

Open Heart Toward Christ And Believers

Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together into my name, there am I in the midst of them."

There is a presence of the Lord talked about here where two or three gather in His name, and the context is that they are praying and dealing with something. But this principle that I wanted to grab and then attach to another verse has to do with how we can deal with the practice of it. How does this actually happen? How does this work out.

In II Corinthians 6 I want to borrow a phrase or borrow a concept. With the Corinthians there have been difficulties, and they are sharing and helping them through something. But there needs to be a receiving back and forth. If we are helping you, you are also receiving help, and if we are sharing our lives with you, you also are sharing your lives with us.

II Corinthians 6:11: "Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians, our heart is expanded. You are not straitened in us, but you are straitened in your affections; but for answering recompense, (I speak as to children,) Let your heart also expand itself."

We have a variety of believers in the room with different translations, but I want to read from the Adventure Bible. Mine is adventurous, but so is the English of it.

Verse 11: "We have spoken to you freely, Corinthians and opened wide our hearts to you." (That concept of a wide open heart is expressed in my translation as "our hearts are expanded to you." There is an openness there, and room is made in the heart.) "We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. (So that was a hindrance for them.) And as a fair exchange, do what we are doing; basically, I speak as to my children, Open wide your hearts also." It is having a wide open heart for that fellowship.

Let's pray together:

Lord, we trust in You right now in this time. We look away to You to lead us and complete us, to speak to us and meet with us. We open our hearts to You, Lord, and we open our hearts to each other. We pray that You would bring us into the reality of fellowship and into the experience of Your presence afresh. Lord, we thank You for being with us today. Thank You for this fellowship that we have, that we so enjoy. Lord, we pray right now again in a fresh way that You would meet with us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Two or Three Open to the Lord

For me the definition of church life or church experience, if I was just going to grab a verse, I think that verse we read in Matthew 18 is at the top of the list. The concept there brings it down to only two or three people; of course it includes more. However, the simplicity of it is to gather in the Lord's name, and something new happens. It is true that as a believer, as a Christian, the Lord will never leave us nor forsake us, as it says in Hebrews. Or like Jesus when He gave the great commission in Matthew when he sent them out, He said, "I will be with you

to the end of the days; I am with you.” The Lord is always with us. As an individual believer as it says in Ephesians 4, “You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit;” you are stuck with the Holy Spirit. You can grieve the Holy Spirit, but He is there.

However, there is something unique that happens when two or three gather in His name, and He can say in a different way, “There I am. There am I among you. I am in Your midst now.” Does that mean He was not there before? It was not in the same way actually. He is always with me, but if I gather with believers and I gather in His name, something special happens. The Lord shows up, but it only happens with other believers; I cannot do this by myself. No matter how mature I get, even though I can abide, I can commune with the Lord, and I can enjoy His presence, but there is a largeness of His presence when we gather with others. You can actually understand this logically because I am not only gaining His presence directly; I am gaining His presence from the others who are gaining His presence directly. They are in His presence, and I am in His presence. Suddenly I am experiencing Christ from the side as well as from the top. I am experiencing the Lord from the believers and it is like I see Christ, but I also see Christ, and suddenly there He is in our midst. You stop seeing the believers only; you see the believers and you also see Christ in your midst.

There is the church; this is it! I just found the church, the body of Christ. I see Christ in the body; He is in charge, and He is the Head, but I also see Christ. He is moving in His body, and I am recognizing Him now as I gather in His name. But to call out to the name of the Lord, He actually needs to be Lord. To gather in His name means it is not to be in my name. You can remember what your name is like with the tower of Babel. When they built the tower of Babel in the Old Testament in Genesis, they wanted to make a name for themselves. So that is the principal of the tower of Babel. If it is in our name, we can do many great things, but it is all the tower of Babel which would be my opinions, my wishes, my desires, and basically my pride. The tower of Babel is trying to reach to the heaven to be like God, to ascend almost like Satan.

When the Lord was telling them about the tabernacle and about the Promised Land, He said, “There is a place in the land, and once you get there I will show you where it is.” Eventually, He did; it was Jerusalem. That is the place where He was going to put His name, just one spot, and they would put His house there. If you wanted to worship Him, you had to go where His name was, where His house was, and that’s it. That was His spot. It included the cross, the altar and where the sacrifices were offered. It included His presence, His opinions and His styles. When they built the tabernacle, the big deal about it was not Moses’ abilities; it was Moses following abilities. He followed the directions according to the pattern.

