

How to Study the Bible

Week Six

March 22, 2009

Application

*Elisha prayed, and said,
"LORD, I pray, open his
eyes that he may see."
(2 Kings 6:17)*



*His delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day
and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That
brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And
whatever he does shall prosper. (Ps 1:2-3)*


Calvary Chapel
O F R O S W E L L

Final Review

Well if you have made it this far, you are in the last study and booklet for our How to Study the Bible course! Let me take a moment to remind you one last time of the basics.

We have discovered that real Bible Study always consists of three key aspects: **Observation**, **Interpretation**, and **Application**. Our goal is to become adept at specifically and intentionally focusing on each of these three in our Bible studies.

In our first study, we saw the vital place of making good **Observations**. Good observations are the building blocks and material for a good Bible study.

In our second through fifth week we focused on the place of **Interpretation**. We obviously spent the most time in this area. This is not because it is the most important of the three areas, but just the most technical. Interpretation is the science and the skill to determine what a passage means. We have divided up our Interpretation into five basic areas of interpretation: Content, Context, Christ, Compare and Consult.

Today we come to the key area of **Application**. In many ways, this has been the aim all along. Yet as we will see, it is an area that can be missed if not directly focused on.

At the end of this booklet I have a couple resources for you. One, just an encouragement and discussion of how all this can and should work in a daily time with the Lord, a “Quiet Time”. Then I also included a small section on prayer, as this is a key part of our daily time with God.

I hope and pray that study has been helpful to you!

Application

What is Application? In one sense, the definition of “Application” is so simple: “*an act of putting to use*”. Yet understanding it and actually doing it are two entirely different matters.

Consider that on an average day, Christian bookstores in the United States sell 34,932 Bibles! That is a lot of Bibles! Now add to that, the constant flow of Bible teachings via radio, television, books, CD’s, tapes, MP3’s, mail, e-mail and more. Now, you answer me, do you see the Bible having that large of an impact in our country? I think any honest person will see that we have a lot more Bibles and Bible studies than we do Biblical practice.



WHY???

Why does the Bible and its teachings seem to have such a small effect on our world, even our Christian world? I won’t say that what we are going to talk about is the only reason for this sad lack in our world today—but I will say that I do believe it is a part of the problem. Most people in churches know so much, but practice so little.

Consider what Jesus says about this kind of folly:

“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (Lk 6:46-49)

What are we doing?

If we are not applying the Word to our lives, then what are we doing instead of Application? Several possibilities come to mind:

We substitute interpretation for application.

By far, I think this is one of our main faults. Many Christians love learning more and knowing more of the Bible. Knowledge is good...but knowledge unapplied is folly. Yet it is so easy to slip into a place where our approach to the Bible is only about knowledge. It can get so bad that we can be excited about new Bible knowledge and never think about actually applying it. We thrive on knowledge. Worse, when we learn something, we feel like we are doing it, because we know it. I want you to hear that last sentence again...because it is scary in its truth: Because we know the truth, we can mistakenly think that is the same as doing the truth. We end up replacing obedience with knowledge and don't even see the predicament we find ourselves in. Many could win a Biblical Trivial Pursuit game, but the same things to which they could readily answer would never be seen from their lives. You couldn't tell it in their families, their entertainment, their business practices. The truth they learn stays in facts to know, not to live.



We substitute emotional experiences for decision.

Adding to knowledge, sometimes what we begin to seek is feelings, the idea of feeling that God spoke to us. Yet, we never carry that out to obedience. Many pastors are subject to what we often call "Glad handing". The idea is that as you see people after a message they will say things like "good message Pastor" or "Ouch, got me this week Pastor". Don't get me wrong, it is not bad to thank a teacher for the teaching. Yet, I for one, long to see what I teach live out. I have gotten to the place that it does not encourage me a whole lot to be congratulated alone. I want to see what people are actually doing with the teaching the Lord is giving them. Yet sadly, for many, they don't approach the Bible or Bible studies with the intent to change. They simply want to have a good time. It becomes its own form of Christian entertainment instead of a Christian being transformed. So, in putting this in practice, it is not how a Bible study makes us feel that matters, as much as it is how we are putting it into practice.



We substitute rationalization for repentance

The idea is that as we hear God's Word or study God's Word we have a quick internal mechanism that rationalizes why we can't, shouldn't or won't actually do what the Bible has to say. We excuse away our behavior by excuses of culture or personality or many such things that keep us from obeying. Saul tried this before Samuel. As he disobeyed God's direct orders in 1 Samuel 15, he stood before Samuel making excuses. He said he was actually disobeying so that later he could give more to God. Then he said the people made him do it. But when it all ended, he only wanted to "look good" without actually "being good". But God has something so much more for us in doing His Word!



What we really need...is application, obedience



I occasionally hear people say that they want "the meat of the Word". I understand what they are saying. But again, there is a danger. For some...it is still about pursuing knowledge instead of application. . It is interesting to note what the Bible qualifies as the "meat of Scripture".

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

"Meat" is much more than the content of a Bible study. It is the putting it to use that makes it meat to our spiritual lives.

Jesus said it this way:

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (Jn 4:34)

The KJV says it this way, "

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me"

The meat is the doing, not just the hearing or the knowing!

Be Warned about Deceiving yourself!!!

Obedience brings God's blessing, but first consider again, the opposite picture:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22-25)

Being a hearer only, one who hears and sees truth in the word, but does not do it – is given three descriptions that are somewhat fearful: deceit, foolish and forgetful.

