

## HOW TO FIND REALITY IN YOUR MORNING DEVOTIONS

You must at all costs make quiet time. Give up work if need be. Your influence finally depends upon your own firsthand knowledge of the unseen world, and on your experience of prayer. Love and sympathy and tact and Insight are born of prayer.

**Lord, teach us to pray. Luke 11:1.**

### I. THE WORD OF GOD. THE BIBLE

The Bible contains food values suited to different needs. It will have no claim on you whatever apart from your own sense of need. Regard the Bible as God's case-book, recording the experiences of various men in finding God as well as the repeated instances of God's revealing more and more of Himself to men. God is a God of variety. He makes use of diverse personalities to express His Will. Be sure you have some definite plan of approach to the Word. Then work your plan.

Make a study of :

- A. The Bible as a whole
- B. Individual Books
- C. The Personality Delineated
- D. The Evident Principles set forth
- E. The Unfolding of God's Promises.

The objective will vary with the interest of the reader.

#### Five Rules for Vitalizing Your Grasp of the Scriptures

**1. Read It Through.** Get something you can use. Do not attempt merely to knish so many chapters within a given period. No sensible person attempts to rush through every item on the menu. Search until a verse grips you. You may have to read through many chapters before you find the nugget or the pearl of great price. Tons of earth yield scarcely a gram of precious radium. *Be* willing to sink deep shafts into the Word. Such sagacity is always rewarded with the discovery of new Truth.

Read your New Testament in a foreign language, if possible. Secure one in Modern English such as Moffat's, or Weymouth's or Godspeed's. A Christian is one who is trying to be like Jesus and completely mastered by Him. If this is true, then, spend much time in the priceless Portrait Galleries, the Four Gospels. Study how Jesus lived. Then try to imitate Him.

**2. Pray In It.** Ask God to open the Word to you and bring the Truth to light so that you might behold wondrous things. When a discovery is made apply what you have found to your own immediate problems. Remember that the Scriptures were written by God-intoxicated men. They knew sin but they found God. Seek to understand their enthusiasm for righteousness. Interpret their longings in terms of modern problems. They were men of faith and of heroic action. Through weakness they were made strong. Pray that God might guide you as significantly as He did these of whom you read. Study the habits of Jesus, especially His communion with the Father.

**3. Write It Down.** Mark your Bible. Blaze the trail where the Light found you in your hour of need. Keep a notebook of your difficulties and of your discoveries. Memorize faithful guide posts that led you home just as darkness set in. Your Bible will become for you a record of spiritual achievements if you will take time to register, the hill top moments when you saw things large that really were large. But we have the mind of Christ.

**4. Work It Out.** A Christian is primarily concerned with his personal relationship to the Lord Jesus. If he is right with his Master he cannot but be right with those about him. The ordinary round of withering routine affords a rich testing ground for the message of Jesus, as found in the Gospels. After all He is a very practical Saviour. He came to give men life in greet abundance. His message is amazingly simple. At least, it is easy to understand what He wants each one of us to do. His words and His example and His influence still fling down their challenge upon us to Be Christ like.

**5. Pass it On.** We lose that which we selfishly hoard. You keep spiritual treasures only by sharing them. The servant who hid his talents in the earth through fear lost all. Jesus bade men return home to tell what great things had been done for them.

A functioning Christian is the strangest argument for Christianity. Never forget that other men are just as hungry for the Truth you have laid hold upon as you have been. Avoid being afraid to share crusts of bread even when you have not yet been given the entire loaf. Starving men grasp at the spiritual crumbs that fall from your own tables. Come See. This is the first step. The inevitable follows. Quickly, Go Tell.

## **II. THE POWER OF GOD. PRAYER**

Prayer is the breath of the Christian, the cable from the Power House, the channel from the Reservoir, the warmth from the Sun. Prayer is a loving Father's gift to the objects of His grace, His own children.

### **Suggestions as to Effective Prayer.**

**1. Have a definite time each morning.** The morning period before breakfast is most desirable. Day telegrams are delivered immediately. Night letters are delayed until the following morning. Give God the first moments of your day. It will remove the friction from the rest of the day's duties. The Psalmist wrote, In the morning will I order my prayer unto thee, and will keep watch. It was a habit of Jesus, a great while before it was day.

**2. Have a definite place where you can be alone.** Learn to concentrate on heavenly thoughts even surrounded by others amid real confusion. It is an art to become un-mindful of others when absorbed in communion. Seek the out of doors frequently to feel the holy hush of nature newly born. Make your bedroom a gateway into His presence. Shut the door on the world and all that would distract. Closet yourself with the Lord Jesus. Let nothing on your part make such intimacy difficult.

**3. Pray aloud if your thoughts are tempted to wander.** Prayer is not limited to a posture or a time or an expression of the lips. Prayer is an attitude of the heart toward God. Communion is not restricted to a single period of the day. He seeth the heart. Men of God have found audible prayer a means of making more real their fellowship with Him. Jesus sometimes prayed aloud. We are richer since men heard His petitions. Adopt the practice that best, satisfies your own spiritual hunger.