Our Hearts Open to Each Other

So this is like us when we gather in His name, and it is just a general concept of what He wants as we gather. We forget about our opinions, our own kingdoms, our own towers. We are open to the Lord and then suddenly we are open to each other. So what I want to get into a little more today is this: if I am willing to gather in His name, if my heart is open to the Lord, what about my heart being open to believers. I am very open to believers when they are awesome, when there are no walls in their hearts, and they are just expressing Christ. Yes, that is who I am friends with. You can receive fellowship from some people just by accident; they do

not make you do it. They are just overflowing with Christ. But we need to be able to fellowship with the rest of the Lord's people on regular boring days. There is a way for the glory of God to come among us regularly when there is no amazing message, no amazing prayer that happens, no amazing sharing, but there is Christ coming out. There is a little bit of Christ coming out, and I think there is a way to this. This comes back to that Scripture about the hearts being open to others: "Our hearts are open to you. Do not close off your affections from us. Open your hearts back also. That is the general concept.

In I Corinthians 6 the temple of the Holy Spirit is mentioned, as far as our bodies go. He is talking to them about dealing with sins and not living in sin. "Your body literally is the house of the Holy Spirit of God. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, do not act like He is not there." That realization changes your life as far as sin goes especially. God Himself has purposed to dwell within me, and I am like the house of the Holy Spirit. It is an experience of the temple. But earlier in I Corinthians 3 he is talking about the church and seeing how you build with the church. We see how he built with the Corinthian Church because he was there at the beginning. He said, "I laid a foundation there; it was Christ. See how everyone builds." And that is where he also says, "You are the temple of the Holy Spirit." At that point he is talking about the two or three gathering in My name, there I am. The Holy Spirit is within you as a believer, as in I Corinthians 6, but the Holy Spirit is among us as believers when we gather in His name. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that is different. See how you build because this is the house of God; this is where God dwells in a unique and different way.

A Dwelling Place for God

Sometime back I was thinking of this, and I was not prepared. I was contemplating these things even as the Lord was still working these things within me. The title I had was, "How to listen to a bad message." I totally scrapped that title because that is not right. Let's say that this is a bad message today; nothing is amazing and you do not hear anything that is new. How do you open your hearts to Christ? Some people do this naturally, and some people overdo it, and they are just amending everything you say. But some people have found the secret, and I do not even know if they know how they are doing it. But this is how it works. Their hearts are a room or are a place where God can dwell. There is nothing else occupying the heart; it is open to Christ. And if your heart is expanded like that, when the little bit of Christ comes out He finds a dwelling place. When Christ has a spot in your heart and He has a spot in another's heart, suddenly there He is in their midst. He needs space, and the space that He wants to occupy is in our hearts. But if it is occupied by other things, even good things, then it is difficult for Him to dwell; it is as if He is hindered. Actually, one good thing that was going on in my heart was that I was considering these words that I am talking about while we were breaking bread. But the Lord quickly reminded me, "Open your heart," because I was present with the breaking of bread, not preparing the message. With my heart open I could sense the Lord's presence, and I could fellowship with my brothers and sisters. And you know what that does? That makes a boring prayer, somebody who can barely get their prayer out, and it sounds dry on the surface; it makes it glorious. If it was Christ, sometimes we sound boring, but inside there is life and there is a lot of good things going on. If you are open to the Lord and that prayer comes out, the Lord can almost directly let you know that was Christ. Even though there was some kind of

wall, even though it did not sound like super expressive, it is not necessary. It is okay to just barely pray out your portion of Christ. If our hearts are open, we find there is Christ.

You get this the most when you care about a person a lot. Let's say it is your child or somebody that you have prayed for a lot, and maybe you helped them recently you should encourage them. Then when they pray, and it is maybe even half incorrect, however it sounds, your heart is just so open to the Lord and the Lord in them, you are so excited. I think then you are touching the heart of God, and the Lord has room in your heart to receive that portion of Christ. He is receiving it himself, but as He is upon us, there is an openness in our hearts.

