

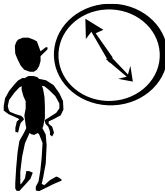
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Sunday:	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Every other Sunday night:	
Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	
Bible Study	7:00 p. m.

Characteristics of the Spiritually Minded

By Jefferson David Tant

Do you know anyone who is spiritually minded? This is someone who is more than being merely religious ... more than having been baptized ... more than attending services regularly ... more than giving liberally. A person may do all of this and still not be spiritually minded, for Paul wrote of certain ones who were “*holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof*” (II Timothy 3:5). In another place, he writes of those who have a “*voluntary humility*” (Colossians 2:18). This reminds us of the hypocrites who prayed and gave alms in public and wore elaborate clothing, that they might be seen of men. And being spiritually minded is more than simply having a good knowledge of the word of God, for a person may know the truth, and yet turn away from God (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26).

When we speak of one who is spiritually minded, we have in mind one who displays certain characteristics in life, which things may include some of the foregoing matters, but it really goes deeper than that. In Romans 8:5-8, Paul wrote of the contract between those who have “*the mind of the flesh*” as opposed to those who have “*the mind of the Spirit,*” or those who are “*spiritually minded.*”

Let us consider some of those characteristics that are common to spiritually minded people. May we each examine ourselves.

A Constant Realization of God's Presence

What a great blessing to have this fellowship with God. Note Micah’s words in Micah 6:8, noting that the Lord requires of us that we “*do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God.*” Do you have a sense of walking with God? David had a keen sense of God’s presence in his life, as expressed in Psalms 139:1-12. He knew that wherever he was, in the depths of the sea, in the heavens, in darkness or daylight, he could not escape the presence of his Lord. A poet expressed it in

these words: “My God and I go in the fields together, we walk and talk as good friends should and do ... My God and I walk through the meadow’s hue. This earth will pass, and with it common trifles, but God and I will go unendingly.”

This realization of God’s presence in our lives should have a great influence on us. For one thing, it should be a deterrent to sin. We often find that when we are with someone we respect, it is easy to overcome temptation, for we don’t want them to see us do wrong. I can remember visiting with some friends in another town some years ago when the congregation was having a gospel meeting. We had dinner with this family, and after the meal, their children went to their rooms to dress for the assembly. In a few minutes, their 14-year-old daughter came into the living room where I was reading the newspaper. She asked me, “How do you like my dress? I wore the longest one I had because you were here.” Well, it was still a little short, but this was in the days of extreme mini-skirts, and she knew my convictions on modest apparel. Out of her respect for me, she wore the longest she had. I appreciated that. But, if she had the realization of God’s presence in her life, she would have wanted to dress to please him at all times, not just when I was around.

I have known people who drank, smoked, and swore, but never in my presence. One time I asked a young mother why she never smoked in my presence. “Oh, I could never do that!” “Why not?” “Because I respect you too much.” I replied, “Don’t you respect your husband and your children?” She was stymied for an answer. But even beyond that, what about respect for God? In truth, if we had this sense of God’s presence in our lives, it would make a difference.

Furthermore, if we realized God’s presence, we would be encouraged to pray. It is only natural and easy to talk to those who are around us. Have you ever been in a home where members of the family are not speaking to one another? “Joanie, ask your mother to pass the salt.” “Joanie, tell your father that the salt is behind the potato salad.” It’s a strange feeling, and we know there has been some trouble there.

Why don’t we talk to God more often? What great blessings we deprive ourselves of when we fail to spend time alone with God. Albert Barnes in his commentary noted the prayer life of Christ. “To be alone, he rose up ‘a great while before day,’ and went into a solitary place and prayed” (Mark 1:35). With him, a grove, a mountain, a garden, furnished such a place, and, though a traveler, among strangers, and without a house, he lived in the habit of secret prayer. What excuse can they have for not praying who have a home, and who spend the morning’s precious hours in sleep, and who will practice no self-denial that they may be alone with God? O Christian! Your Savior would have broken in upon these hours and would have trod his solitary way to that mountain or grove that he might pray. He did do it. He did it to pray for you, too indolent and too unconcerned about your own salvation and that of the world to practice the least self-denial in order to commune with God! How can religion live thus? How can such a soul be saved?

Another benefit of this sense of God’s presence is freedom from fear. “*The Lord is*

my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life: Whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, My heart will not read; Though war rise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident" (Psalm 27:1-3). A similar thought is expressed in Psalm 46:1-2: "*God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear ...*" The poet has expressed it in the well-known song "Be with me Lord, and then if dangers threaten, if storms of trial burst above my head, if lashing seas leap everywhere about me, They cannot harm, or make my heart afraid" (T.O. Chisolm).

In this, I can see the trust of a little child who walks unafraid in the dark, with a little hand clasped in Daddy's strong hand. I can remember when my oldest daughter, Susan, was a little girl. She was much afraid of the dark, and if I asked her to go to the back of the house or out to the car to get something for me when it was dark, she just didn't want to go. But if Daddy was with her, and her hand was in mine, then that made all the difference in the world. She was unafraid, because Daddy was there, and he would take care of any dangers. What a blessing to have this trust in God — to feel his presence in our lives. The writer of Hebrews expresses the point in these words: "*Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have; for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we can say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What shall man do unto me?'*" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

A Recognition of God's Providential Care

Do you believe in the providence of God? Did you ever receive a gift that came at just the right time? I cannot pretend to have an insight into every event so that I can identify which particular event is providence as opposed to coincidence, but I have my "suspicions."

