they exercise it to the extent of their ability. When you are in relationship and fellowship with your *Abba*, you have revelation of your intimate relationship with Him, and that gives you access to unlimited resources of power, dominion, rights, privileges, authority, health, and provision, with the power and authority to exercise them; you will have the right to be like God and act like Him. Ask yourself, are you a believer of God? Or are you a son of the Father?

You can be a believer or a servant, but only a son can be an heir.

Equality

Much like the topic of identity, this second aspect is difficult for believers to assume, but its role is fundamental in completing and grounding the Father-son relationship with God. Equality with Jesus is a truly profound level of revelation that cannot be faked. *Equality* is the state of being equal. It is the conformity of something to something else in nature, form, quality, or quantity. The greatest statement Jesus ever made was, *"I and My Father are one"* (John 10:30). This was a revelation that the religious people of Jesus's time—as well as those of today—could not understand. For them, to make oneself equal with God was blasphemy. *"The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God'"* (John 10:33). No Old Testament people dared call themselves a "son of God." It's important to understand that Jesus was not killed because of His miracles but because He proclaimed Himself the son of God.

Jesus constantly referred to His relationship with God because He could not possibly conceive Himself without involving His Father. *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works"* (John 14:10). When Jesus declared, *"I am in the Father,"* He said, "I am equal to the Father. Therefore, I am the Father." As believers who came out of Jesus through the new birth, we are born of heaven, which makes us children of the heavenly Father by grace as much as Jesus is by nature. *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (Romans 8:16). One of the fundamental points that separate Christianity from the rest of the world's religions is the fraternal relationship between the followers and its founder.

Equality with Jesus comes with understanding your rights as a child of God.

There is only one distinction regarding this equality with Jesus: priority always goes to the one who is first. Jesus was first; therefore, He has preeminence. We are not Jesus but *like* Him; we are in His same class and kind. This is established in that *"He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18).

The revelation of equality brings two parts: the likeness of the Father and the access to the inheritance of the Father, as equals to Jesus. *"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"* (Romans 8:17). To be a "co-heir" implies the idea of having the same right to the inheritance as the other party. If we are co-heirs with Christ, just as the verse states, it means that we have the same right as He does to the Father's inheritance. We are equal in rights. *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you"* (John 16:23).

Can a person have the right to inheritance or answered prayers without being a son? No, because the Father cannot violate His principles. As children of God, we have the right to ask for what we need and the guarantee that we will receive it. We have the privilege of accessing the Father at any time to ask Him for anything by right of sonship, whether it be healing, deliverance, salvation, protection, or provision. When you have this revelation, there comes the point in your prayers where you just thank *Abba* because you know that whatever you have asked for, He has already provided for it. You have the full assurance that it is already yours. It is impossible to pray from a place other than the Father-son relationship.

Appropriating yourself as a son and co-heir is to stop asking for things and take possession of your rightful inheritance.

Conclusion

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'"* (Luke 11:2). He was explaining that God's home is in heaven, and our job as sons is to establish a similar home on earth, in the likeness of the Father. To do God's will on earth as it is in heaven is to bring heaven to earth. It means that when you worship God as Father, He manifests His glory and the supernatural along with it—demonstrations such as miracles, healings, deliverance, and transformation. That is bringing heaven to earth.

The purpose of the Father-son relationship is to bring the manifestation of heaven to earth.

Who are you? Who is God to you? We should all have the revelation that He is our Father, our source of life, and that we are His children, have His DNA and lineage, look like Him, act like Him, and have access to Him as *Abba* every day. We have rights, privileges, and authority to act in His place. Once this becomes a revelation to you, you will be fully assured that all your prayers and needs will be answered.

Answered Prayers

My name is Joshua Bayer. I am a Brazilian pastor under the covering of King Jesus Ministry in the United States. Before

coming to this ministry, I was about to be deported. I lived in this country with financial and marital problems and ministerial and personal conflict with God because of all that was happening in my life. I grew up in a Christian family. My parents raised me in the church, but something was always missing. Since I came to this house, everything changed. The Holy Spirit led me to be born again, and I learned to have a true Father-son relationship with God, which has opened to an outpouring of blessings. Today, I have a family. I am a husband, father, pastor, spiritual father, and entrepreneur. God has multiplied new businesses for me, and it all emerged from a relationship with Him and the revelation of being His son. On a ministerial level, I felt a strong calling to pray for people. It hurt me to look at a sick person and not do anything about it. However, I had not been equipped or trained for this, nor did I have the spiritual covering to do so. On one occasion, I had brought the young people from our church to receive from a youth service in King Jesus Ministry. I left them at the altar and went to the back of the room behind some thick curtains, so I could hear the service without getting in the way of the young people. While they were worshiping, I felt the presence of God and began to dance and sing. Suddenly, a voice said to me, “Stop!” I thought it was a church worker. I looked around but saw no one. When I returned to worship, the voice came again but louder, “Stop!” Again, I looked, and no one. The voice was clear the third time, and I knew it was the Holy Spirit. When I asked Him why He was telling me to stop even though I was worshiping Him, He told me that He was saying it because I wasn’t worshiping with the right revelation in mind. He told me that many sick people were going to the altar, yet I was not praying for them because I was more concerned about my reputation. There, He began to minister to my life. I understood that I needed a more intimate relationship with my Father to be filled with His power and boldness. When I returned to my local church, I began to call for miracles in the services. People would walk by and get healed without even being touched. The anointing was over our house. God made Himself known as my

> Father and gave me identity as a child and co-heir of His power. To this day, God has worked miracles on the blind, the deaf, and the paralyzed. Today, our ministry is known for practicing the supernatural power, and we can truly see the fruit of knowing God in this new dimension.

Glenda Jackson is a great prophet of God whom the Father has provided for my life, family, and ministry. She is a great example of having an intimate relationship with God as a daughter to the Father. God constantly speaks to her in her prayers, and her prophetic words unleash blessings on people's lives such as provision, creative miracles, words of knowledge, specific messages, and personal, ministerial, national, and global prophecies. However, all her fruit was born from a personal and intimate relationship with the Father. Let's read her testimony:

> My name is Glenda Jackson. I grew up in a Christian home. My father was an evangelist during the 1950s when we saw numerous miracles. When I was six years old, God healed me, and I gave my life to Him. My mom taught me to pray and study the Bible at that age. However, it wasn't until I was eight years old, when I had a vision of the rapture and saw Jesus in the clouds, that I dedicated my life to Him. As I grew older, I received the revelation of God as my Father, and He would show me His sweet care, developing a true and loving relationship with Him. In my experience, a relationship with the Father is something one must pursue and preserve with all of their heart because the enemy constantly attempts to attack that relationship. As his children, we must pray for God to give us a hunger for Him. In my case, God gave me a hunger for His Word, the supernatural, and everything about Him. From then on, that hunger never ceased. To this day, it has been growing to the point that I have seen Him and His angels in visitation. This is only achieved if one remains hungry for Him and prioritizes making Him their best friend more than any other person. He is my first love and will never take second place in my life. When I was younger, the more I talked to Him, the more I went to church, and the more I stopped caring about the

world. I just wanted to see people saved. I remember people would make fun of me, but I didn't care. I would evangelize at school, the grocery store, and different places. I wouldn't shop at the store if I met people who needed healing or help. I would pray for people, and because I had such a close relationship with God the Father, He would back me up and they would be healed. I remember prophesying over people on the street. I would go to the parks to hand out flyers and evangelize. There was something inside of me that grew, and that kept me on fire for the Lord.

Establishing this kind of relationship takes time. I know some people don't understand it, but once you do, the Lord opens Himself to you, and you are never the same after that. He leads you to the Bible, teaches you, and gives you a love for the gospel. You begin to have visions about Him. He becomes the most interesting and important person to you. After receiving that revelation, my goal was to help people—especially young people, but also everybody in general—to know Him, to be on fire for Him, and to see Him as more interesting than the movies. Because it is true, He is more interesting than Hollywood! He is not a fairy tale. He is the most interesting person I have ever met in my life. It is very exciting to wait for the Lord to speak to me every day, and I don't dare go to sleep without talking to Him at least once.

Here is what a typical day of fellowship with God looks like for me: Every morning, I get up early—four or five in the morning—and I start praising God. I worship Him first. I worship the Father and Jesus, telling Him how much I love and adore Him. I do that until His presence comes into the room. Then, my prayer in tongues takes over, and I begin to pray nonstop. Then, I grab my Bible, open it, and wait in His presence for Him to speak to me. It is very important to do this. Wait for Him to speak to you because He will. I have made this a pattern. Sometimes, He speaks to me internally; other times, I hear an external voice, but I recognize it as His voice. It becomes a back-and-forth conversation. The Lord wants to

speak to me, and I speak to Him, too. But I first keep quiet. I stay still and listen to receive His answer. Then, He begins to download His thoughts into my spirit. He speaks and gives me revelation of His Word. There are days when I spend hours like this. Then at night, I seek God again. I repeat the same process, praising Him, worshiping Him, and praying again. I ask the Holy Spirit to bring people to my heart who need prayer, and when He does (be it the apostle, the church, or other people), I begin to intercede for them. That's how it happens every day in my life, and it's not boring at all because when you see God as your Father and friend, the relationship becomes so natural that it's impossible to get tired of fellowshipping with Him every day.

Practical Activation

- If you still have difficulty praying to God as your Father, or if you have not received the revelation of your status as a child of God, pray with me:

My Father, who art in heaven, I adore Your name, and I receive the revelation of Your paternity in my life and my identity as a child before You. You are my Father—You love me, You made me with Your hands and gave me Your image and likeness. You are my origin. I am confident that I come from You and shall return to You. I have Your identity because You made me identical to You. I am Your child, as is Jesus; therefore, I am co-heir with Him of all You have as Father. Today, I receive this revelation by the work of the Holy Spirit, and I commit myself to seek You more to deepen our Father-son relationship. Give me the grace to surrender my life more and more to You each day, dying to my old nature to be on earth as You created me in heaven. I pray and declare my identity as Your child, in Jesus's name. Amen!