Having Our Hearts Expanded

Now I have been in both spots. I was sharing a message one time, and I was actually the boring preacher, making mistakes the whole time. I was preaching the Gospel, and I just could not do it. As I was sharing, I felt a wall with the crowd but also with me. Sometimes it does not matter if you are preaching the good news, it is so powerful that if you do not have a wall in your heart it can break through everyone's walls and unbelievers can be saved. Sometimes I have experienced that, but this time I was just praying, "Oh Lord, I wish this good news that is so good in my heart could just be released, but I feel like I am a hindrance." As I was talking I was thinking of all this: "Lord, can You just do something?" But He could not do it in me. I did not have a sin going on as I was checking with the Lord. I just had a little bit of Christ, and the Lord was doing something more glorious. In the crowd was this believer whose heart was open to the Lord, and her heart was open to me. She was a believer, not an unbeliever, and she received what I said. You know how the Word of God grows in your heart once you get saved. That word expands and goes beyond what you first received when you were saved. That is life; it just grows. So the little bit of word I was sharing, which was not so powerful, expanded in this believer's heart. And as that happened she burst into tears. I knew, there is the house of God; now there are two of us who have this Word. There was a home right there, and another believer across the way received that word and opened their heart, and I could even sense it. You could see in on their face and it was like the Lord was with us: "There I am in their midst," and His presence came upon the room, not from the speaking but from the hearing, from the open heart. If He is going to have a house, He needs those who have that space in their hearts. So there is an open room right there.

A month or so ago we had a Gospel time for some youth in Emporia, and I had nothing to do except the slides for the music. I so enjoyed that time. I was not sharing the good news, I was not playing a guitar, I was not at the mike, I was not doing anything. But as I was sitting there, it was so enjoyable because when anyone shared, it was like this; our hearts are open to you. In my heart I just opened up to the Lord: "I know the good news; I know all the facts that they are saying, and, "O Lord, I am open to You." Whatever they said was edifying to me, and it was being received in my heart. In this experience I felt like it was the house of God, two or three just open to the Lord, And I sensed, "I am just part of His presence coming upon the room because my heart is actually open to this. If my heart is stubborn and I am waiting (which I have done this) for something really exciting to be said or I need a really fun story or I need some teaching that is new. I do not mean new like incorrect, but new like that is a hard verse I have

never understood, and now I see. That can be used by God to open up our hearts. Sometimes he will use a fresh teaching, and you are just like, “Whoa!” And as the revelation comes your heart opens up. I have seen some speakers do that just on a regular basis. It was like the secret weapon that opened hearts. Here is a little Bible nugget that you have never heard before, and you are going, “Wow!” That is useful, but when the guys have no weapons and they just have their little bit of Christ, you have to be able to be open to the little bit of Christ. So we ourselves can expand our hearts and make room for the Lord and actually receive Christ that way. Now we have to have a clear heart from sins, and we will get into that.

However, when someone shares for five minutes or longer, there is a way they can tell that some in the room are receiving the Christ that they have. The more that we are open to the Lord, we are gathering in His name. We are doing this thing of allowing Him to occupy the room with His presence. When our hearts are open it is not open to a human’s opinions and their ideas; we are only open to Christ. So there is a filter there, but we are trying to find Christ. We are so trying to find Christ that if there is a wall in the other person, we are sort of knocking on the wall and breaking a little crack in the wall. I have seen it happen, and I have seen it happen to me. Maybe I have a little wall going on in my heart, and there is some dear saint in the group whose heart is towards the Lord, “Yes, I am listening.” They have a rope, and they are pulling down a wall, and it is okay; Christ is here. They were open to Christ, and the Lord is actually doing something more glorious.

When we prepare for the breaking of bread time, we typically have somebody to come up and share for five minutes or so. There are people who pray about that ahead of time, and there are a few who say, “Yes, this is what we should do.” Do you know what can happen that I think is glorious? Everyone who was in on that is in on it, and when someone comes up and opens their mouth, there are already hearts that are set who get the burden because they agreed on it ahead of time. They say, “Yeah, that is what we should do, that is what we should share.” As that is shared, at that point it almost does not matter how bad they do. Let’s assume that no one is getting up except this one person who is trying to walk with the Lord. They stumbled through it, and whatever they did, they messed up. It was not as glorious as it was on Saturday when they shared with everybody. Maybe they shared too much on Saturday. Sometimes you just spill your guts, and there is no more guts. Nevertheless, they got up and shared, but it was very little from what I knew was there. But if your heart is open and you are one of those guys who already knew it, the two or three prayers that come right after that are often like the actual opening. It is almost like a package because the Lord has a home right there. He already has the burden placed in several people, and it makes it so much easier when someone gets up and they are just a stumbling fool. But we are fools for Christ, and those others bring the Christ altogether, and by the time you get going there is a glory that is to be had in the house of God, and the glory belongs only to God. It only belongs to Him, and I think for that reason He makes us look really foolish sometimes.

