

**Being a Spiritually Minded Christian**  
**Part Eighteen**  
**Developing Humility and Love through Fellowship**

- *As believers we have a choice: We can be naturally minded, carnally minded, or spiritually minded.*
- *As Christians we can have a natural mind which sees and evaluates life only from this temporal physical earthly perspective.*
- *The natural mind either does not acknowledge the existence of a spiritual realm, or does not recognize the value or the activities of the spiritual realm. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14).*
- *As Christians we can have a carnal mind which sees and evaluates life from a purely selfish perspective seeking to satisfy the fleeting lusts of the flesh. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7).*
- *An important difference between the natural mind and the carnal mind is that a carnally minded person always seeks instant gratification regardless of the consequences or the cost. On the other hand, a naturally minded man may be well disciplined and make sacrifices for longer term benefits and goals, as long as those benefits are realized in this life.*
- *A carnally minded man will experience the negative consequences and losses of his choices fairly quickly, accompanied by regrets, sorrow, and shame. However, soon his carnal mind begins to override anything that would oppose satisfying his lusts, and the cycle of lust, impulsive choices, and painful consequences continues. The carnal mind keeps the person trapped in an endless cycle of failure and loss.*
- *The carnal mind is always impulsive. Esau exemplifies a man who operated from the carnal point of view, “lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” (Hebrews 12:16).*
- *Esau was a carnally minded person who lived his entire life without ever trying to curb his lusts. His carnal choices resulted in permanent loss and sorrow as his father was not able to give his son the inheritance that he should have received. “For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” (Hebrews 12:17).*

- *As opposed to the carnally minded man, a naturally minded man may accomplish many things in this life from an earthly perspective. It may only be at the end of his life or in eternity that he will realize the great loss he has actually incurred by living a life that was not spiritually minded.*
- *As Christians we can have a spiritual mind which is to have the mind of Christ and see and evaluate circumstances and events from God's perspective, which is both heavenly and eternal. This will help us to make choices and sacrifices which will culminate in a life that is truly fulfilling and fruitful both in this life and in eternity.*
- *As Christians there may be times when we operate in a carnal mindset and other times with a natural mindset and even other times from a spiritual mindset. However, to truly make progress and overcome the obstacles in life and be fruitful, we need to be consistent. We need to learn to constantly live our lives from a spiritually minded perspective.*
- *Often Christians struggle with compromise because they ask the wrong questions.*
- *The naturally minded Christian asks, "What can't I do?" because he loves rules, laws, and rituals.*
- *The carnally minded Christian asks, "Why can't I do it?" because his motivation is to satisfy his own lusts and find excuses for his bad choices.*
- *The spiritually minded Christian asks, "What do You want me to do?" because his primary motive is to please God even above himself, and to live a life that brings glory to Christ.*
- *The three areas that enable us to develop into spiritually minded Christians are our relationship with the Word of God, Prayer, and Christian Fellowship.*
- *From the inception of the church, these three components, the Word of God, Christian Fellowship and Prayer, were practiced by all believers. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).*
- *We spent a number of weeks studying and exploring our relationship with the Word of God, the Bible, and how to develop a healthy relationship with the Word of God which helps us to become spiritually minded.*
- *We began with our relationship to the Bible. Of the three foundational principles that enable us to develop into spiritually minded Christians, it is Scripture that grounds us in the truth and provides a spiritual compass to ensure we do not stray from being Christ-centered.*

- *Though experience validates our faith, it is the Word of God, the Bible, that establishes our faith.*
- *Next, we spent a number of weeks studying prayer and how to experience the reality of God in prayer. Through the Bible we learned about the character of God and in prayer we experience the reality of His character and faithfulness. Prayer is where we interact with God. In prayer we can experience the delight of knowing Him, loving Him, and sharing with Him our desires, burdens, and needs.*
- *Prayer is where we experience the reality of God's promises as we see Him actually answering our prayers. If we fail to spend time in prayer, we will also fail to experience the delight of having our prayers answered. "Yet you do not have because you do not ask." (James 4:2b).*
- *There is an expression, "If you are just in the Word you will dry up, if you are just in the spirit you will blow up, but if you are in both you will grow up."*
- *In other words, if we just spend time studying the Bible then we may develop good theology but our relationship with God can become dry and lifeless. On the other hand, if we are only seeking spiritual experiences and neglect studying the Bible, truth can become very subjective and we can end up believing some pretty crazy things.*
- *If we have a balanced daily devotional life that consists of both spending time in the Word and time in prayer our relationship with God will develop and deepen.*
- *However, there is one more component that we need to develop in order to become spiritually minded Christians—Christian fellowship.*
- *Christian fellowship is where we put into practice the things we have learned and experienced both in prayer and in the Word. It is the place "where the rubber meets the road," where theory becomes practice.*
- *Christian fellowship is not just Christians getting together but Christians getting together around Christ. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20).*
- *Just because Christians get together does not mean it is Christian fellowship, because when Christians are in the flesh it can lead to gossip and division. "Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it." (1 Corinthians 11:17-18).*