- Keep writing your prayer experiences as a son or daughter with the Father.
- Open a section of answered prayers and write down all the prayers God has answered for you and the ones you are still waiting for Him to answer. It doesn't matter if it is something small or big. If God has worked, it is a fruit of your relationship with Him.
- Share this revelation with others so they may also receive the revelation of God's fatherhood over their lives.

Chapter Summary

- From the beginning, God intended to make man in His image and likeness.
- An image is "the resemblance or representation of a substance," "a shadow" in the sense of being "an imitation of something," and "a duplicate, likeness, or replica" of something or someone. It focuses on the external appearance of a person or thing.
- Likeness is the "similarity of features, shape, figure, form, and pattern" in the spiritual, physical, and moral sense.
- When God created Adam, He based his identity on His form, substance, and pattern.
- Jesus is the model of the Father-son relationship.
- The Father-son relationship is founded on an identity with the Father and equality with Jesus.
- Identity is the quality of being identical. Our identity comes from the image and likeness of God the Father; therefore, we were made identical to God.
- Honoring God as our Father gives us unlimited access to Him as a source.
- The Father's revelation and being a son are received through prayer.
- Jesus is equal to the Father, and we are equal with Jesus, which makes us co-heirs of the Father with Him.

- The equality of Jesus gives us the power to have our prayers answered.

Notes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, “America’s families and living arrangements: 2018: Children,” November, 2018, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/families/cps-2018.html.
2. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “identity,” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity.
3. Real Academia Española, s.v. “identidad,” https://dle.rae.es/identidad.
4. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “father,” https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/father.

Chapter 7

Intimacy with God

God designed man to be intimate with Him, which is why man's heart always longs for intimacy, just as it does in a married couple. The Bible uses the marriage between a man and a woman as an example of the union between Christ and the Church because it expresses the highest level of intimacy that includes all realms—the physical, emotional, and spiritual. *"'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church"* (Ephesians 5:31-32). A study conducted by the *Survey Center on American Life* states that 85 percent of married men depend on their wives for emotional and personal support, and 72 percent of married women turn to their husbands for that same support.[1] God designed marriage to be intimate, to bring pleasure to the man and woman, and to reproduce as a race. However, this natural intimacy we share with others is simply a precursor to the type of intimacy we were made for sharing with God.

Intimacy is the deepest level of any natural and spiritual relationship; therefore, the supreme goal in our relationship with God, as with our husband or wife, should be to achieve intimacy. In an article published by *Psychology Today* magazine, an organization known for its studies in human behavior, it is stated that when this is not achieved, a couple moves from illusion to disillusionment, and what follows is confusion.[2] The same thing happens with God. For several reasons, most believers do not reach an intimate level of fellowship with God. Partially because they are unaware of this revelation, but mostly because they are unwilling to bare their heart, soul, and mind in His presence. Whether fueled by fear or ignorance, this hesitation to expose ourselves is almost expected because the basis of intimacy is the removal of any mystery from a person. It forces them to be transparent. Our relationship with God is no exception. In it, we can hide nothing from Him, nor can He hide anything from us. Thus, with God, we are naked before Him, and so is He with us, just as Adam and Eve were in

Eden. Furthermore, intimacy is where we meet God face to face and experience a heart to heart with Him. It is the place of His presence where He opens His heart to us, and we open ours to Him simultaneously. Being face to face with God means seeing Him for who He is, loving Him, and honoring Him with your worship. Moses shared such an intimate, face-to-face relationship with God. *"But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face"* (Deuteronomy 34:10). Intimacy *is* possible for all believers. Jesus ensured it when He removed the barrier of sin with His blood. *"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus"* (Hebrews 10:19). We have access to His face and presence; we just need to be willingly available to God.

In the marriage concept God designed, one can find the seven levels of fellowship we saw in previous chapters, where intimacy is the last and deepest. When a man and a woman first meet and feel a mutual attraction, they do not immediately have intimacy. Rather, they start a friendship and gradually develop a relationship in which they begin to know each other. This relationship stage is called "courtship." It lasts the time necessary for both to know whether it is God's will and whether they are in a position to take that relationship to a deeper level. Once in agreement, the bride and groom make a marriage pact, a commitment to a lifelong relationship that is sealed with the sexual act. In this act, all the levels of relationship developed throughout the time of courtship come together, and the deepest intimacy is consummated between these two people who now know each other, love each other, respect each other, and want to become one. Today, married couples know a lot about sex but little about intimacy. The same article published by *Psychology Today* magazine discusses a certain "evil" of modern relationships. It says, for example, that "couples have not learned how to sustain pleasure in intimate relationships reliably." That "…our cultural flair for commercialization has separated sex from intimacy. Intimacy involves both emotional and physical closeness and openness. But we end up confusing these two and feel betrayed and used when, as often happens, we fail to satisfy our need for closeness in sex."[3]

Lately, something similar has been happening with God. In Christian gatherings, for example, we come with personal needs in mind but tend to leave God out by not returning the act and thus leaving His desires

unfulfilled. Let's say you received the miracle you'd been praying for, but because your worship to Him was mechanical or done out of obligation or personal taste, and not for Him, God was left with nothing. In these cases, the question that begs to be asked is: Do you love God for who He is? Or do you love Him for what He can give you?

The 21st-century church has put God in a time frame where He must be God within the hour. We have produced that mentality ourselves. We tell people, "Come to church to get your needs met," or "Come for your miracle." We don't invite them to seek God in spirit and truth. This leads many Christians to be associated with God but not intimate. This is very much like the activity of a prostitute. They don't know their client yet have sex with them for money. Some believers treat God as a prostitute because they only seek Him when they have needs, pay Him with their offering, and go back to their normal life without a single thought for Him. Intimacy in any relationship produces a desire to please *each other*. No one can ever hope to achieve intimacy without first desiring it. How much more with God? We can sing songs, come to Sunday service mechanically, and warm up a seat, but He will not be pleased unless we genuinely want Him. We may feel like we did our job with these senseless acts, but intimacy is not a job; it is a pleasure, a mutual desire. How can we have intimacy with God if we do not desire it?

The biblical term for intimacy is "to know." This verb refers to sexual intercourse, the deepest connection in spirit, soul, and body that can happen between a woman and a man. In Hebrew, the word the Bible uses to describe this level of relationship is *yada*, which means "intimacy" and "to know intimately." In Greek, there are two words to describe this concept of knowing. One is *gnosis*, which means "mental knowledge," "theory," and "information." The other word is *epignosis*, which implies experiential knowledge; it means to "experience" and "to know a person intimately."

Paul says that the epignosis of Christ's love exceeds gnosis. Therefore, he wanted his disciples in Ephesus to experience the love of God: *"And [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself]"* (Ephesians 3:19

AMP). To know the love of Christ (to know God) is to experience it, not study it. No matter how many books you have read, how many titles you have, if you don't have a practical experience with God, you still won't know Him intimately. Therefore, it must be every believer's goal to seek to know Him, not in terms of theology, because theology without experience is worthless. If you have not had an encounter with Christ as Lord and Savior, you may end up in hell, no matter how much mental knowledge you have of Him. The eternal life's consistency is found in the Father's practical, experiential knowledge. *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3). Therefore, the proper motivation for prayer is to know Him intimately. We must desire to experience God now, *"that [we] may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"* (Philippians 3:10).

In this process of developing intimacy with God, some signs can tell us whether we know God intimately or not. First, we keep His commandments. *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:3-4). The second evidence is that we do not sin. Unfortunately, we are all in a constant process of sanctification. Therefore, I do not mean completely. But in this instance, what I mean is that sin is not a lifestyle, for *"whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him"* (1 John 3:6). And the third piece of evidence is that we love God. Every person who knows God loves Him and loves others. *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love"* (1 John 4:8). Does your life show evidence that you know God? Do you keep His commandments? Do you walk in holiness? Do you walk in love?

Purposes of Intimacy

Like everything God demands of us, intimacy has clear purposes, which always have the potential to bless us. In the case of intimacy with Him as our Father, the purposes are:

To Receive Revelation

When someone tells me they have intimacy with God but no revelation of His will or plans, I know it is not true. Intimacy brings revelation of God's truth about Him and His mysteries. We may know truths about God because we have heard them through preaching, but they have no life in us because the life of truth is conceived through intimacy. Some people speak truths, but it's a dead truth because what they have is a theory, not an experience. They speak a truth that they heard but has not been revealed to them personally; therefore, it is a truth that they cannot demonstrate. In intimacy with God, on the other hand, hidden things are revealed; being in the full presence of God exposes the truth because God dwells in the light. This means that in intimacy with the Father, we must be transparent, honest, and sincere, and we cannot hide anything from Him. He loves us with the good and the bad but cannot have intimacy with the hidden. *"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant"* (Psalm 25:14).

Intimacy guarantees the revelation of God and His Word.

To know God is the highest pursuit and honor. My greatest passion is to know Him intimately. I am not interested in a superficial relationship with God. I want an intimate and close relationship in which He reveals His plans and will to me. When God wanted to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, *"The Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?'"* (Genesis 18:17). When you have a close and intimate relationship with God, He tells you when and where; He even shows you what people are trying to do to you.

Intimacy is the place in God in which nothing is hidden. God allows us to see and know.

To Conceive God's Purposes

Just as sexual intimacy is where the conception of a new human being occurs, so is spiritual intimacy with God. There, His plans, what He wants to bring forth on earth, are conceived. This means that intimacy with God will always bear visible fruit, laden with the power of His life. Your intimacy with God must produce fruit and fruit that lasts.

The purpose of intimacy is procreation, in which the life of God is created and imparted.

There are two types of birth—that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the Spirit. Things born of the flesh produce nothing spiritual, just like things born of the spirit produce nothing carnal. For something to be born of the Spirit, we first need that intimacy with the Father *"for whatever is born of God overcomes the world"* (1 John 5:4). This is something the enemy cannot touch—the purpose, vision, and calling I have conceived in intimacy with God. Every time I have personal time with Him, I am always imparted with something new.

The ultimate purpose of intimacy is to be fruitful in all aspects of life.