When Flora and I were first married and working with a small church in southeast Oklahoma among the Choctaw Indians, our salary was not calculated to put us in the upper class. My weekly wages were \$25 (in 1959). The nearest drugstore was 37 miles away. And when our son was born, the doctor and hospital were 90 miles away in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. A lot of our salary went into gas for our car. Soon after Jeff was born, a brother in Ft. Worth, Texas sent us a check for \$100, with this note: "Heard you had a boy. Thought you could use this." He had a good thought! Was God seeing to our needs?

On another occasion when things were pretty tough for us financially, we received a cashier's check in the mail for \$100. No return address on the envelope (except ours), and no signature on the check. For over a year similar checks arrived every month or two, usually for \$50. No clue as to the giver. Flora and I tried our best to identify the giver so we could thank the family. We thought we had it narrowed down, and I was going play detective. Since the envelopes were addressed with a typewriter, I was going to borrow a friend's typewriter and type our address on some paper and compare the typing with that

on the envelopes that came to us in the mail. I called the wife and asked to borrow their typewriter. “Why certainly. Is yours broken?” Since mine was not broken, I had to confess the scheme I had in mind. She laughed and replied, “Why, thank you for thinking it was us. But we are not the ones.” That was many years ago, and we still don’t know whose generosity helped us during that year when we were in need. Could this have been the providence of God? An answer to prayer for our “daily bread?”

Some believe the only benefits of prayer are psychological. That is, if you feel better after praying, then that is all that will happen. Now, it cannot be denied that one who prays, believing, has already received a blessing. But who can deny that the God who could create this universe can and does answer prayer? “*The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in it working*” (James 5:16).

Do you recognize God’s providence in your life? That is the mark of one whose mind is “in tune” with things of the Spirit.

A Grand Promise

By Ken Green

“And 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](#)).

We approach now one of the deepest passages of this most profound epistle. In the next few verses, Paul speaks to us of God’s purpose, foreknowledge, predestination, justification, and glorification. Interpretations are diverse, but we shall attempt to reach some conclusions that are consistent with the text and context as well as the general teaching of the Bible.

Observe that Paul declares this to be a matter of knowledge and confidence. He had no doubts of the truth of this statement. This is the reason that he could sing in the Philippian jail at midnight and rejoice in his Roman imprisonment.

Do we share his confidence? Can we exclaim in the face of adversity that we know that all things work together for good?

The first thing that stands out is that we must know this truth. “Know” is in the perfect tense. We must know that this is true; and it remains true today, tomorrow, and every day thereafter. You may ask: “How do we know?” There are at least three ways that help us know that God works all things together for good.

First, there is Scripture. It states this truth in many ways. Consider, for example, [Genesis 50: 19–20](#). Joseph said to them: “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” The entire story of Joseph is a study of the validity of this grand promise.

Second, there is our own experience. Most of us can recall times and places in our lives that were very difficult; places where things happened to us that we did not perceive

as good. Yet now, years later, we can look back and see God's presence. We have more joy and assurance than we did before. We can remember and believe that God was working in our lives during those trying times.

Third, there is the experience of others. Perhaps you cannot yet understand why some tragic, hurtful, or difficult thing happened to you. You do not see how it can work for good. But, by observing how God has worked in the lives of other Christians, it can give you hope and confidence that one day you will look back and see that all things work together for good.

Many desire to limit the "all things" to the things of God and the gospel. I believe the context of the passage rules against such. Paul makes this statement in the midst of a discussion of suffering ([Romans 8:18, 23, 26, 35-37](#)). He describes in these verses the particular kind of "all things" under consideration.

One may ask, "Do you believe that bereavement, illness, disappointment, and failure will work together for good?" I answer: Yes, with the qualifications stated in the passage. As McGarvey put it, "... all these present ills, hardships, adversities, afflictions, etc. are so overruled by God as to be made to combine to produce the permanent and eternal advantage and welfare..."

These things work together for good. Many things that are not good in isolation may work together for good. The condiments used by a chef to produce a palatable meal would be bitter and nauseating if tasted individually.

Furthermore, things that do not appear good to us at the moment may prove to be for our benefit. Medicine may not seem good when one is instructed to take a dose. Surgery may not be considered good. Discipline may not appear good to a child. Joseph acknowledged that the trials he suffered worked out for good ([Genesis 50:20](#)). But what is the "good" object of these things? It's not that all things work together for our comfort, material success, pleasure, convenience, leisure, or any number of things we might ascribe as good.

Paul informs us of the good in the following verse: "... *to be conformed to the image of His Son.*" Anything that makes us more like Jesus is for our ultimate and eternal good. Even He had to learn obedience by the things He suffered ([Hebrews 5:7](#); compare with [James 1:3-4](#)).

To whom is this grand promise given? It is not given to everybody, but "*to those who love God ... who are the called according to His purpose.*" Those who love God are those who walk after the Spirit ([Romans 8:4](#)); in whom the Spirit of God dwells ([Romans 8:9](#)); who are led by the Spirit of God ([Romans 8:14](#)); and who are heirs of God ([Romans 8:17](#)).

Those who are "the called" are Christians; they who have heeded and answered the call of the gospel ([Romans 1:7](#); [II Thessalonians 2:14](#)).

Such is according to "the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus" ([Eph. 3:11](#)).