I have had such a good time of prayer sometimes, and then I open my mouth and it is like, “Oh that sounded so dumb, so bad.” But if that happens, we should not hesitate to pray. We do not wait until we have this bubbling-over awesome prayer that is going to change the whole room, and everyone is going to have to take a breath after that. If we wait for that, who gains

the glory all the time? Occasionally, that may happen; you may have that kind of prayer, then just go for it. If you have it, the Lord has need of it for right now. But normally, you just have your little bit of, "Thank You, Lord. You forgave me today." As you do it, it is actually Christ. You do not have to break through the wall because you are part of the house of God. You are a room in the house of God. You are a space on the floor in the house of God. As you share, others have the rooms available for God to be in, and they are like, "There is Christ." Our hearts are open to each other, and even two or three can know, "Here I am in your midst. You are in My name, you are open to each other," and His presence will come through.

When we break bread, I think it is the glory of the time. No one is sharing that long on purpose while we are breaking bread. Even if someone opens, it is just to lead a charge. It is like, "Guys, today we are getting into hope; charge." And then we may be on hope or the love of God. Or here we are remembering the Lord's suffering. Whatever it is, it is just barely, and we do not even notice each other. We just say, "I remember the Lord; it is so glorious because He is glorious." The church is glorious when you find Christ in the church.

The Glorious Church

When I first caught a glimpse of the teaching of the church or the revelation of the church in the future, my catch was to do with the New Jerusalem. It was like some future time and there is no way this is happening. It is like the walls are **cedared** because it is so perfect, and it was a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. But through time you can see that glorious church is in our midst. You have to open your hearts to Christ and close your eyes to other things. But you can see the glorious church without spot or wrinkle; it is actually among us because Christ is among us. He has no spot, He has no wrinkle; Christ in you is so perfect. Your history in Christ is so perfect that when we get the glory of God, when we open our hearts to Him, His glorious church is in action, and there is the house of God. When we gather together for prayer, that verse in Matthew 18 is like that. We are gathering, and we are praying.

I can honestly say that I learned how to pray here with the Lord's people. I had an attitude before I came where I only wanted to pray if the prayer meeting was great or if the person who shared the burdens was burdened. What I call burden is an overflow of burden, and what I learned from the Lord is that people are burdened, but they are just not overflowing sometimes. Maybe they are having a tired day, but they are actually burdened; it is just kind of in there, and it is not always their responsibility to really express. Now I think it is great if that happens. I think sometimes somebody can share with burden and we all catch it, and that is great. If you are sharing a burden it is really helpful if you can be so burdened.

I really learned here from other people praying that the glory belongs to the Lord. His glory is in His house, and He comes upon us and burdens all of the saints, a little bit here and a little bit there, and when we gather in His name, there He is. So it is not who is leading the time, it is not who has an amazing prayer; it is actually those little five second prayers added up, and by the time you sit back you are like, "Nothing amazing just happened, but something of Christ just happened and that is amazing. It is like that Scripture says, "I had rather be a door keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. The tents of the wicked to me are just so large like a circus tent, an amazing thing. The door keeper in the house of God is like a boring

day with God's people who are just sharing Christ, and it is better than the most exciting day when we organize it and we do not sense Christ. They could still be Christians, but if our hearts are not open to the Christ in each other, and everything depends on one person, that does not always work out. Or if our hearts are not open to each other, the things that end up happening are not Christ anyway. When we are praying together, and I have never prayed about this topic, but my heart is open to the Lord, and my heart is open to that believer who is burdened on this topic.