To Produce Trust

A fundamental premise in life is trusting a person with whom you have a genuine relationship. Trust is a covenant word that includes and demands a close, cultivated, and tested relationship. For you to trust God, you must first know Him and vice versa; for Him to trust you, you must have made yourself known to Him in intimacy. People who are intimate with God do not struggle to trust Him; it comes naturally to them because that trust was

cultivated in the relationship. Those Christians who struggle to trust God, who want to have faith but cannot stop doubting, do not know the Father in intimacy. And those who want to be used by God but are not backed up by Him are because they do not have intimacy with Him. The Father does not know them and thus cannot place His trust in them.

To Separate the Bride

Jesus comes looking for a bride, not a prostitute. He does not come for a Church that seeks Him only for miracles, which does not have a stable, exclusive, and intimate relationship with Him. The fact that you are a member of a church, a preacher of the Word, that you use the power of God to do miracles, or that you are a prophet does not mean that you know God. In the parable of the ten virgins, the five who ran out of oil for their lamps received a very harsh answer from the bridegroom when they finally arrived at the wedding gate: *"But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you'"* (Matthew 25:12). Simply put, when the bridegroom came for the virgins, the five foolish ones lacked intimacy; therefore, they were left outside.

Jesus said the same thing when He referred to those who use His power without intimacy: *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Mat-thew 7:22-23). The miracles they worked were by kingdom principles, not intimacy. I have worked thousands of miracles, but every one was done out of my intimate relationship with God. I love and desire Him, not because of His power but because of who He is. His power flows through me as a consequence of my intimacy with Him, for I am His child and He is my Father. His power is my inheritance and right, and I use it with the legal authority that comes from being His child and being in a relationship with Him, from seeking and honoring Him every day of my life. I am part of that bride whom Christ comes to seek, who is in relationship with Him and who loves Him and knows Him intimately.

How to Develop Intimacy with God

Having learned all the above, I know that some may still wonder how to develop a relationship with God so that it is intimate, where there is mutual desire and pleasure. Let me give you a few secrets based on my intimacy with the heavenly Father.

Worship

Worship is the basis for intimacy and is designed to bring us into the presence of the Father. When we worship God, at the beginning, we always do it from the natural; we stand back and begin to tell Him what He is to us (with music, our words, singing, or dancing). When the Spirit of God begins to respond, that worship moves to the spiritual plane, and we enter into the presence of the Lord. There, we begin to have fellowship and intimacy with Him. Your whole prayer life should begin with worship because that is where God reveals Himself.

Worship is the act of submission to God's will that causes Him to reveal Himself to us.

Prolonged worship is boring for people who do not seek intimacy with God or do not seek to please God but to attain His favor to obtain a miracle. Worship for the latter is a formality. When you have intimacy with God, time means nothing; worship can go on forever because your spirit is connected with the Spirit of God, and thus, time ceases to exist. A true worshiper will worship from this revelation. *"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"* (John 4:23-24).

There is a place in intimacy where nothing else matters but God. I have those moments of intimacy when I know I am in His presence and I am one with God. I feel His love filling my heart, and I surrender all of me to Him. Nothing else matters to me at that moment because He becomes my absolute reality. He is so real that sometimes I say to Him, "I know, Lord, that You are here. I welcome Your presence." All I desire is to love Him

and be intimate with Him. Sometimes, hours go by, and I continue to adore Him endlessly. His presence increases more until I end up weeping before Him. Most of the supernatural encounters I have had with God have been in intimacy. Whenever I have intimacy with the Father, I end up in a state of brokenness and a stronger desire and hunger for Him. The result is that I come away changed and influenced by the weight of His essence. It is even evident in my voice. Many people tell me that my voice changes, that there is a greater weight and authority in my voice. The words I speak pierce people's hearts because it is God Himself speaking to them.

Invest Quality Time

Any relationship that does not include quality time will be a relationship of convenience, activated or pursued only out of necessity or commitment and, therefore, is not intimate. Believers of this generation do not want to invest time in their relationship with God or His people. The truth is that they need to understand that the only thing that lasts is what you invest time in. If you want a marriage that lasts long, invest quality time. If you want a long-term relationship with God, family, children, and friends, invest time in them.

Make a Commitment

I choose to be intimate with God daily because I am committed to giving this relationship first place in my life. The first hours of the day I dedicate to the Lord. I don't leave home without having my prayer time. Also, during the day, I nourish that relationship by remaining in a spirit of prayer, obedience, honor, and constant communication. I am always available to God at any time. Sometimes, I spend the day praying, fasting, or studying the Word. I cannot live without intimacy with God. Without it, I am nothing and can do nothing.

Conclusion

One important thing I want you to take away from this chapter is that God seeks an intimate relationship with you. He does not want anything casual, temporary, or superficial. Christianity does not end with receiving the Lord as Savior and leaving the world. It is just the beginning, although many people remain there, like the people of Israel, wandering around without

entering the Promised Land. Today, that Promised Land is His presence; it is to know Him intimately, persevere in the revelation of His person, truths, and mysteries, conceive His plans, produce trust, and become part of the bride Christ returns to seek. The challenge is to deepen your prayer life through worship, investing quality time, and your commitment to develop and deepen that intimate relationship with God. That's the challenge! Will you accept it?

Answered Prayers

Our ministry has covering churches in many cities and countries worldwide as a fruit of our relationship with God and obedience to every instruction, plan, and will the Father has revealed to us in intimacy. Many ministries have been transformed and activated in the supernatural with miracles, signs, and wonders. But the most valuable thing I can testify to is that their leaders have received a strong revelation that the basis of all the success they can have as a ministry comes from their intimate relationship with the heavenly Father. When they come to our ministry, we make sure that they learn this fundamental principle and that the revelation of the Holy Spirit does His work of deliverance and transformation in them, revealing to them the Father and the need for that direct relationship with Him. The following is a testimony to this:

> My name is Christian Fondacci, and I live in France. I have a ministry in Toulon, France, under the covering of King Jesus Ministry. We have about five hundred people through the mass media, and several thousand French people follow us. I have known God since I was a child; at the age of eleven, I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and started prophesying and seeing in the spiritual world. But I gave my life to Jesus in prison. There, I cried out to the Lord and had a supernatural experience. Jesus delivered me from violence, alcoholism, the spirit of death, and murder I had inherited from my father. He was a military man, trained as a professional killer, who became a killer for the mafia and prostitute women. I followed his path by prostituting women and running underground gambling tables until God changed my life completely. I

> repented deeply of my sins and began seeking more than a church life. I wanted to know Him personally. I spent months seeking His presence, days and nights in prayer, until I began seeing into the spiritual world. Jesus visited me in person. I never needed other people to pray for my deliverance because my relationship with Jesus led to it. That intimate relationship with Jesus transformed my life. As soon as I began to seek God in prayer, He gave me revelations and visions, and I understood what true Christianity is. Today, I see God moving radically in my ministry. The greatest miracle I saw was the resurrection of a child. During a mission trip to Madagascar, a woman brought her son and asked me, "What can your God do for my son?" I asked her what he had, and her answer left me speechless: "Can't you see that he is dead?" I had thought he was asleep. The woman said, "The sorcerer could do nothing for him. And your God? What will He do?" I replied, "My God is the resurrection and the life; in His name, I call your son to life." Five minutes later, the child had risen, and many people came to Christ. Today, I can say that through a life of prayer and intimacy with the heavenly Father, anything is possible.

Pastor Roxana Monge is a beloved spiritual daughter whom God brought to this house for a great purpose. Throughout her process, I have seen her constant fruit and growth as a sign of her relationship with the Father. She has gone through hard trials that have forged her character and evaluated that relationship in many ways. And I have seen her transform more into the Father's image and closer to Him spiritually. This is the testimony of her life of intimate relationship with God:

> I am Pastor Roxana, and I can testify that since I gave my heart to God, I have constantly been learning to have a relationship with Him. The only thing that sustains me in every season of my life, good or bad, has been my relationship with God. Being with Him daily makes me who I am. My process over the past eighteen years has changed many times and in many ways. In my daily relationship with Him, I have gone from writing to God, to talking to Him, to just sitting and enjoying His

company. I do not believe that time with God is the same every day. I also believe that one must insist strongly on it. As with any other relationship worth having, you must fight and work to have it. It's like a marriage or a friendship—life can get in the way, but you have to be available for that relationship. Our relationship with God is far more important than any other, as He is our source.

In my personal life, I would say that the years 2015 to 2018 were the most difficult years of my life. My husband and I went through a very hard trial in our marriage. My mother passed away, and we had been trying to conceive a baby for nine years. I dealt with disappointment at a very high level. Those were times when the last thing I had the strength to do was seek God. But I overcame because I knew He was my only refuge. Through prayer, the Father healed my heart and comforted me. It was there that I really and truly knew that I could trust Him amid any circumstance. I have seen His faithfulness in my marriage and my life.

When it comes to having a relationship with God, it's important to know that it's not that complicated and is not done in any specific way. There is no manual. Yes, we have examples, but everyone's time with God is different from any relationship. Comparison only leads to discouragement. What can help is that if you don't have words, just worship. If you don't have a song, just write. And if you don't have any strength, just listen. He is always there if you give Him the time and place.

Practical Activation

- If you can recognize that, even though you are a Christian, you doubt your salvation because you do not have a true relationship with God, I invite you to pray with me:

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from You. Today, I repent for my whole life

away from You. I repent for not giving You the appropriate time and place to spend time with You. I repent for not seeking You with the right intentions. I'm sorry if I have been coming to You for selfish gain and fulfilling my desires rather than spending quality time with You. Forgive and cleanse me so I may have a genuine relationship with You. I want to know You. Not just from a theological perspective but in an intimate way. I know now that intimacy with You is not just for Your pleasure but also for my benefit. To become the bride, I come to seek, receive Your revelation, trust You, and conceive Your plans for me. Today, I make a commitment to pursue intimacy with You and seek Your presence daily. I want to desire You as much as You desire me. In Jesus's name, I pray, amen!