**4. Be willing to agonize in prayer.** In the Garden Jesus prayed with costly intensity. Do not trifle. You are in God's presence. Come before Him with real problems whether large or small, that demand His power. Learn to throw the burden on God. It is His Kingdom. He possesses all the resources. We sin when we expect too little of Him. He has infinite time and infinite power at His disposal. Jacob wrestled with the Angel. He dared to keep his hold. It meant life to Jacob. I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. God attaches Himself to men who will ask and seek and knock. Believe in Him and love Him unto the end. He will give thee the desires of thy heart. God is not offended by our asking too much of Him. The more we expect of Him the less we are likely to be disappointed.

### **Obstacles to Fruitful Prayer:**

**1. Preoccupation.** Jesus urged men to be reconciled first with their brothers. Then return to the altar to worship. God has all the time in the world. He waits for a chance when you can give Him a respectable interview. Do your other tasks that seem so urgent. Then return to God. He will still be waiting for you. Do not rob your Best Friend of the privilege of knowing your inmost thought afar off. A sense of being hurried will rob you of the enrichment that such prayer yields to believers.

**2. Physical Unfitness.** Repeated loss of sleep makes spiritual communion difficult if not impossible. When the mind is clouded with other things and preoccupied with the cares of the world, these choke the channel. Insincere prayers seldom rise above our heads. Men must learn to buffet their bodies to bring them into subjection in earnest, so that they might be fit temples for the Spirit. Peter and the others failed Jesus in the hour they could have served Him best. They simply were overcome with sleep.

**3. Conscious Sin.** Continuance in any known or cultivated sin cuts the cable. Sin short circuits the system that links a man to God. Lack of complete surrender, unwillingness to follow the Light as discovered, selfishness in any form, poisoned springs of thought, all form permanent non-conductors to the spirit of Christ likeness.

**4. Unsuspected Sin.** The closer one comes to the Lord Jesus the more glaring the defects that keep us from Him. One must be on his guard lest he imagine that a surrendered will faces no severe temptation. Frequently when the grosser evils are driven

out smug, self-satisfied, and exceedingly subtle sins escape banishment. Tiny impurities on the lens of a great telescope distort the image perceptibly. An un-forgiving spirit of bitter, destructive criticism, or of hatred toward men or nations makes prayer a hollow mockery. Envy and petty jealousy add their vicious malignance. A Christian cannot love and hate at the same time. He can-not serve two masters. For one is your Master, even Christ.

### **Methods in Prayer. Four Steps in the Process**

These steps are not intended to be the only method of prayer. They do represent the route over which many have found reality through Christ. You are to adopt what seems to be most applicable to you.

**1. Get tuned in.** You are the greatest obstacle to God. One must get his own spiritual instrument in harmony. A symphony orchestra generally gets in tune before attempting the difficult program. Gifted musicians with instruments in perfectly adjusted rhythm respond to the merest suggestion from their conductor. We must be as responsive to God's loving direction and desire in the symphony of our own lives.

Repeat well known passages from the Word that bring Him close to you. Read the words of some hymn that makes it easier for you to think high thoughts. Softly hum a melody from some precious hymn that has frequently refreshed you. When you feel that contact has been established begin your prayers with Thanksgiving. There is nothing too small, nor too great for you to thank God for. Assure Him of your gratitude and implicit love. When you have thought of God's goodness and purity and power you will be impelled to make your Confession. Breathe out the bad air of your sins and failures. Breathe in the pure air that He alone can give. Pray earnestly that the Truth may break through all barriers and find you. Prayer links a man with the Infinite. Nothing must be permitted to interfere with this holy relationship.

**2. Daily Requests.** Pray for the day's special opportunities and perplexities. Ask His blessing on your appointments, on your period of refreshment, on the particular burdens the day is to lay upon you. You cannot weary God with your petitions however small they may be. Jesus assures us that our Father scans the obituary column for fallen sparrows. He wants us to bring to Him the little perplexities. It is so much easier to take to Him the really big difficulties when once we have had enough confidence in His willingness to shed light upon the most insignificant requests. A man who prays only for himself and his own interests is yet miles from the Kingdom. A Christian's prayers should begin at home and encircle the whole round earth.

**3. Objects for Intercession.** Prayer is not limited to the requests for a single day. There is a Kingdom to be brought in. Jesus bade those closest Him to pray for the advance of this Kingdom, Thy Kingdom come. We cannot utter this petition for the coming of the Kingdom on earth unless we are willing to work for its complete realization here on earth. God entrusts to us the lever of prayer that we might have a real share in this heroic venture. They ought always to pray and not to faint, covers himself until he identifies himself with universal ends. The Kingdom of God is the one universal end. Nothing is too insignificant to pray over if it concerns your own life or the life of a friend or your community or the world at large. God's infinite all waits for our little all.