This week I was leading a prayer group, and one of the topics was something from the news, and because I do not watch the news enough I had no idea what they were talking about. So I asked if someone else could pray to start this topic? As they prayed, I opened my heart to the Lord, and I could sense the burden in their hearts. It was so good; it was glorious, and I could join in with that because I am part of the house of God. It does not matter that it is not my grandmother's toe, if someone else is burdened for their grandmother. This was a larger topic that we were praying for as the church, and it was just glorious.

When we are doing fellowship times, maybe on a Friday night for Bible fellowship or on the Sunday that is an open sharing time, people are sharing. Sometimes it is the most glorious thing however we handle it. I think it is easier on people who share because we do not expect them to do well. From now on there is no need to get up and say, "You know, I did not prepare, and I am really nervous." We can just toss that aside; we all know that no one is prepared, and no one is any good at sharing, so that is okay. But you get up and share Christ, and we are so interested in the Lord in you that you find it is very fun to share with God's people on those open Sundays. Just step up to the mike and share your simple time with the Lord. You will walk away edified because there are some open hearts in this room that so love you and are so open to you that they become the house of God. As His presence is with you, it is also with them. I just shared my little bit of Christ, and then I sensed that you received my little bit of Christ, and it is glorious. Those fellowship times are glorious. Sometimes one will ask who shared, and I purpose to think, "Okay, maybe I will go back on the video and fast forward, and I can tell you." But sometimes I do not even think about it that way. It was so edifying that I cannot even tell you what that person just said, but I know they were sharing something of Christ. It may have come out messy, but it was so good because that is just what is going on right there.

The Opening of Our Hearts to All Believers

This openness in our hearts is something that has to be developed. It is something that is practiced on the individual fellowship level as well. When we gather together, I think we should be open, "Lord, I am open to You and open to receive from others." But when we are fellowshiping with believers, there is something of a purposing to open our hearts to believers that I think we need to develop more and more. It is the way of fellowship, but it is the way of fellowshiping with those who are not exactly like you. It is the way of coming into the house of God even though if it came down to the details you have some different understanding on the details. It is something that is brought up in the Scriptures like in Romans 14; it is how we receive believers.

Some of our brothers coming today were introduced as beloved brothers, as believers. It is just so good to know them as a believer. Josh announced his friend as a friend. I want to tell you, he is a born-again believer. He shared Christ last night, and it was really good. Sometimes 'friend' is like a secret code word, "This is my gospel friend." But actually we are friends and we are brethren. It was glorious.

In Romans 14:1 he is basically telling about when you receive each other as believers, "Now him that is weak in the faith, receive, (receive that person,) not to the determining of questions of reasoning...

Romans 15:7: "Wherefore receive you one another, according as Christ also has received you to the glory of God."

I think this should be our principal for receiving each other. Has Christ received that believer? It actually changes everything. What kind of Christian are you? They say, "I am a Christian." "What type? What is the name of your church? What type of Christian are you?" Sometimes I have fun with that question, and I will say, "Try to guess. Ask me Bible questions and figure me out." I have been called every denomination now because I like a little bit of all these things whenever I find Christ, if you are doing it the way Christ does it. When He looks down, He does not kind of categorize us; He says, "I receive that one, and I receive that one, and I receive that one on the basis of His precious blood." And they boldly come near to Him. This one who is so confused with teaching, weak in faith, just a mess, I receive him. But if you try to fellowship with someone that is a mess, you cannot fellowship on teachings all the time because they are a mess, but you can fellowship on Christ if your heart is open to them.

Now with some of them you have to dig a little bit, and you might dig down enough to be able to ask, "How did you meet the Lord?" Sometimes, while I am digging, I find out that they are not actually a believer. That happened a while ago. I was talking to somebody after a Bible study, and we were having a great talk about what was going on in the Bible study. It was like the experience that Paul had when he asked, "Did you all receive the Holy Spirit?" It was kind of like that. You are trying to fellowship, and they can say a lot of God things or Christian things or Bible things, but the question is, "Do you know the Lord?" That is rude to say it that way, but Paul said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" It was great because that bluntness allowed him to say, "Actually, we did not know there was a Holy Spirit to be received." And then you are able to help them. When they are open to the Lord, and they want to be Christians, but they are just not there yet, you can fellowship them into fellowship. But if they are Christians, who are different from us, here is the thing I have been learning. It is not about downgrading to that Christian's level. You may be the smartest one in the room, but you are not the Christest one in the room. Christ is glorious, and He is glorious with a brand-new believer, the same as the most mature believer. He expands if you open your heart to him. And when a brand-new believer shares their little bit of Christ, it is not about, "Okay, now I can take that teaching off of my mind. Now I understand this or I have been through that experience." Let's pause for a minute. Everything that can happen in our minds and expand our hearts as you hear Christ is like, "Oh Christ!" It is like He makes room in your heart, and He expands in your heart. He found a home in your heart because you just heard Christ coming from that new believer or that confused