- If you have not already done so, I invite you to begin to include worship in your prayer life. It can be with music, but remember that worship is not just singing. It is entering into intimacy with God with your words, opening your heart to Him, lowering your defenses, and becoming one with Him. The Holy Spirit will guide you, but you cannot be in a hurry, looking at the clock or thinking about other things simultaneously.
- Determine an exclusive time of the day to have intimacy with God and defend it from all distractions, people, tasks, urgencies, etc.
- Turn off all distractions and give yourself time to listen to His voice and know Him in intimacy.
- Record everything new in your journal. And if nothing happened, record that too. Sometimes God waits, but your consistency, insistence, and searching will be rewarded. He will reveal Himself.

Chapter Summary

- The human heart yearns for intimacy with the Father because God designed it that way. Nothing else soothes that longing.
- In intimacy, you meet God face to face and experience a heart-to-heart with Him. It is the place of His presence. He opens His heart,

and we open ours.

- Intimacy is the deepest place of fellowship. It is something so precious that Jesus paid with His blood so that we could access it.
- “To know” someone is a practical and personal experience where both parties are satisfied with their emotional, spiritual, and physical desires and needs.
- Many times, God works miracles for us, but we do not give Him true worship. He fulfills our desire, but we do not fulfill God’s.
- The signs that we know God are:
    1. We keep His commandments.
    2. We do not sin. Since we are all in the process of sanctification, remaining completely sinless is impossible. But we must take care not to make a lifestyle out of sin. We repent and return to holiness.
    3. We love God and others.
- The purposes of intimacy with God are:
    - **To receive revelation** of His fatherhood, our identity, His will, and His plans.
    - **To conceive God’s purposes.** In intimacy with God, His plans are conceived and birthed onto the earth. Intimacy with Him always bears visible and enduring fruit.
    - **To produce trust.** No one trusts a person they do not know. Trust is a covenant word that includes and demands a close relationship that has been assessed.
    - **To separate the bride.** Jesus comes for a bride with an exclusive, constant, and intimate relationship with Him, not one who only seeks His miracles or favor.
- To develop intimacy with God, we should:
    - **Worship.** This is the basis of intimacy with God and is designed to bring us into the presence of the Father.

- **Invest quality time.** The only thing that lasts in life is that in which time is invested.
- **Make a commitment.** We must make a commitment to invest time, worship, and nurture our relationship with God in a spirit of prayer, fasting, the study of His Word, obedience, consecration, holiness, honor, and constant communication.

Notes

1. Daniel A. Cox, "Can Married Men and Women be Friends? Marriage, Friendship, and Loneliness," Survey Center on American Life, July 20, 2021, https://www.americansurveycenter.org/commentary/can-married-men-and-women-be-friends-marriage-friendship-and-loneliness.
2. Lori H. Gordon, "Intimacy: The Art of Relationships," *Psychology Today,* June 9, 2016, https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/articles/196912/intimacy-the-art-relationships.
3. Ibid.

Chapter 8

Covenant Relationships

In Chapter 3, we briefly discussed the subject of the covenant. The Son of God, as well as many other men in the Bible, lived in a covenant relationship with the Father, as a man, until the day of His death on the cross. During His life on earth, He also developed covenant relationships with His disciples and left this wonderful mystery revealed to us. In this chapter, we will learn what a covenant consists of in the Old Testament, what revelation it brings to our lives today, and the basis for establishing new covenants with God and other people.

The Revelation of the Covenant God

It is important to understand that in a covenant with God, the very nature of His person is revealed. In ancient times, when God set Israel apart as a chosen and holy people for the priesthood, He established a covenant with them that was recorded in the first five books of the Old Testament. The Bible is a book about God's covenant with His people divided into two sections: the Old Testament (which covers God's covenant with Abraham to the one established with Moses) and the New Testament (which is the covenant with all humankind made through Jesus). These covenants compose God's purposes with His creation and, above all, humanity, which is based on divine nature.

For many people, the Bible is a mysterious and complicated book because to understand the Bible, one first needs to understand the covenant. The Bible reveals a God who lives according to covenants. He is a God who makes them, keeps them, then empowers and reveals Himself through them. He does so because He does not want to be a mystery to His people. He is always revealing Himself, especially to whoever is willing and ready to enter a covenant to receive His revelation. God's fundamental decision and purpose are to have an intimate relationship with His people, even before Creation. The Father wants to reveal and manifest Himself; that is why He

created human beings. However, He does not reveal Himself openly to all human beings because He does not become intimate with strangers. The manifestations of the covenant between God and the person who longs for it do not belong to strangers. When I say "strangers," I mean the person who neither loves nor intends to know God nor to engage in covenant with Him. *"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant"* (Psalm 25:14). In other translations of the Bible, the word *fear* is translated as "respect," "obey," "reverence," and "worship." In other words, God only reveals Himself intimately to those who respect, obey, revere, and worship Him, those who commit themselves to Him.

What Is a Covenant?

In this chapter, I want to share a deeper and broader definition of what a covenant is. At first, in the Old Testament, the word translated into English as "covenant" is *berith*. This is a Hebrew word meaning "an agreement made passing between two pieces of flesh," "confederation, covenant, alliance, deal," from the root *barah*, in the sense of "to cut." The term was used to describe the act by which two people made a permanent commitment to each other. It was a blood covenant made by passing between two pieces of animal flesh.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for covenant is *diathéké*, meaning "testament, will, or pact between two parties." Where *berith* represents commitment, *diathéké* represents the terms of the contract or agreement based on a commitment to sacrifice. Let us see how the covenant ceremony was conducted in antiquity. When two parties (individuals or families) were going to make a covenant, they first determined a meeting place. There, they would take animals to sacrifice and make a path through which both parties would pass. This happened between God and Abraham when God promised to give him a son and a great offspring: *"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates'"* (Genesis 15:17-18). Then, the parties involved in the covenant would kill the animals, cut them in half, and place them facing each other, leaving a path of blood with the halves of the animals on

both sides of the path. Finally, they would join arms and walk along the path of the covenant, making a declaration of blessing (if the covenant were fulfilled) and a declaration of a curse (if the covenant were violated).

We see an example of this in the book of Jeremiah: *"And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it"* (Jeremiah 34:18). In this example, there was a declaration of blessing. Both parties joined arms and walked along the path of the covenant together, saying, "I will keep the terms of this covenant to the extent of pouring out my life, as these animals have been slaughtered and poured out." In other words, "the shedding of blood represents what I will do and how far I will go to ensure this covenant is kept. It means that I am prepared to lay down my life and shed my blood before breaking the terms of this covenant." That is the heart of the covenant in antiquity.

Unfortunately, our Western culture has no understanding of covenant in these terms nowadays. All deals, contracts, and covenants in our society have dissolution clauses; there are usually penalties for breach, which involve money, but certainly, every covenant can be dissolved today. They do not have the weight and force of the covenant God refers to in the Old and New Testaments. So, today, according to God's mentality, we need to understand what a covenant is all about because that is the deal, covenant, or commitment that He blesses. On the one hand, it is wonderful, but on the other hand, it is something to be feared because it implies a great demand for surrender and commitment. This means that a covenant requires profound respect and maturity between the parties that enter it.

With all this said, we can say that the biblical definition of the covenant God wants with His people is an agreement of total commitment between two lives, becoming one sealed with blood (in this case, the blood of Christ). It is the will of God in agreement with the will of man, a heavenly agreement in which the alignment of your earthly self and your heavenly self is consummated. The covenant is a binding legal agreement entered into by a relationship. The covenant is supernatural because we are one with the supernatural God.

Unity of Mind, Body, and Spirit

There cannot be different opinions in the covenant with God because there are no longer two minds but one—the divine mind. Therefore, both parties must be the same because both have become one mind, one spirit, and one person. Can God become you? Can you become God? In a true covenant like the one I have just described, the answer is yes, because the earthly being dies so that the heavenly being may live. The heavenly being is as God created Adam before he sinned, which is in complete unity with the Father. This truth is too much for the traditional religious mind; it immediately thinks that we pretend to be God while being fallible human beings, full of defects and sin, without considering the type of covenant required to make this statement.

This kind of unity in mind, spirit, and will with God through covenant is one of the keys to moving and demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit at will. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Note that Paul says, "It is no longer I who live." That is the price of a covenant with God. Understanding the above, we can affirm that the covenant is a bank from which we can draw divine power. When we have a covenant with God, we are covered, protected, preserved, and healed because we are entitled to use all the assets of our covenant partner (as in a marriage). We are entitled to God's treasure: power, peace, love, and justice. Under a covenant with God, nothing is impossible.

The covenant is one of the ancient foundations of the supernatural. It is the portal to appropriate the supernatural.

The Knowability of God by the Covenant

Many people, including many Christians, do not know who God is, His nature, essence, love, and sense of justice. For God can only be as He has

been revealed to you. In other words, all that God is, was, and has can only be known through the revelation He chooses to give. Therefore, He will reveal Himself to the one who seeks Him the most, and to the one who does not seek Him, He will not reveal Himself. In Chapter 2, we spoke of knowing God through prayer, implying that, although He is an incorporeal being and invisible to the natural senses, it *is* possible to know Him. God is knowable. According to the dictionary, the word *know* as a verb means: "to recognize the identity of, to be aware of the truth of, to have a practical understanding of, to have information or knowledge, to be or become aware, to be acquainted or familiar with, to have an understanding of, to recognize the nature of."[1]

God is knowable! But there is only one way to know Him intimately: through a covenant with Him. It also takes a covenant to know a person. *Psychology Today* features an article titled "Getting to Know Someone Is a Life-Long Process" that begins with a quote from Mark Twain: *"Love seems the swiftest, but it is the slowest of all growths. No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century."*[2]

That is why, when Jesus came to the earth, His teaching was so shocking and controversial to people, especially the religious people of the time. He taught a relational theology, not a doctrinal one. He came to restore the meaning of the word *covenant* and what it means to worship and know the true God. No covenant can be doctrinal because it loses its essence and power; it does not work. That is why many Christians are frustrated with their prayers, the Church, and themselves in general because they have tried for years to live a doctrinal covenant without knowing that they will never get anywhere that way. Every covenant with God enters through a way of relationship (whether it be of sacrifice or blood). Without that, the covenant is meaningless. Some people know about God but do not *know* Him. When you know God, you believe Him in anything. According to the Scriptures, no man has known God and has not ended up believing Him.