**4. Individuals for Whom to Pray.** Jesus told Peter He had prayed for him. When once a man catches the vision of what the Lord Jesus really means, his instinctive desire is to share his discovery with another. Individual prayer makes it easier for the Lord Jesus to slip across the threshold of a human heart. Prayer makes such miracles possible. Include among those for whom you pray, those you love most in all the world. Thank God for your friends by name. Then pray that the Truth might come home to those who have not found Him great and good and near. One rises refreshed after having asked God's richest blessing on those for whom he has prayed. It is a further compensation to have communed with The Best Friend and also with those who are closest to our hearts, together with those we long to help. Love never asks how much must I do, but how much can I do.

### **III. THE GUIDE OF GOD. THE HOLY SPIRIT**

One cannot understand the progress of the Christian Church in the first century without appreciating the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had been given to men in the Old Testament, This Gift seemed available to a limited group of individuals. Jesus promised the gift of the Spirit in great abundance to them that believed. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given without measure. It is tragic how little Christians make of the power thus imparted through the Spirit. We know God. We love Jesus. But the Spirit seems an unreal accessory in a theological formula. The Spirit giveth life. He is God's Messenger. The Spirit has been given to illumine the Word, to bring the Truth to light and to teach us how to pray. The Spirit guides men. He

also prepares men for the God directed message and messenger. Coincidences are merely God's Providences." In the reading of the Word and in your petitions for the most part YOU have been the agent. YOU have done most of the talking. You have asked Him for particular help for the day. Now let GOD speak to you. He will guide you if you take your hands off your life and let Him. This is the most difficult period of the whole effort. It is likewise the most profitable. Surely God can and will communicate His purposes to men who seek for guidance from General Headquarters. Ships at sea or fighting regiments move forward only when they receive specific orders. Investment corporations employ their own private telegraph wires in closing important transactions. Brokers are dependent upon the stock ticker for market quotations. A Christian should be in constant communication with his Major Partner. The Spirit makes such guidance possible.

## **Two Requirements.**

**1. Be willing to listen to what seems God's voice.** It requires a delicate spiritual ear to hear Him speak. Try to put out of mind everything that might distract your attention. It should not be thought incredible for your Creator to implant His thought in your mind. All things are possible to men who believe. Be willing to listen twice as long as you have prayed. Give God two-thirds of the whole interview. He makes His Will known in the gift of an idea. Record in your prayer manual the highest thoughts that come to you each morning. When one is wholly receptive to God's tiniest suggestion, he shall know what God wants done through his own witness. Do not hang up the long distance receiver until you have heard His message. Your Father desires to speak with you. He has some spiritual gift to impart. Give Him the chance to make His immediate Will known.

**2. Be willing to act on the message God gives through the Holy Spirit.** You do not ooze into doing his will. You need to act. When Light has come the next step is to translate the guidance into significant action. In the commands of Jesus to His disciples to "Go into all the world," he added "Lo I am with you!" "Go" and "Lo" stand together. When God made plain His Will to the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane there was instant obedience. "Not my will but Thine." God's part is to guide. Our part is to follow the Light when it comes. The Ethiopian Eunuch or Cornelius or the Apostle Paul would have been lost to the Church of Christ if Philip or Peter or Ananias had refused to obey the prompting guidance of the Spirit. Spiritual miracles are possible when men are willing to obey God rather than men. Never forget that you may hold the key to the heart of a man whom God wants to transform. Communities are made up of single individuals. It is perilous to rebel against the clear commands of God. What to you may seem quite insignificant may be the means of a man's finding the Lord Jesus. Expect great things of God. Attempt great things for God. Pray dally not that you may have more of the Spirit. Pray that the Spirit may have more of you. The God of all Peace will guide you graciously into new and holy pathways.

## **On Keeping a Prayer Manual**

Secure a notebook that opens book-wise or a loose-leaf notebook, Keep a record of your Dally Requests, the Objects, the Individuals for whom you pray. It will establish your faith in the efficacy of prayer to record what seems the obvious answer to continued intercession. Write down what seems the answer to your prayer on the same line as the object or individual for whom you pray. George Mueller of Bristol in 65 years recorded more than 20,000 distinct answers to his prayers. There is no monopoly in this field. God is ready whenever men are ready to trust Him implicitly. Begin now. Pray for one object and for one individual.

### **Arrange your note book under four heads:**

1. The Daily Requests. (What I want God to do today).
2. Objects for Intercession.
3. Individuals for whom you Pray.
4. God's Guidance for that Day. (What God wants me to do today).

Keep several pages free in which to copy striking verses that reveal God's power to answer prayer. Include the testimony of men who have learned the art of communion. Your *prayer* manual will come to contain evidence that cannot be controverted that God really does hear and answer prayer. This tangible evidence of His power is of immeasurable help in reassuring others of what God can do with a man completely consecrated to Him. So long as we are afraid of the things that seem impossible, so long God does not get His chance to show that He can and will carry us through.

**The Acid Test of Prayer.** By praying prayer is proved. No argument establishes it apart from practice while the practice renders argument unnecessary.

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