believer, and there is Christ; I just found Christ.” And we are actually fellowshiping. It does not matter if whatever they are saying is a mess. If you find Christ, there is something that is edifying.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, “I am so desiring to see you all. I have been hindered, but I want to see you.” And he actually explained about having mutual edification. I want to share a portion of faith with you, and I want to receive your portion for me. This is the apostle Paul who wrote this awesome 16th chapter Roman’s letter. It is just a glorious teaching on the Gospel and beyond, and he said, “When I come there, I cannot wait to be edified by your portion of Christ. I want each of us receiving from one another. This is kind of how it works. When you receive someone, you do it the way God receives them. He receives Christ in them. The Lord Jesus receives us when we are a mess also.

Let’s say that I am receiving a believer who is not very mature, and they seem to be out of their overflowing abundant first love, and I am just bored with the way they talk and the way they pray. I am just bothered. I would like to ask a question though. What is Christ doing with them right now? How is He working with them right now? That is different from my stubborn heart that is closed off to them. I think they should be acting like this or talking like this. They should be excited like I am excited. They should understand more. But how is Christ working with them? He is so gentle; He is so drawing; He is so working with us when we are in our dry times. If you have ever been in a dry time, you know He still talks to you, He is still walking with you, He is carrying you through, and He is still working with you. If we who are believers receive each other the way Christ receives us, it makes a major difference. The one thing that Christ does not do However, if someone is walking in sin purposefully, it is all on the surface of their conscience and they know what is going on. Or if they are sharing a bunch of horrific things against the Lord, do not receive him. It is kind of like in II John, where he says, “Whoever goes forward and does not stay in this teaching, do not receive him.

II John 10-11: “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, and greet him not; for he who greets him partakes in his wicked works.”

This is a terrible thing to mention, but if someone has really gone away from Christ, we are not talking about that. We are not talking about receiving things outside of Christ, even if you would say this is a believer. What they are doing is either they are completely living in sin, like the believer in Corinth, who had to actually be asked not to come to church meetings. Or if it is somebody that we find in John’s letter to whom he is saying, “This person is teaching something totally different than the good news, and they are confused on Christ.” You do not want to receive just because you are open; that is the wrong kind of openness. That is not what I am talking about.

He actually said, and it is kind of cool the way it is phrased, “Do not receive him into the house.” This is what he is talking about, “They are knocking at your door. There are two in nice outfits with white shirts knocking at your door. So do not let them into your house.” That stuff is not to be received into the house of God. If it is not of God, it is not God. It is not open to some ecumenical thing where we are just trying to be friends with everybody. We are trying to find Christ, and if He is finding a spot in a believer, we should be open to that. If we fellowship

with each other on the level that Christ is currently fellowshiping with us, our levels of fellowship will expand, and that believer, who seems very dry, their feet get washed, and they are back in the presence of the Lord. This happens just on the regular, and sometimes what is needed is those smaller portions of Christ to come out, and then there will be receiving and sharing.

This is almost like a testimony of discovery in that I have been finding Christ in believers with all kinds of background. And the more we go on with the Lord together, and I think this is among us too, the more we are discovering more of Christ, and your heart gets open to that. When you find a believer who is stubborn in their teaching because they have a background that has told them a certain thing, which may be incorrect, but they are really big on this teaching. So you fellowship together and receive each other in Christ. As you have the house of God space in your heart and they begin to have the house of God space, two or three gathered in His name, and there He is.