You cannot enter a covenant with God by a casual relationship because the covenant is the basis for a person to be known and trusted.

All the men in the Bible who knew God first had an encounter with Him. Because of that experience, they could enter into a covenant with God to know and worship Him for the rest of their lives. In other words, they could only know God through a covenant. They knew the depth of God because they committed themselves to Him; they gave themselves and surrendered their lives completely. That allowed them to unleash God's power on earth, and God's will be done through them. An example of this was the prophet Elijah and the various occasions when the supernatural flowed through him because of his covenant with God. For example, when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal, the fire of God consumed the burnt offering on the altar that Elijah had prepared (1 Kings 18:20-40). After this, Elijah prayed for rain. *"Then Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.' So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees. … It happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain…"* (1 Kings 18:41-42,45).

The Bases for a Covenant

There are two main bases for covenant: commitment and sacrifice. Let's look at what each implies:

Commitment

As we saw earlier, the only basis for a permanent relationship between God and man is a covenant of commitment. There is no covenant without commitment because God wants to know you are serious. Covenant is nothing more than a commitment to a person, vision, house, leadership, marriage, or God. The word *commitment* is not popular in our culture

nowadays. People do not want to commit because it implies dying to themselves and laying down their lives for God and the people.

Commitment is giving oneself and surrendering completely to someone or something. When we commit to God, He commits to His word and promises.

Jesus demanded the covenant of commitment from His disciples. He said something extraordinarily strong: *"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. …He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"* (John 6:53-54,56). Some did not understand or were unwilling and ended up abandoning Him. When many of His disciples heard Him, they said, *"'This is a hard saying; who can understand it?' …From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"* (John 6:60,66).

According to world censuses, the majority of the world's population is made up of young people. They are interested in commitment, not to God or the Church, but to other things. We see rock musicians committed to their music, athletes committed to their sport, and scientists committed to technological advancement, but not to God. People are committed to something or someone because that is human nature; the issue is that fewer people are committed to their relationships, whether with God, a spouse, friendships, and so on. Unfortunately, no relationship can be sustained without commitment; your marriage, leadership, or siblings will not be permanent relationships without you investing your life in them with commitment.

Sacrifice

There is no covenant without sacrifice. This word implies that life must die on the altar and is usually associated with bloodshed. *"I beseech you*

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). Sacrifice speaks of a life to be laid down as Jesus laid His on the cross for us. He instituted the new covenant by making the single greatest act of blood sacrifice to seal it. After Jesus, there was never again animal sacrifice, as in the Old Testament. Today, sacrifice consists of spiritual sacrifices and sacrifices of death to the flesh so that Christ may live in and through each one of us.

As believers, we automatically enter a covenant with the Father when we accept Jesus as Lord.

Believe it or not, you entered a covenant with God the moment you made the public confession of faith in Christ, accepting Him as Lord and Savior of your life. Today, we do not walk among animals, but we walk on the cross of Christ amid the blood He shed for the new covenant. *"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). When we pray the sinner's prayer, we enter into a covenant with God and believers. It is important to have this revelation because we are responsible for the preservation of that covenant; that is, we must keep from breaking it, relapsing, turning back on it, and betraying it. *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame"* (Hebrews 6:4-6). To "fall away" is the translation of the Greek word *parapipto,* which means "to forsake, to desert, to turn aside." This implies that if we were ever to break the covenant we made with God through the blood of Christ, it would be like crucifying Jesus again and mocking His sacrifice.

The only way to enter a covenant with God the Father is through the blood of Christ shed on the cross.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). What does the expression "lay down one's life" mean? All the sacrifices that were offered in the past, such as lambs, animals, oxen, and sheep, are symbolic of a life laid on the altar in sacrifice, but the real sacrifice today, the one that God receives, is our own life—not by shedding our physical blood, but by surrendering our life and will to Him completely. We cannot claim promises, demand rights, or ask God to fulfill His part of the covenant if we are not ready to lay down our own life. The Lord will do what He promised in His covenant, but only if we do our part, knowing that our part is always infinitely less than God's and Jesus's on the cross.

The supreme test of love is to lay down one's life for others.

We lay down our lives for others when we have a covenant commitment to them through the grace given us by the Spirit of God. "*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*" (1 John 3:16-17). We die so that others may live. We do not sleep so that others may sleep. We give them resources, money, time, and energy as an evident manifestation of having laid down our lives as a sacrifice for God and for Him to be manifested on this earth.

Most preachers have made Christianity a very easy, rosy road where the only thing preached is that God is at our service, and we don't have to do anything in return. Then, when people don't see God respond to their

prayers, they become disappointed in Him when in reality they have been lied to by being given a gospel adapted to their convenience. The truth is that God does not endorse this type of relationship because there is no covenant or surrender. Christianity is a life of commitment and sacrifice for God and others; when we do this, God lives in us and lacks nothing. Giving our life in sacrifice is not something we can do without God's grace. It is impossible to keep the covenant without His grace because this level of sacrifice cannot be found in human nature. So we obey the covenant by grace, not by law or force of our own, and that is what God responds to with His presence, His power, and His miracles.

When we obey the covenant and keep its promises,
the covenant preserves, protects, and provides for us.

Conclusion

My purpose with this chapter was to establish the basis for a covenant with God because it is fundamental for every Christian to understand that God is not someone we can play with or entertain. He is not someone who is there for anything we need when we need it. He is not there for a superficial relationship or to surrender at our feet when we want to look for Him. He is a covenant God who establishes His relationships based on mutual, long-term commitment. He is willing to give as much and even more than we ask for, but He will give nothing if there is no commitment on the other side. Are you willing to seek, develop, and deepen a genuine relationship with God? Are you willing to give your life, time, family, and anything it takes to give God first place in your life? This is the challenge and the secret to a truly intimate relationship with the Father. There is no in-between level, nor can it be done halfway. He gives Himself completely and expects you to give yourself completely as well. This is the remnant that Jesus is coming to raise up, the bride without blemish who awaits the bridegroom's coming to go with Him. Are you part of that remnant? If you are not, there is still time, although there is little time left.

Answered Prayers

Rolph Hendriks from Holland, Netherlands, has a wonderful testimony that perfectly illustrates what we have learned in this chapter. I would like to share it with you:

> My name is Rolph, and I am the pastor of Power City Church in Holland. I was raised Catholic, but as a teenager I went out into the world to have "the big life." Two people shared the gospel of salvation with me one day and invited me to church. When I arrived, I found a Pentecostal church, very different from the Catholic church I was used to. I thought the people I saw there were crazy, but something made me want to return. The presence of the Lord took hold of me. I repented and was saved. There, I made a radical decision to follow Him. I left my worldly life behind to pursue God. Having a relationship with Him brought deep meaning to my life; it gave me vision and purpose. From the beginning, the first three things to do to know Him were to worship, pray, and study the Word. In response, God manifested His presence in my life and taught me to live by faith. I began to love the church. I would be the first to arrive and the last to leave, but intimacy with God was found at home, spending time in worship. While I have had times of dryness and distance from God, hunger and desire have always been there. He has never left me or forgotten me. The desire to know Him more intimately continues, and when I reach a new depth, I feel the invitation to go even closer. Today, I am a pastor and have seen many great miracles, but what amazes me most is when He heals broken hearts. Also, I can testify how the Lord has sustained us in emotionally and financially devastating times, thanks to the covenant. To me, a covenant is an unbreakable, unconditional contract where God remains faithful even when we lack faith. When I was saved, I made a covenant with God to serve Him all the days of my life. Today, I know I have been accepted, I am a son, and the way to His presence is open to me. This is the covenant, and now my sacrifice leads me to know God and His power more each day.

> My wife and I have been fully dedicated to the ministry since 1994. While it has not been easy, He has always sustained and provided for us; He has never let us down by paying the price for a relationship with Christ or ministry. We have often moved away from our family to other nations, living on three continents as gospel missionaries. We have made many financial sacrifices but have seen so much more back. We died to the dream of our own home for the ministry, but God gave us our home. It was impossible. We had no salaries or savings for a down payment, but God made it possible.

Pastor Erika Rodriguez has a powerful testimony about how a lifetime of covenant and relationship with God can transform an entire family and take it from a lifetime of violence and abuse to being a healthy, loving family and a blessing to so many others. This is her testimony:

> I came to King Jesus Ministry in 2005, broken and hurt. I had grown up in a home with a lot of domestic violence and abuse from my father over my mother, me, and my siblings. My dad abused us physically, emotionally, and psychologically. When I met Jesus, my life was completely changed by the power of redemption that forgives our sins. I began the process of healing from that traumatic childhood and adolescence. I had an encounter with God and began to seek and pursue Him through worship, congregate in ministry and learn more about God, who I am, and how He sees me. I began to receive the Word and grow spiritually. Then, the search began in my secret place to have a covenant relationship with the Father. I would go into worship and prayer and surrender everything to God. There, I knew that no matter where I came from, I was a child of God with access to the Father. I surrendered to Him and sought Him with all my heart. I worshiped Him by surrendering and giving Him the pain I was carrying at that time. I am still doing this. One of the hardest parts of my past was dealing with the rejection I had against my natural father, who hurt me the most. I had a lot of hatred and anger built up against him. But knowing who I am in Christ, I knew

forgiveness and began my healing process. I decided in the presence of God and said, “I’m going to forgive. I’m going to let go of this pain.” I can’t say it was overnight, but as my relationship with God grew, my heart healed. It was a lengthy process. It was a lot of things that God had to deal with and heal. In this process, one key thing in my healing was deliverance. And I think one of the key aspects of being completely free and overcoming the abuse and violence was seeking God and having a relationship with Him. He began to mend and heal every wound from my past in His presence. Seeing the person who hurt me (my father), I no longer feel pain. I no longer feel rejection and hatred as before. So, I knew that God had healed me completely and restored our relationship. When I decided to have a covenant of intimacy with God, He deposited His love and changed what hurt me. He gave me more of the character of Christ. Walking in God’s love and mercy, my relationship with my father was completely restored. When I was able to show him God’s love, our relationship was restored. Today, I am a pastor, and my relationship with my father is beautiful. Also another key to my deliverance was the intervention of Apostle Guillermo Maldonado. The fatherhood of my spiritual father was instrumental in restoring my heart and innocence because I could not trust any authority figure before I came to Christ.