- *When Christians gather together and their focus is not on Christ but on problems, complaints and grievances, it produces an atmosphere where faith cannot operate. “Too much talk makes one’s faith weak.”*
- *True Christian fellowship delights the heart of God and when believers gather together and share the goodness of God, He listens and takes notes. “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.” (Malachi 3:16). God hears our every word!*

#### Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV)

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,  
25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

- *Hebrews 10:24- 25 instructs and warns us not to neglect Christian fellowship, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.” It also outlines some of the purposes of fellowship. “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” and “exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*
- *Christian fellowship is not something to be relegated to once a week on a Sunday morning, but something that is to be part of our daily lives to ensure we continue steadfast in the faith, “but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:13).*
- *There are many reasons and benefits that the Bible gives as to why we should belong to a local church and remain in Christian fellowship.*
- *When Christians gather together they are able to encourage and help one another through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (1 Corinthians 14:3), or as my brother Harvey puts it, “build up, charge up and cheer up.”*
- *Christian fellowship is God’s provision so we will not have to face times of trial, temptations, or hardships alone. “For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:10-12).*
- *Christian fellowship and belonging to a local church also provides protection through accountability. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive,*

for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17).

- *Often, Christians venture out in this life alone where the trials, temptations, and darkness of this world can quickly disorientate them. Christ has put us in a Body where we can stay close to the Shepherd and have our lives enriched by fellowship and guided by godly counsel. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14).*
- *There are two things that I have learned about myself: first—I can be wrong; second—I can be wrong and not realize it. “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2).*
- *If we are not accountable and open to correction it is certain that we will have blind spots that will cause us to be led astray in some areas of our lives and will hinder us from growing and maturing in Christ.*
- *Christian fellowship also allows us to share our joys and sorrows with others and to celebrate our times of victory and receive comfort in our times of loss. “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15).*
- *Through Christian fellowship we can experience the presence of God corporately. “I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the LORD.”” (Psalms 122:1).*
- *If Christian fellowship is so essential to our Christian growth and it is to be both delightful and refreshing why do so many Christians stop going to church and stop fellowshiping with other believers? “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.” (Hebrews 10:25).*
- *I believe the reason some Christians become discouraged and disillusioned with the church and with other believers is because they have unrealistic and unbiblical expectations.*
- *They expect to find a corporate body of believers who are already spiritually mature and who have dealt with all or most of their past “baggage.” They also expect the leadership to have attained such a high level of spiritual maturity that they are almost infallible.*
- *However, as we study the New Testament and specifically the book of Acts and the epistles, we see quite a different picture of what the early church was like which also accurately reflects the same challenges and issues that we face today as New Testament believers.*

- *The church is composed of spiritual fathers and mothers, spiritual young men and women, and spiritual babes. (1 John 2:12-14). The Church is not a reflection of Heaven, but a place that prepares us for Heaven as we learn to grow and mature and become disciples of Jesus Christ.*
- *Even though it would be nice to believe that a church or a body of believers would not experience misunderstanding, disappointments, or conflicts, this is not the reality. However, if we submit to God then He will actually use those very things to produce maturity in us personally, and unity and maturity in the Church corporately. “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28).*
- *If a Christian withdraws from fellowship and isolates himself because of past disappointments, misunderstanding or conflicts, he is actually robbing himself of the very things that God wants to use to help shape and mature him into the image of Jesus Christ. Without challenges, there would be no reason or opportunity for us to grow or mature.*
- *“As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend,” (Proverbs 27:17). The act of sharpening two pieces of iron by rubbing them together can not only refer to people honing their understanding of things through the process of sharing their thoughts, but also can allude to the development of godly character through exchanges that may sometimes be challenging in nature and even uncomfortable, difficult, or painful.*
- *Sometimes the very things that we see in others that bother us and perhaps “set us off” are really a mirror reflecting our own struggles. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” (Romans 2:1).*
- *While being part of a local church and participating in Christian fellowship is important so we can grow into the image of Jesus Christ, there is one specific area that we will focus on today, and that is “conflict.”*
- *The way we deal with conflict speaks a great deal as to our level of spiritual maturity and how close our walk with Christ is.*
- *The way we deal with conflicts in a godly way is through humility, wisdom, and love. If we turn to God in the midst of conflicts and cooperate with His Holy Spirit, challenging situations will actually help to produce and develop a greater degree of humility, Christian character, and love in our own hearts.*