The best way to get clear on teaching is by the Holy Spirit helping you. The Holy Spirit actually teaches you; it works. When someone else tries to correct you, even though they can outmaneuver you in the Word or they can outargue you and show you many verses, sometimes all that happens is that they beat you in your mind. So you actually get a little more stubborn because you think, "Ahh, I know there is someone else that could beat you in that argument." Then you are determined to find those other messages that believe the same thing as you; it is just different. But if we open our hearts to believers and we receive each other, one thing that is going to happen is that we are going to get corrected, and this is a fun way to be corrected. You hear Christ in someone many times, and it is not even a correction; it is like an upgrade. I just got expanded in teaching because of that person who has wrong teaching, but they have a little sprinkle of rightness to it. Most wrong teaching is a little bit right. If you are completely arguing with somebody, and they are a believer walking with the Lord, usually they have something for you to receive. And the way to help each other is to receive one another as Christ has received us. Can we actually open our hearts to each other and have some fellowship? Someone sees something, and they are really stubborn on it, but try to see what they see. It is not always the teaching part; sometimes it is the feeling of it. But there is something of Christ, if they have seen it. Now when it has nothing to do with Christ, then I agree it is really bad teaching. But usually the age old arguments among Christians are about heaven or hell, baptism, free will or election, all the basics, all of these things. If you find somebody who has a different idea from you, you open your heart to Christ and hear them out. Then they are able to share, and they can be listened to. They are able to be loved by the love of Christ. As you allow them to fellowship and share their portion of Christ, but not determining the questions of doctrine like it says in Roman 14:1. Do not try to just take the portion where they are wrong, but actually pick out where they are Christ-like: "I just found Christ right there; that was good." This is super fun to do when you are studying the book of Revelation because we are all wrong with Revelation, at least a little bit; right?

But I am so excited to fellowship on end time things because I like to do charts, going over them. I was sharing with some believers a while back in New Hampshire on Revelation, and everybody was wrong, including me. We were all wrong, but it was so fun seeing the smiles on

everyone's face. At least five of them disagreed with me, but they had so much joy in their hearts because they were discovering the way to find Christ in Revelation. Even when we disagreed we found Christ, and some of them disagreed with me right then. But the Lord was training me to listen to them; is there something there? Actually, as a sister was sharing, and it was wrong; but it was right a little bit. So here is what I received. It expanded me a little more or deepened more of what I had seen, and it was just a little extra flavor to it. That was actually pretty good; there was something there even though part of it was wrong. So I am not saying there is no truth that you cannot figure out or that the Bible is not very clear on it. I think if we go the way of fellowship we actually ascend. There is more and more clarity, but with some kind of peace in our hearts, some kind of joy, some kind of being able to stick together.

The Unity of the Spirit

This is that basic thing that is talked about in Ephesians 4 about the unity of the spirit. You strive hard to not run away from each other, but you diligently stick together. This is a real thing in the church of wanting to run away because we do not see the same or we do not practice the same or we do not understand the same. But when you diligently stick together, by the end of that chapter it is like you are arriving at the unity of the faith. You are discovering something. This works because Christ shows up in His glory, and then our mouths stop, and the activity of our mind kind of ceases, and we see Christ. Sometimes you find that it is okay if you do not understand this all the way. It is okay if we do not agree all the way; I just found Christ.

I was arguing with a believer months ago on how to help new believers be filled with the Holy Spirit which is a hard one. As we were going through these things, this question came up: "When does someone receive the Holy Spirit?" So this is one of those hard things, and there are all kinds of differences even among a few of us in this room.

Nevertheless, the Lord broke through by His presence, and it actually happened because our hearts got melted together. Somebody said something a little harsh, and then somebody just pleaded with the brother, "Ah brother, it is just me. Don't talk like that." And we just melted with each other. And we are like, "Ahh, you are right." And we just started fellowshiping, and the Lord's presence was there. I got upgraded on my understanding, although it did not change the teaching necessarily, but I saw the Spirit of what he had caught. That was actually something, and I was able to better express what I wanted to say. By the end of the time, it was not that we came to a hundred percent conclusion, but we found our way to walk together. It was so good.

It probably seems like I am just up here rambling with stories and illustrations, but there is something glorious in the church. I just want to testify as a believer that I found it, and we have been finding it. I think I am finding a way to regularly do this, and I think it has to do with the Lord wanting space in our hearts to have His house. If this is the house of God, He has to dwell somewhere, and if you open your hearts to Him, He has a space right there. When Solomon's temple was finished, it took all those different parts and furniture, but everything got in there. Then suddenly the glory of the living God came upon the place. Actually, the priests who were ready to do their routines in the house of God had to leave the building. I think it is like that sometimes. That would be awesome if we all had to pause for a moment because the glory of

God stopped us from talking or doing anything. But sometimes it happens in a small way. When we sense the glory of the Lord, our extracurricular activities, our extra Christ-occurred activities, our extra things in our minds and hearts sort of pause, and you just see Christ.