Another valuable lesson I learned in the area of prayer came from Psalm 46:10, which is to “be still and know God.” We often go before God full of many things: “God, I want this. God, I need that.” And that’s fine, but what if we recognize that God is there? What if we take a moment to seek Him and put that list of requests aside genuinely? When I came to the Lord, my marriage and my parents’ marriages took a turn for the worse. Divorce was all the talk. There was yelling and violence; everything was going from bad to worse. Keeping still and waiting on God was an almost impossible mission. But when my spirit caught the revelation of Psalm 46:10, I was able to do it. I learned to be still in prayer and wait on God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. No matter what our eyes saw,

what was coming against us, or how hard it was, I learned to be still and know He is God.

Finally, the other great revelation I received in my intimacy with God is that He is never late. One day, amid great attacks from the enemy, great struggles, and great trials, God spoke to me and told me that He is never too early or too late. He is always on time. It was an encounter with God in which He embraced me and gave me this revelation. It wasn't during a Sunday service or a miracle service. It was me alone in the garage of my house. Knowing that God was in complete control became so real in my spirit that it changed my life forever. In His time, God restored my family and my marriage. He restored everything!

Here's what I can share. To have a relationship with God is to trust Him, to know that He is always in control, and that He never forsakes or disappoints us. God never forgets us because He is our loving Father!

Practical Activation

- If you have not received Christ into your heart, pray with me:

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that my sin separates me from You. I repent of living far from You; I confess that Jesus is Lord and that You raised Him from the dead. Forgive me and cleanse me to have a relationship with You. Amen!

- Add the taking of the Lord's Supper to your spiritual exercises of prayer, not as a monthly ritual, but with the revelation that Jesus gave us this tool so that we can receive His strength, healing, and deliverance. Find bread and juice in your home, take your family, and join them together to take the Lord's Supper.
- If you want to bring your relationship with God into a covenant relationship, pray the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, I make a commitment to seek a truly intimate and close relationship with You through prayer until You come. I want to know You, to love You and others, and to lay down my life for my brothers and sisters. I commit myself to seek You as Jesus did in a covenant relationship in which we have everything in common, in perfect unity and partnership, sharing life and participating together in the sufferings of Christ. I commit myself to seek a perfect communion in which I become one with You and intimacy so deep that I may know all of You and give You all of me. I promise to live in the revelation of Your fatherhood and my sonship of You—in a perfect covenant relationship, sealed by the blood of Christ and reaffirmed daily by my living sacrifice of obedience, total surrender, adoration, seeking, and total devotion to You by the grace of Your Holy Spirit. I covenant to serve You all the days of my life. Lord, today, I lay my life before You; I no longer belong to myself, I no longer have a will of my own, and I no longer live for myself, but I commit to investing my life in You and other people. As Abraham laid Isaac on the altar, I lay my own life on the altar. I lay my father, mother, past life, friendships, money, career, business, everything. I am available and ready to invest my resources, time, and money in Your kingdom and my daily relationship with You, by the grace of Your Spirit operating in me. In Jesus's name, amen!

Chapter Summary

- God lives by covenant. From the creation of Adam and Eve to Jesus, we see He establishes covenant relationships.
- God makes the covenant, keeps it, empowers it, and reveals Himself through it.
- The biblical covenant is an agreement between two parties sealed with sacrificial blood, based on mutual commitment.
- The biblical covenant includes blessings for keeping it and curses for breaking it.

- In the covenant, both parties become one in spirit, body, and mind. This unity is a key condition for moving in the power of the Holy Spirit to work miracles, signs, and wonders.
- The knowability of God comes only through the covenant. There, He reveals His divine nature.
- All the men in the Bible who impacted God's people first had an encounter with Him and entered into a covenant relationship.
- The bases for a covenant are:
    - Commitment: Commitment is giving and surrendering completely to something or someone in word and deed, with no turning back.
    - Sacrifice: This implies that our life must die on the altar through spiritual offerings of obedience, devotion, service, death to the flesh, and total surrender to God.

The supreme test of love is to lay down one's life for others.

Notes

1. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "know," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/know.
2. Mark Twain, qtd. in "Getting to Know Someone Is a Life-Long Process," *Psychology Today*, https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/emotional-fitness/201207/getting-know-someone-is-life-long-process.

Chapter 9

Developing a Close Relationship with God

Over these past chapters, we've gradually discovered the different levels and aspects that make up a relationship with God, the most important relationship in our lives. We've recognized the evident call to that relationship, placed over us as children of God; we've looked to Jesus's own prayer life as the testament to this relationship; we've understood the purposes of fellowship and intimacy in a relationship; and finally, we've learned what marks the difference between a relationship with God and a relationship with others, which is the covenant. All of this is important to know to pursue the type of relationship God desires with us. Now, with this final chapter, I want to help you apply this revelation to develop that daily relationship with the heavenly Father. My goal is also to answer any remaining questions that linger in your mind after reading all this. For example: What are the steps to achieving a life of daily relationship with God? How can I accomplish it? What is my part in it? How can I make sure it will last forever and won't just fade away in a few years?

I want to answer these questions in a practical and, above all, personal way. Therefore, I wrote this chapter based on my own experiences of personal relationships and fellowship with the Father. To simplify, I separated this into seven practices that show what this relationship consists of. Let's take a look at each of them.

Keys That Help Develop a Relationship with God

Enter His Presence in Faith

Since I began my journey as a Christian, I learned that everything in God starts from faith. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6). Nothing can be known of Him without faith. Prayer is, above all, an act of faith; otherwise, it is

completely vain, useless, and ritualistic. When prayer is done without faith, it becomes an act in which God does not participate. And if God does not participate, we are doing something meaningless on our own. It is impossible to know Him this way. You can pray to enter God's presence, but how do you speak to a God who is not present? You must believe wholeheartedly that He is there, ready to talk to you and answer your prayers.

Every day when I get up, the first thing I do is pray to enter the presence of God. I automatically pray with the fixed mindset that, by faith, He is present, He is real, and He is waiting to talk to me. I often say out loud, "Lord, I know that You are here waiting for me."

Approaching God in prayer is an act of faith, not done by natural senses or feelings.

The second thing I know by faith is that the Lord rewards those who diligently seek Him. (See Hebrews 11:6.) God rewards us for seeking Him and often with many good things.

Be Thankful

The next thing I learned to do, which has become my way of life, is to enter God's presence with a thankful heart. It is not a ritual, nor is it done mechanically; I have gratitude in my heart because I recognize all the Father gives me daily. That is why the Bible teaches us, "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name*" (Psalm 100:4). A common mistake Christians make is to go to God with a list of requests as if the only reason they have to talk to Him is to make requests of Him. If you go to see a king, president, or another person of influence, for example, you never go with a request in front of you. Surely, you will bring them a present as a form of thanking them for receiving you, acknowledging their work, and so on. If that person expresses interest in something you need, only then will you make the request. With worldly standards like these, I can't understand why people

continue to treat God so differently, going straight to asking Him for things without acknowledging what He has already done.

The psalmist proclaimed, *"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever"* (Psalm 118:1). Thanksgiving is part of praise. I never go into His presence starting with a list of requests because I know the protocol of the kingdom, which is to go into His presence first with thanksgiving. Besides, receiving answers to requests is not what matters most to me about Him. I like to meditate on the more eternal aspects He embodies. Every day, I begin our fellowship time by thanking God for being good to me. I thank Him for the Holy Spirit; for the finished work of Jesus on the cross; for calling me into the ministry; for my family, my church, my leadership, my health; for His uninterrupted provision of everything, and more than I could ever need without my asking. I thank God after every service for His presence, provision, the souls, His Word, the prophecy, demonstrations of His power, etc. Every day, I thank Him for His existence, for revealing Himself to my life, for giving me His power and wisdom, for His goodness and patience, for His grace and favor, for opening doors for me, and for connecting me with key people who lead me to grow and fulfill my purpose. I thank Him for my processes, for not looking at my shortcomings to bless me, and for making me His child and giving me identity, inheritance, privileges, belonging, acceptance, and purpose in life. The list can go on.

Confess and Repent

Another key, as well as the protocol, for entering God's presence is to be clean; there can be no sin in our life because God does not cohabit with sin. So, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The way to intimacy with the Father is to cleanse oneself from sin. That is why, when God gave Moses the tabernacle design, He made sure to place in the courtyard an area for the priests to wash. *"You shall also make a laver of bronze…you shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and*

their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations" (Exodus 30:18-21). And we know that all this was done as a representation of what was to come with Jesus, when the tabernacle would be moved to our hearts (see Hebrews 8:5; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

Man is born with sin since Adam let it enter the human bloodline: *"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear"* (Isaiah 59:2). Therefore, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). None of us can cleanse ourselves; that is why Jesus came and paid for our sins by taking them upon Himself.

Every day in my prayer, I say, "Lord, I repent of every sin of commission and omission I have made. I repent of all sin and iniquity that may be hidden in my life. I ask You, Father, to remove from me all sin, iniquity, transgression, and unrighteousness so that I may enter clean into the Holy of Holies and commune with You. Forgive me and cleanse me, now, in the name of Jesus." After doing this with a sincere heart, I now know that the channels are open to enter the presence of God, trusting that He will not hide His face from me nor close His ears to my prayers. I lead a lifestyle of daily repentance and holiness before God, but on this path, we make mistakes and sin, both knowingly and unknowingly. I want to be sure that my life is upright before God; therefore, I always ask for forgiveness before entering His presence.

Confession and repentance put us in a position of righteousness before God.

