

# The Dying Art of Fellowship

By Wayne Vasilenko

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Last week we talked a little about the distractions we face on a daily basis. With just about everyone I talk to, at some point in our conversation it gets around to them saying how busy they are, how little time they have to do the things they want to do. I was reviewing what I wrote last week about distractions and the Lord spoke to me through the Holy Spirit. What really jumped out at me was the fact that most people find time to do the things that they want to do despite all the distractions in their lives, yet there seems to be little or no time left for two very important things, friendship and fellowship. Trying to get someone to come over for a cup of coffee and a chat in the year 2017 is akin to asking them to take your place at a dental appointment for a root canal! My wife and I are retired now, so we have plenty of time to do the things we need to do; but even when the both of us were still working full time, we still found time to do the things we do now and much more. As a matter of fact, looking back at when we were much younger, despite many more responsibilities, we not only had a lot more going on in our lives, but it seems we had a lot more fellowship with our Christian and non Christian friends. When I was in my 20's and 30's I worked two - at times three jobs, I had a house, a wife, two young children, car payments, and all the other stuff that goes with all that. When the kids got old enough, my wife went back to work and still kept the house spotless! To this day she still makes my breakfast every day without fail. We kept busy, yet we always had time for fellowship! We attended bible studies, we had cookouts, we went on day trips with friends to the beach or some other place, and that's not all. I was also a member of a Gospel Music Group for a period of time which required a weekly rehearsal night and playing at a church or other venue at least once a month! Oh yeah... my son played soccer and my daughter went to dance school. Back then none of us used our kids as an excuse not to be involved in fellowship! Most of the time the kids were with us when we fellowshiped with our friends...only occasionally would we need a sitter for the kids. We had lots of friends, lots of fun and most importantly good Christian Friends. We had people we could depend on if we ever needed help with anything, material, spiritual, or emotional. I wonder why things are so different for most people today. A more important question perhaps is, "how is the lack of fellowship affecting people, especially our Christian Brothers and Sisters?"

We live in a time when we hear a lot about stress and all the things that cause havoc in families. There are countless authors and motivational speakers hawking their remedies but nothing seems to be improving! Not only are marriages and families drifting apart but the thought of having a real friend to confide in and perhaps share comfort or advise with is a fantasy at best. Are we all so much busier now as opposed to 20 years ago, or are we simply misallocating our time and neglecting what is really important -fellowship and friendship? I personally know a few people who I used to fellowship with but they now have nothing but excuses when it comes to finding time for anything. One in particular works between 60 and 80 hours a week and sleeps the rest of the time. No time for family - no time for fun - no time for fellowship! Is *that* the modern definition of "Living?" Did all of this just happen over time, or is there something or someone behind this trend? When I previously wrote about distraction and deception I mentioned the "Master Magician" Satan, and how he uses these tools to cause problems. Many people, Christians included, feel that they are on their own when it comes to living out their lives. Yes the Bible says, "If we don't work, we don't eat" but it also says that God will take care of our needs.

## **Matthew 6:28-30 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)**

<sup>28</sup> "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing,<sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.<sup>30</sup>

And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

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The problem is that there is confusion concerning "Wants & Needs." Your neighbor gets a brand new SUV and you think to yourself, "I got to have one of those!" Once again we see the Deceiver at work, redirecting our focus from God and others to ourselves, and the things others have; things that we are convinced by Satan we need. The Bible calls this "Covetousness" and it is listed as a No-No in the top ten of God's laws. **Exodus 20:17 (New King James Version)**

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's."

## How do we fight back?

We are bombarded with advertising from all directions; people telling us what we need in our life, that new car, that new house, all kinds of things! So we allow ourselves to indulge in a few little things, which lead to more things and more things... before we know it we're in debt up to our eyeballs! Then we find ourselves working all the overtime we can to pay credit cards instead of having a family picnic... instead of having time for fellowship and friends! I am speaking to you from experience. I have been there - done that. I am telling you, don't fall for it... it's a trap that can affect you for years to come! For many years I didn't have time for a lot of things. I didn't even have time to read God's Word... or so I thought. Once again, the Bible has the answer...

### Matthew 6:32-33 (King James Version)

<sup>32</sup> (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

This is how we fight back! If only we get our priorities straight, everything else will fall into place. Take inventory of your time. How much time do you spend with God and in His word? There are 1440 minutes in every day, how many do you spend seeking God and His wisdom? If you give Him 14.4 minutes, that translates to 1%. I would venture to say that a lot of professing Christians don't do much more than a token prayer before lunch while rubbing their brow so no one suspects they are actually praying in public. Only 1.8 minutes translates to .125%, more than enough time for a token prayer! This is where I went astray in my younger years. Yes I put in some time serving God in various ways, but little by little I was enticed by the Deceiver to seek things that were not of God. Once he got my attention it was just a matter of time before I was hooked on worldly things once again and as a result, I found less and less time for the things that were the most important. I praise God that He put some people in my path to get me back on track. If you are one of the 1 % people I mentioned above, try increasing the time you give back to God to 2%. It doesn't seem like much time and it isn't much, 28.8 minutes out of the entire day. As I did, you will find that the more time you give to God, the more time you will have! Trust Him for your needs. God will change the desires of your heart and those desires that seemed so important before will fade away. You will find more time for yourself, more time for your family, and more time for fellowship and friends. I promise... you won't regret it. Who knows... we might even get together for a cup of coffee!