Hearts Open to the Lord

Peter had the right idea when Jesus showed up on the Mount of Transfiguration: “We need to make some tents.” Now he was wrong because he thought two of them were for Moses and Elijah, but he was right because there were three of the believers, Peter, James and John. It is almost like the tents were in their hearts. That is why when God removed Moses and Elijah and He just had Christ, “Here is where the glory is. The cloud overshadowed, stopped everything, and the Voice said, “Listen to My Son. But the tents were actually in the hearts of Peter, James and John, and the Lord shined His glory because He had those three whose hearts were so open to Him.

Why did He just choose those three? Why did He choose those three when He had to do a healing one time or when He had to pray in the garden of Gethsemane? It was because their hearts were open to the Lord, and this is the principal that Christians often miss. There were twelve of them, but they were a big mix of hearts. However, if the Lord can find three tents, three tabernacles where He can dwell, He can perform miracles; He can show up in His glory. He can do marvelous things. He can pray His prayers when He has two or three whose hearts are open to Him, and He will pull us aside like that. I know that there is a lot going on in the room, but open your heart to Christ right now, and you will find the glory of the Lord.

So I think on the practice level it does come down to this with believers. It does not end up being a thing that more and more we can train ourselves and discover this while we are having lunch, having meals together, while we are having fellowship. I think we will find Christ in the body of Christ; this is our testimony. Our expression here is that we are just the Lord’s people, and He has gathered us in His name. We are just Christians, and we are actually for the whole body of Christ. Every believer who does not even come into this room is our believer because they are the Lord’s believer. Our hearts are expanded to the whole body of Christ, and it does not matter if their hearts are closed off to us. It is just like the Scripture in II Corinthians 6: “Our hearts are expanded to you, oh Corinthians, but your hearts are kind of stuck for a moment. Open up your hearts.”

That is our plea all the time. Part of our expression is that we are one with all God’s people; this is our stance. We are not creating a new separate single thing. We are not an entity of a hundred and some people. We are part of the body of Christ, and our hearts are so much broader than this building. When we gather in this building, it actually gathers more than the building. It is actually Christ who is expanded and reaching all of those believers. That is why when a believer comes in our midst they are already at home. The home is Christ, and Christ is at home, and if they are walking with Christ, they are one of us. You are among us because Christ has received you.

I Corinthians 14 is describing a basic fellowship time. One of the people who comes into their midst is maybe an unbeliever, but one of them is a simple believer. Let’s say a simple

believer for the moment represents a Christian that just does not get this. They are only used to hearing a sermon or maybe they do not fellowship, or sense God's presence in His people. But when they come into our midst, there is an openness in our hearts to each other. It mentions the preaching, they are prophesying, they are sharing, hearts are laid bare before the Lord, and that person says, "God is among you. Surely God is among you." But to have that experience, we cannot put it on the other person; it is on all of us.

So my encouragement today is that we open our hearts to each other. He makes everything glorious, and if we do that, our most boring times together will be glorious. And I can tell you that it has been a privilege being here all of these years, and even with boring meetings sometimes, every time I have gone away, I have loved coming back. Every time I have traveled, I have loved coming back because I could say, "I'd rather dwell in the most boring times among God's people whose hearts are open to Him.

Let's pray together:

Lord, I feel right now there are hearts in the room that are open to You. We pray that You would search our hearts and see if there is any wicked way in them, see if there are any walls, hindrances or obstacles or unforgiveness, any thought against other believers that have created a wall, who right now are repenting from these things. Those whom you have received, Lord, those whom you are receiving right now, our hearts are open to You, our hearts are open to those believers. We are making room for you, Lord, to have your house in our midst. We worship You and thank You for these precious times together and for Your glory among Your people. Lord, we can say honestly that it is a glorious church. There is no spot, there is no wrinkle. We see Christ, and our hearts are open to each other; our hearts are open to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.