Visualize Yourself in His Presence

This is a powerful revelation that, to some extent, is part of going into God's presence in faith. I cannot begin to pray if I do not see myself before the Almighty God. It is vital to know that I am in His presence, to place myself in that place, and to become aware that I am there. In fact, by doing

this, I can pray at any time, no matter where I am physically. Every time I begin my devotional with God and see myself before Him, His presence comes, and I can feel it. I say to God, “Lord, I acknowledge Your presence. I welcome Your presence.” Then, I begin to pray.

Without this awareness of seeing oneself in the presence of God, there is no true prayer because we risk praying with our mouth while our mind is elsewhere; we are unaware of being before God. Tell me, do you visualize yourself in His presence? What happens after you pray? If you have been in God’s presence, when you finish praying, there is a difference. In my case, I feel spiritually recharged. I become a bearer of that presence. Everywhere I go, people tell me, “Apostle, you carry the presence. I feel it.” That is why it is so important to see yourself in the presence, to use your spiritual imagination and say to the Lord, “I recognize Your presence in this place.”

One of the definitions of God’s presence is that it is an atmosphere. It is something that can be felt and perceived; it surrounds us. When I bring people to my office, the place where I pray, some start crying, and others fall to their knees. I never tell them that this is where I pray, my secret place, but the presence of God is accumulated there, and people perceive it. There are open heavens in my office because that is where I meet God daily; there, I pray, declare, and intercede from the manifested presence of the Father. When I leave that place carrying the atmosphere of the presence, I pray for people, and they are healed and delivered.

Since Jesus came and closed the old covenant to begin the new one, there was no need for animal sacrifices anymore; the temple was torn down, and the meeting place with God was translated to each person’s heart. Today, you no longer equate God’s presence with a building but rather yourself as a living carrier of that presence. Each one of us is a carrier. This means that we radiate the life and power of God Himself if we spend time in His presence. I have walked out of some services consumed by His presence, and as I pass by people, many fall to the floor, weeping and worshiping under the power of God.

When you visualize yourself in His presence, nothing else matters to you because God is looking at you, and you are looking at Him. If anything else matters to you, then you are not there yet. All worry, fear, anxiety, and

dread go away in His presence. I tell you this because I experience it every day, clearly showing that I am already fully in His presence.

Worship

Jesus said, *"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"* (John 4:23-24). My favorite way to deepen my relationship with God is through worship because in it I activate His presence with my mouth. As I said at the beginning, I go to God in faith, knowing that He is there for me; then, I partake in thanksgiving; confess my faults, mistakes, and sins; and repent with all my heart. Then, I visualize myself in His presence and begin to worship the Father.

Allow me to give you a practical example of how I do this. First, I say, "Father, I worship and exalt You. You are my source of life, the place where my being originates. You are my giver of life, faith, strength, grace, and wisdom. Father, all things originate from You, whether visible or invisible. You are my Father, and I am Your child, and I love You with all my being. Today, as every day, I offer You my heart in worship. I worship You in spirit and truth with a sincere, transparent, and whole heart. I love You for who You are because You have revealed Yourself to my life and poured out Your love upon me. You loved me first and captivated my heart. Now, Lord, I surrender my will to Yours, to do Your will through my life. I want to be Your instrument to bring Your love and power to the world. Father, today, as every day, I humble myself before Your presence; I recognize that without You, I am nothing and need You in every step I take. Without You, I do not live. You are everything to me; my reason to exist and go on." As the worship in my heart grows, I begin to worship in tongues.

When I reach this point in my prayer, sometimes I kneel, walk, raise my hands, or prostrate myself. Many times, tears come to my eyes because His presence overcomes me. As I worship, His presence pours out in waves. It is a precious and sublime moment when He begins to reveal Himself to my life in different areas and ways. Sometimes, I can hear His voice; other times, I feel the certainty of something He is confirming to me.

Worship causes God to reveal Himself.

In those moments of worship, God speaks to me about everything—myself, the church, a person, a situation, a decision, or a move I need to make. He also gives me assignments and instructions, the strength and boldness to obey them, clarity of mind and spirit, and much more. Worship is the master key that God has given us to reveal His presence. I pray for the church to return to worship. To develop an intimate relationship with God, you must become a worshiper in spirit and truth. Ask the Holy Spirit to help and teach you if you don't know how to worship. That's what I did, and He has always guided me.

The key to worship is doing it until God's presence comes, and nothing else matters.

Sometimes during services, some people become disappointed if I do not pray for them, lay my hands on them, or touch them. Every Christian needs to learn to worship to manifest the presence of God in their life and not always depend on their pastor's relationship with God. If you have depended on that, just say, "Lord, I receive my healing, deliverance, provision, peace, and joy from Your presence directly, now. I receive everything I need from You, Lord." If you need a miracle from God and wonder, "How long must I worship to get my miracle?" the answer is until you receive your miracle. God will enter into your circumstance and work if you adore Him without anything or anyone else who matters to you, without time or limit. All He asks is that you worship Him.

We must worship until God reveals Himself to us.

Submit Your Petitions

In the original Hebrew, "prayer" is also synonymous with "petition." The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4:6). A petition is a legal demand made in heaven based on the word of God. The verb "to petition" means to make a demand for something due. Everything was due after Jesus's work on the cross because everything we may need and desire—healing, deliverance, peace, prosperity—has already been paid for.

Prayer is a cry or demand for the rights and privileges that God promises us as sons and daughters. When I present my requests to Him, I present them as a child of God, not as a beggar or a petitioner, but as someone with rights. I can appropriate those rights because I am in a relationship with Him as His child. At times, the anointing for intercession comes upon me, and the Lord directs me to pray for other people. For example, when the pandemic was at its peak, God told me to cover all the people under my covering and the church of Christ in the world. I prayed every day for this with all my heart.

In my daily prayer, I sometimes use the Abba Father ("Our Father") prayer as a pattern to follow, not as a ritual. This is how I pray: "Abba Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Your name. Source of life and my sustainer, I bring before You all my petitions. May Your kingdom come and expand into new territories. May Your will be done in my life and the lives of my natural and spiritual children. Supply my needs and those of my sons and daughters. Deliver me from temptation. Lord, deliver me from satan's snares, deception, and deceiving others. Deliver me from the love of money and power, sexual temptation, and the appetites of the flesh. Give me the fear of God to resist evil. Father, I claim my rights as Your child, based on Your words. I believe in You and thank You. If I pray according to Your will, I know that it will be done because *'this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him'* (1 John 5:14-15). I thank You, Lord. Your peace invades my mind and heart because of the certainty I have that You hear me and answer my prayers."

If we pray to the Father within the framework of a childlike relationship with Him, we have the right to claim what is legally ours.

Meditate

When Joshua succeeded Moses in the mission to lead Israel into the Promised Land, God told him, *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Joshua 1:8). The word *meditate* in Hebrew means "to imagine, to weep, to speak to oneself, to whisper, to study, and to say." In other words, what the Lord said to Joshua was, "I want you to take time to meditate and whisper on what I have done in your life. Meditate on Me, that I am your God, protector, provider, healer, and everything." When you meditate on Him, God speaks to you.

In my moments of relationship with the Father, I always take time to meditate and wait on Him to make room for the Holy Spirit to speak to me. Prayer is a two-way communication of speaking and listening. Many believers just talk and talk but never stop in silence for God to speak back to them. Therefore, meditating in the presence of God also implies silence. There are moments when I stop talking, become silent, and keep my mind fixed on Him and His word, with my ears attentive to His voice. I place my affection on Him and become still. *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* (Psalm 46:10). This is a great secret to developing a relationship with God because it is a silence of intimacy; it is a state of total connection with Him in which no words are needed because the communication is from the heart to the heart. This is a moment of rest in Him, of total abandonment in His arms. I let go of my anxieties, fears, and insecurities in complete trust and vulnerability. I just contemplate His holiness, meditate on Him, on what He has done and is doing. Meditating is also the ultimate expression of faith, for no natural

sense is involved, yet we are closer to Him than ever. At such times, the Lord has communicated precious revelations to me.

You need to know that it is vital that you make time to wait upon Him because there, *"He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:29-31).

When you enter into the rest of prayer, the Lord fights your battles.

Prayer and relationship with God are not a type of formula or law, but rather communication between Father and child based on love, obedience, trust, commitment, and respect or fear of God.

How Do I Apply the Above Points in Practice?

Beloved reader, allow me to bring all this together for the practical and daily portion in the following steps. To develop your relationship with God, you need to:

Pray for One Hour a Day

Praying for one hour is neither law nor doctrine. You will not go to hell if you don't pray for one hour. But it is practical advice for you to succeed. The key to developing a personal relationship with the Father is commitment. And for commitment to be effective, it needs a clear basis, such as the time and place you want to dedicate to prayer. Let's look at what Jesus thought. *"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?'"* (Matthew 26:40 NIV). Why is it that the minimum Jesus expected was that they would pray for one hour? An hour creates discipline, a daily habit. At first, you will

begin to do it out of discipline, as a sacrifice; after a while, you will do it out of desire, passion, and love for wanting to be with God.

"What do I say or do in that hour?" you may ask. Simply approach God in faith, give Him thanks, worship Him, confess and repent of your sins, visualize yourself in His presence, ask God your Father your personal and corporate petitions, intercede for others, and meditate on Him. We have just learned the majority of this in the previous pages. In this place of fellowship, you will be changed, healed, and delivered; you will receive miracles, know God, and much more.

Pray in a Personal Way

Many people attend church expecting to fulfill their prayer time with the service. However, the relationship the Father demands of you as His son or daughter is not developed in these corporate prayer meetings, but alone between you and Him. Notice how in the Bible, Jesus did not pray with His disciples. He always prayed alone: *"He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed"* (Luke 5:16). Prayer is personal and private, first, before it is corporate. Therefore, your passion should be a personal prayer life.

We also see that Jesus overcame temptation because of His commitment to watch and pray. His disciples did not have that same commitment, so they were always tempted to fall asleep. *"He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy"* (Matthew 26:43). In my case, during the times when, for some reason, I have not been able to pray due to an emergency or other cause, I have felt vulnerable to the temptation that day. On those occasions, I have found it easier to lose patience and become sad, irritable, and discouraged.