- *Carnality and selfishness are two of the main sources of conflicts, strife, divisions, and sectarianism. “for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).*
- *There are few experiences that will test the depth and quality of our humility, character, and love more than conflicts.*
- *An Old Testament example of someone who illustrates how godly humility diffused a potentially destructive situation is found in Judges, Chapter 8. Returning from a miraculous victory where he defeated an entire enemy army with only 300 hundred unarmed men, Gideon was confronted by Israelites from the tribe of Ephraim who were jealous of his success.*

#### **Judges 8:1-3 (NKJV)**

**1** Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" And they reprimanded him sharply.

**2** So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"

**3** God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

- *The men of Ephraim angrily confronted Gideon and “reprimanded him sharply” accusing him of purposely excluding them from the battle so he would have all the glory and booty for himself. However, in reality it was God who instructed Gideon which men to choose and it was God who limited the number. Gideon simply obeyed.*
- *Gideon could have rightly and boldly reproved them for their presumptuous and slanderous remarks that they had spoken against him, but that would probably have resulted in a bloody civil war among his own people, the very people that God had called Gideon to rescue from the hands of their enemies.*
- *Instead, Gideon answered with great humility and acknowledged what the Ephraimites had accomplished and downplayed his own part in the great victory that God had performed. “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?”*
- *Gideon’s wisdom and humility diffused the conflict and restored peace and good will among his own people. “Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.”*

- *Gideon’s godly character was demonstrated by his humility and wise response, in sharp contrast to the Ephraimites’ carnal, selfish, and rash words. Gideon exhibited another godly characteristic—love.*
- *Gideon demonstrated love for his fellow Israelites and also for God. If a civil war had broken out amongst the Israelites, many would have been wounded and killed. It would have resulted not only in great suffering and loss for Israel, but it would have tarnished the wonderful victory that God had won. The enemies of Israel would have mocked both Israel and the God of Israel. Gideon set aside his own reputation and rights because of his love for Israel and his God.*
- *Gideon’s humility was not motivated because he feared the wrath and threats of the Ephraimites, but because he loved God and he didn’t want to do anything that would bring reproach to His Holy Name.*
- *While Gideon is a wonderful example of how to overcome conflicts with humility and love, the Old Testament also provides examples of how the people of God through pride and stubbornness failed with devastating results. God’s Word never candy coats the truth but presents it so we can clearly understand and learn from it so we can live godly and fruitful lives.*
- *The second example in the Old Testament that serves as a contrast to Gideon and his act of humility and love involves King David. This story took place immediately after the rebellion and the civil war with King David’s son, Absalom, came to an end. (2 Samuel 19).*
- *After Absalom’s death, Israel turned again to David to restore him as their king. However, David for some reason appealed to his own tribe, the tribe of Judah, to take the lead in bringing David back to his throne. “So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, “Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his very house? You are my brethren, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?’” (2 Samuel 19:11-12).*
- *In fact, a case could be made that David himself added to the conflict by his seemingly preferential treatment of Judah which caused a sense of pride, entitlement, and superiority to spring up in the hearts of the people of Judah. Judah became possessive of the king, feeling they were more favoured than the other tribes of Israel. This sowed the seeds for another bitter and bloody civil war.*



40 Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41 Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, “Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?”

42 So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king is a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?”

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, “We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more right to David than you. Why then do you despise us-were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?” Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

- *As we read the exchange of words between Judah and the rest of Israel we can recognize familiar patterns that escalate and produce anger, frustration, and conflict.*
- *When the men of Israel saw Judah leading the way for David to return, they responded with childish and selfish words accusing Judah of stealing away their king. “Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, “Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?””*
- *However, instead of Judah responding with humility and love, they justified themselves by saying that they had a greater right to the king. “So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king is a close relative of ours.””*
- *In typical carnal fashion, Judah escalated the tension even more by expressing how righteous and generous they were because they weren't receiving any personal benefit. Their statements dripped with self-righteousness, self-justification, and pride. “Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?”*
- *Judah's words inflamed the pride and selfishness of Israel causing them to claim that they were actually the ones who had a greater right to David because they were the first to propose restoring David as king. In addition they said, “there are more of us than you.” “And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, “We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more right to David than you. Why then do you despise us-were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?””*

