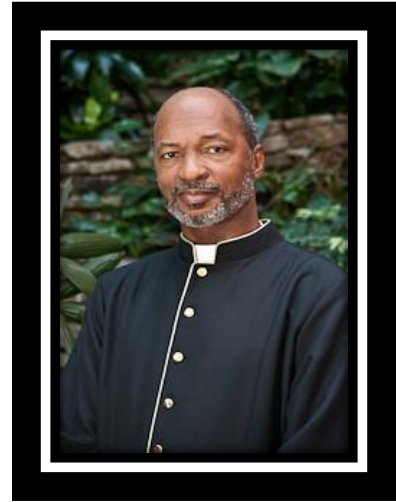


## The Bishop's Corner

### *Do you have a relationship with God?*

Praise the Lord Saints,

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us--that which we have seen and heard and declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:1-7, NKJV).



We know a lot about God, but not all of us have established a meaningful relationship with Him. Establishing a relationship with God relies on our personal transformation because we are born in sin and shaped by iniquity (Psalms 51:5). We sometimes have to experience our world being turned upside down so the Lord can change us and bring us into a relationship with Him, for God's most precious gift to us is eternal life in His presence (Romans 6:23). Jesus had to die to free us from the power of sin, and by repenting and accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we enter a relationship with God. We are welcomed into His family and become His children (Romans 8:14-17).

The presence of the Holy Spirit within us enables us to commune with God the Father (John 14:16-17). To connect with God in the spiritual realm, we must first have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us (John 4:24). The depth of our relationship with God reflects the depth of our faith in Him through His Son. Just as Jesus placed complete trust in God, enabling Him to endure the cross, we too must have faith in God to endure. Without a relationship with God, we cannot genuinely pray for His will to be done, as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-45).

It is so important that we allow God to establish a relationship with us so the Holy Spirit has free reign to mold us into the likeness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). God can only have as much of a relationship with us as we are willing to have with Him. As stated in James 4:8 (NKJV), “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” In essence, our relationship with God is a two-way connection, and the extent of its richness is determined by our commitment to draw closer to Him.

God bless you,

Bishop Charles D. Smith  
Gulf Coast Jurisdiction

*For more of Bishop Smith's teachings, go to the Gulf Coast Jurisdiction Website at <http://www.gulfcoastclgi.org> and click on “Encouragement” then “Teachings.”*