I encourage you! Commit to praying for at least one hour a day, and you will see powerful results. I have given this challenge to many people, and their lives were changed. All their prayers were answered, they developed a discipline to pray, and they became powerful intercessors!

Pray Without Ceasing

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica to teach them the principle of prayer because he also experienced its power: "*Pray without*

ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-19).

Prayer is not a burden; it is the means of developing a personal relationship with God. Nor is it, by any means, a competition, but a principle that Jesus lived and demonstrated. Commit to praying for one hour a day as a start to a life of unceasing prayer. This commitment shows God you are serious about your relationship with Him and will truly pursue Him in prayer. Pray constantly and persistently until you achieve a deep and intimate relationship with God, the Father.

Time with God is not an expense but an investment.

Make a Vow of Consecration

Another key to developing your life of relationship with God is to make a vow. A vow is a promise, a covenant, in which you promise God to set yourself apart and consecrate your life in prayer to develop an intimate relationship with Him. To consecrate yourself means to set yourself apart for God. Every morning of my life, when I get up, I remind myself of the vow I made thirty-four years ago to seek His face, walk in integrity and holiness, pray to develop an intimate relationship with Him, and keep it. It doesn't matter if I don't feel like it if I am tired, in a hurry, or busy; for me, that vow is above all else.

Making a vow sustains the commitment, and the commitment sustains the development of your relationship with God.

Conclusion

My greatest hope, as we approach the end of this book, is that each reader has been able to receive the revelation of the importance of developing an intimate relationship of fellowship with the heavenly Father. That you realize this is what being a Christian is all about, and everything else is just religion. Jesus did not come to die to form a religion. He came to bring the real thing, a true relationship that sin had originally severed. Jesus came to bring us back into fellowship with the Father. I pray to the Lord that readers may develop their relationship with God through worship, faith, purity of heart, and thankfulness. The Holy Spirit is calling and gathering the remnant that will prepare the way for the second coming of the Son of God. I pray that you will be part of that bride, without blemish, who awaits the bridegroom watching and praying, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Answered Prayers

Apostle Tommy Acosta has been with King Jesus Ministry for over twenty years. Together, we have been through the best and the most difficult times. I know of his relationship with God and faithfulness in trial times. His fellowship with the Father has led him to overcome obstacles and become purified like gold every time. This is the testimony of his prayer life:

> Honestly, my relationship with God is what has sustained me throughout my life. In my case, my conversion was like love at first sight, and I think that is due to where God took me from. I was married with two children. I was working well, but I was deep in alcohol and drugs. One night, while I was sleeping, drunk and high in my house, I was awakened by my wife’s screams. My little two-yearold daughter had hanged herself, entangled in the cord of a window blind. At the hospital, we were told she was brain dead. Amid the grief and guilt, I decided that I would say goodbye to my daughter and take my own life. When I went to see her, a woman standing in the doorway of her room told me about Jesus, and, after rejecting Him countless times before, I accepted Him into my heart at the lowest and darkest moment of my life. He became so real to me. The day my little girl died, I not only received Jesus, but I had an encounter with the Father. It was as if God was literally

> there. I didn’t know how to pray, but that day I knew that if I spoke to Him, He heard me, even though I didn’t have the words or the biblical knowledge. So I would talk to Him in my car, in the bathroom, in my room, in silence; I would even talk to Him in my mind. The relationship kept growing to the point where I was no longer talking to myself, but I could hear Him. He speaks to me through impressions. It is like knowing something in my spirit and knowing that it is Him speaking to me. To this day, that communication only gets better. I’m not saying that I wake up every day ready to pray. It’s not always easy. Some days I’m tired, and it’s a sacrifice, but I know that’s where my strength and life come from. Besides, I do it because I don’t want to turn back. I don’t want to turn my back on God. I want to show Him my eternal gratitude because I owe Him everything, and I belong to Him. I have nothing. I am only the keeper of what He has entrusted to me. God is so merciful that, despite my mistakes, He is still with me, and He uses me. It is very easy to make your prayer mechanical, boring, and repetitive, to sit there and pray in tongues for an hour. I don’t want to fall there, so I go into His presence, waiting for something new to happen. And God never disappoints me. Every day in His presence is a new experience. Everything in my life stems from my relationship and intimacy with Him. Today, I can say that the greatest blessing is my fellowship with God.

Damari Salcedo has been my spiritual daughter for the past fifteen years. She came to me at a very young age, looking for the fatherhood that she had been denied, and she found it in God, primarily, and in me as her spiritual father. Seeing her today fills me with pride because she has come a long way, and her relationship with the Father has made her a strong, courageous, and sensitive woman who bears abundant fruit for the kingdom.

> As someone who grew up an atheist, radically surrendered her life to God, and is now a mother of three and a pastor of King Jesus Ministry, my prayer life has gone through different

seasons of creativity, but it has been and always will be not only foundational but my favorite part of my walk with God. One of the best things I have learned in this house about prayer is that it is two-way communication with God. It's not just about making your requests known to Him but waiting on Him and listening to what He wants to say to you. I love that I learned that in this house because I feel my prayer has a purpose now. It has taught me that, in every season of my life, God has something to say, and He wants me to come to Him to show it to me. He is such a relational God! I say that my prayer life had gone through different seasons of creativity because, when I was single, I had all the time in the world to pray as much as I wanted. Prayer was non-stop, and I treasure those moments because they made me who I am today. Now, as a mother and pastor, there are many interruptions daily; still, it is my favorite season because I feel like I understand a parent's love much more than I did before. I love having my kids spend time with me; I love hearing how their day went, how they feel, and what they want. I also love seeing their little faces as I talk about their lives and teach them or explain something to them. I can't help but wonder that if that brings me so much joy, how much more does the Father fall in love when we relate to Him?

My prayer life now has many special moments, although I struggle to have uninterrupted moments and consistency. It doesn't matter if I have to get up earlier, go to bed later, lock myself in the bathroom where no one can find me, or pray with my baby in my arms; I still persevere because it's those moments with God, talking to Him or hearing what He tells me, that make it all worthwhile. Every victory I have had in my life has resulted from prayer. Recently, one in particular has been that I was praying and talking to God about provision for my daughter. I have only had boys, so I had nothing for a girl. The Lord told me not to worry, for He would provide abundantly for her, and asked me to trust Him. Well, God exceeded what He had told me in prayer, giving me so many things that I even had to give to other people with girls. Something as simple as that! God is faithful. He knows our

desires, and He has more desire than we do to see them fulfilled. God just wants us to come to Him, open our hearts, and let Him speak to us.

Practical Activation

Dear reader, I want to leave you with one last sample prayer that you can use to guide you in making your covenant and consecration with God, to develop an intimate relationship with Him for the rest of your life.

> *Father God, I come before You as Your child with a strong commitment to developing my relationship with You on a daily, personal, and intimate level. I want to make a vow, a promise to You, before Your angels, principalities, and powers, to seek You every day in a personal relationship, obey You, and walk in holiness. I consecrate my total being, body, soul, and spirit to the pursuit of Your presence. I set myself apart for Your exclusive use. I surrender my life in sacrifice to die to myself for this relationship every day. Lord, I ask You to give me the grace to seek Your presence in prayer and worship, daily and constantly. Lord, I commit myself to start with one hour and grow from there. Give me the grace to endure to the end and Your strength when mine fails. Lord, I pray that my faith will never fail, and I ask that Your Holy Spirit guide me. In Jesus's name, amen!*

Chapter Summary

The keys to developing a close relationship with God are to:

- Enter His presence by faith, not by the natural senses. When you seek Him, He will reward you.
- Enter with thanksgiving, for He owes us nothing, and His gifts are given through relationship.
- Confess our sins and repent of them to enter clean into His Most Holy Place.

- Visualize ourselves in His presence using spiritual imagination. If we create that atmosphere, we can pray anytime and anywhere in His presence.
- Worship God in spirit and truth; this is the main key to attracting His presence.
- Present our petitions, which represent legal claims, under the terms of His promises.
- Meditate on the Word and on God, which is to take time to study, imagine, cry, and whisper in His presence.

To apply the above points in practice, I advise you to:

- Pray for one hour a day.
- Pray personally. Group prayer does not replace individual prayer.
- Pray without ceasing. Being consistent and continuous in prayer helps us develop and consolidate all the keys to developing a relationship with God.
- Make a vow of consecration. This is a promise or covenant where you promise God to separate yourself from the world and set yourself apart for Him, His service, and will.

About the Author

Apostle Guillermo Maldonado is the senior pastor and founder of King Jesus Ministries International (KJM) in Miami, Florida, which is based on the Word of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the moving of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and worship. The building of kingdom leaders and the visible manifestations of God's supernatural power distinguish this ministry. KJM is a multicultural church, considered one of the fastest growing in the United States, with a membership that exceeds 25 thousand people, including the main church in Miami, its branches, daughter churches, and online church. Amid a visitation, Apostle Maldonado received the specific assignment to bring the supernatural power of God to this generation, and he fulfills this task around the world. Currently, he is the spiritual father for more than 450 churches in 63 countries, including the United States, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and New Zealand, which form the Supernatural Global Network (SGN), representing more than 706,000 people. He is also the founder of King Jesus University (KJU).

Apostle Maldonado is a national best-selling author who has written more than 50 books and manuals, which have been published in English, Spanish, and many other languages. Among his most recent books are *Jesus Is Coming Back Soon, Created for Purpose, Breakthrough Prayer, Breakthrough Fast, A Stress-Free Life, How to Walk in the Supernatural Power of God, The Glory of God, The Kingdom of Power, Supernatural Transformation, Supernatural Deliverance, Divine Encounter with the Holy Spirit,* and *End-Time Shaking and Revival.* He also preaches the message of Jesus Christ and His redemptive power on his international television program, *Supernatural Now,* which airs on Daystar, Church Channel, and 50 other TV networks, potentially reaching and impacting more than 2 billion people worldwide.

Apostle Maldonado holds a doctorate in philosophy with a major in Christian counseling from Vision International University, a doctorate in ministry from Friends International Christian University, a doctorate in divinity from Logos Graduate School, and a master's degree in practical

theology from Oral Roberts University. He and his family reside in Miami, Florida.

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