- *The war of words between Judah and Israel continued to escalate until Judah went too far causing an irreconcilable division. “Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.”*
- *This verbal conflict opened the door for the devil to raise up a rebellious man who led Israel into another bloody and needless civil war. “And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: “We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!” So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri.” (2 Samuel 20:1-2).*
- *Even though this conflict took place in the Old Testament and resulted in actual armed fighting, similar conflicts can be seen operating in the body of Christ today.*
- *None of the parties were really concerned about God’s will and no one prayed or sought God’s guidance or heart in the matter.*
- *There was no real substance to the heart of the conflict, because it was rooted in pride and selfishness expressed in words. The problem they had with the other side really reflected the condition of their own hearts. There was no material gain at stake, only the king’s favour. Israel’s real complaint was, “Why do you despise us?”*
- *“People don’t usually express their feelings as jealousy; instead they look for faults in the other person to justify their ugly feelings.” Harvey Katz*
- *It is clear that both parties were at fault. Most times when conflicts arise both parties play a part. Many times when there is conflict we can clearly see where the other person is at fault but we remain blind to our contribution to the conflict.*
- *When others are easily offended we say they are “touchy,” but if we are easily offended we say we are “sensitive.” Harvey Katz*
- *If either of the parties had responded with humility and love the conflict would never have developed. Even if the conflict began to escalate it could have been defused if even one of the parties had humbled themselves and acknowledged their fault in the conflict. “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.” (Proverbs 15:1-2).*
- *King David was equally at fault because he remained silent when Israel brought their grievance to his attention. “all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, “Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen*

you away.” As king, he abdicated his responsibility to resolve the matter. David could have helped to defuse the conflict by humbling himself and admitting the part he played when he showed partiality to Judah over the other tribes of Israel.

- *Sometimes we are unwilling to admit our part in a conflict however small, and instead choose to stand back as a bystander. This is rooted in our indifference which is an indication of our lack of love and care for others. Even if we aren't personally involved, we can earnestly pray and intercede for those who are in conflict.*
- *To be a spiritually minded Christian is “to care for the things that God cares about and to value the things that God values.” God cares deeply for His Church and as believers and followers of Jesus, God wants us to love one another and maintain unity in His body.*
- *There are two characteristics that the Church is to demonstrate so that the world will truly know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ.*
- *The first characteristic is to show genuine and unconditional love for one another. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35).*
- *The second characteristic that disciples of Christ are to demonstrate is genuine unity. “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22-23).*
- *Disunity, infighting, sectarianism, and lack of love have marred Church history for the last two thousand years. It is no wonder that many times the world has mocked and disbelieved the Gospel message. “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” (Romans 2:24a).*
- *However, when love and unity have prevailed in the Church, the Church and the Gospel message has been unstoppable, “on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18b). When our focus is on the true message, which is Jesus Christ, then miracles happen, people are saved, and lives are changed.*
- *The mighty Roman Empire, with its cruel and crushing armies, was not able to overcome the Church. While the Roman Empire has faded into history, the Church continues to shine ever brighter on the world stage. Communist China vowed to wipe out the Church, but now after almost seventy years, China has the largest population of Christians in the world!*

- *Paradoxically, the church always grows when it is persecuted and oppressed. But this isn't as strange as it may seem because when the Church experiences persecution, the believers begin to develop a deeper love and care for one another. During times of difficulties and hardships we come to appreciate being part of the Body of Christ.*
- *Apostle Paul commended Timothy's godly character as an example of genuine love and selfless service to God and others. "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state." Paul contrasted Timothy with others in ministry who had mixed motives. "For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:20-21).*
- *Instead of the devil using conflict to produce hurts and divisions, true godly humility and love "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11).*
- *True godly humility and love enable us to take our eyes off of ourselves and instead of seeking our own will, we begin to seek the things which are of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:20).*
- *True godly humility and love is evidenced when we stop praying for vindication and begin to fervently pray that we will not do anything that would bring shame to Jesus Christ or the Gospel even at the cost of personal loss. "But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?" (1 Corinthians 6:6-7).*
- *True godly humility and love occur when we have grace for one another and do not nitpick at each word people say but realize we are all imperfect, "above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'" (1 Peter 4:8).*
- *True godly humility and love places others before ourselves. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4).*
- *True godly humility and love does not despise or look down on others who are struggling but instead comes alongside and encourages them. "Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed." (Hebrews 12:12-13).*

- ***True godly humility and love exhibits self-restraint and makes concessions to refrain from doing “anything that causes your brother to stumble.” (Romans 14:21).***
- ***Being spiritually minded is learning to be clothed with humility and to honour every member of the Body of Christ. “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Peter 5:5).***
- ***Being spiritually minded is knowing how to minister to those around us with humility and love, “distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” (Romans 12:13-17).***
- ***Being spiritually minded is recognizing that even though we reach out to those around us with humility and love, they may not choose to be at peace with us. “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:18). In such situations we can still be at peace with them in our hearts knowing we are pleasing God.***