Deceiving yourself

This is one of the most fearful of descriptions. To be deceived, to be lied to in order to get you to buy some goods. The very thought of it is horrible. Personally, I hate being lied to, to be deceived. Yet, this one is worse, it is lying to yourself in such a powerful way...that you believe your own lies. I am conscious of many faults and areas God is working on in my life. But the thought of lying to myself in such a way, as to deceive myself, scares me. Yet, that is exactly what one does as he or she hears and sees the truth, but does not do it.



Foolish.

Imagine a man who wakes up in the morning and makes his way to the mirror. Upon inspection, there is much that needs help. The mirror shows him his hair is in need of a comb, his beard is in need of a shave and a nasty bit of matter has caked itself to the side of his face. The mirror has shown him what he needs, and he has willingly placed himself in front of the mirror for just such a purpose. But imagine that after seeing this, he walks away from the mirror never having dealt with any of the issues and soon forgets what he saw. That would be a foolish way of grooming oneself, would it



not? Yet that is exactly the way many groom their spirits. They approach the Word, they hear a Bible study and are exposed. Areas that need help and repair are put before them. They see it and understand it. But they leave, never seeking to actually change the areas touched. All we can say is that is such a foolish thing. If one is not going to do anything about his appearance, then why ever take a look in the mirror? And if one is not going to care for his spiritual life, at least be honest enough not to even approach the Bible to have it exposed.

Forgetful

This becomes the final description of this folly. One who forgets what he sees, one who forgets what he hears. This is no small danger, in fact it is a spiritual battle. Jesus tells the picture of the four soils. Each soil represents a different heart and the approach it has to the Word. But it also shows satan, like a bird, hovering over a man's heart, anxious to snatch away the things God sows. Therefore, we need to face this, and see the folly of being forgetful of what God shows us.



Is it really all that serious?

Perhaps this seems like a failure in protocol or practice but not all that serious to you. I hope not, but if so, then consider this scripture also found in James:

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:17)

To know what God has for us, to see it in the Word and not do it... is sin, plain and simple.

But O how God has more for us. For the contrast, it is a blessed man. One who hears what God is saying and with the opposite approach of the forgetful man, continues in the things God shows him. This one seeks to do what God says. This man will be blessed. This one will be blessed in all that he does. Does that not sound inviting? I hope so. That is what God has for us.

So how do we Apply what God has?

1) We need to hear! We need to seek to clearly understand what God has for us. One of the things you will discover is that in any Bible study, whether its your own or through another – what God has for you will be one or two things. God is gracious in His dealings with us. He does not seek to deal with a hundred areas in our lives all at once. Don't misunderstand me, there are more than a hundred areas in our lives that need work! But God is gentle and kind in His dealings, and will seek to bring just an area or two before you in your study. This is more than just knowledge, this is something specific, something that applies to you and your life.

This is where the work of the Holy Spirit shines even above His work in opening the Scriptures to us. As the one at our side, He will apply that truth to your life. I urge you to seek to hear, to hear from Him what He has for you.

2) We need to hold on to it! Again, I draw your attention to the picture of satan as a bird of prey who hovers over your heart. He yearns for one thing, to rob you of what God is seeking to do in you. This nugget, this one area of application is what he is after. He cares not that you grow in Bible facts, it is the application that concerns him. Therefore, you must be diligent to hold it.

How you do this will differ with each of you by your personality and temperament. But here are a few suggestions.

One – Write it. In a sermon or in my own Bible study, when I see what God is seeking to teach me – I will clearly write that out – drawing a large amount of attention to it.

Two – Journal it. Once we begin to get an inkling of what God is seeking to do in us, many have found it helpful to journal at this point. Just to sit down and write out the thoughts that are before them is helpful. Writing it out often helps work it into our hearts and into our practice.

Three – Pray it. As you see what it is, take it to the Lord in prayer. Do so immediately and throughout the rest of the day. Deal with it before the Lord. In fact, you may want to make these bits of application a part of your prayer life for an extended time. Praying it into the work of your life.

Four – Post it. It may be helpful to post part of the Scripture that God is using in your heart and maybe even the application somewhere before you. Some have placed it on their refrigerator as a constant reminder. I used to write it out on a 3x5 card and put it on my car dash. I had about an hour to commute every day – and would spend that time in prayer, often going over what God was working in me.

Five – Memorize it. It is helpful to memorize the verse that God is applying to your life, that way you can call it to mind again and again as you seek to apply it.

3) We need to understand it. Now perhaps you are thinking that by this point that should be clear. But often it is not. Often we will have a vague sense of an area that God is working on in our life, but no actual practical understanding of it. What we need to do is ask the Holy Spirit to show us how and where this truth should impact our lives. It is here that we get all the more practical, seeking to force it from just a neat understanding to what it should look like if we do it. God is seeking to work something and I have found this is not hard to figure out, if I just seek Him for it. But again, the aim is to be practical.

4) We need to do it. Now perhaps that sounds like what I have been saying all along, but in a sense it is a step further. It is actually seeing it practically worked into your life. How we do this, will again differ for each. Some will write out actual goals that are measurable and seek to hold themselves accountable. Others will seek to journal it more and more and review their journals to see how they are doing. The actual outcome will vary, but the intention is to actually do it to look at ourselves in the Biblical mirror and do something about what we see!

In conclusion

There are so many more things that I could say to seek to reinforce all that I have said. But I simply want to say this – before you, is the place of blessing. Jesus said it this way:

*If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.
(John 13:17)*

I have a sense that many have missed out on so many of God's blessings. Yet before you is the path. It is not overwhelming. Again, God is gracious in His dealings. He will not deal with a thousand things at once. But one by one, as you follow on the path of Application, you will see the real blessing of Bible study. Without this part, it is pretty meaningless to our lives. I urge you, challenge you and encourage you – don't miss the Application! Not in your own studies! Not in the hearing of the Word! I promise you will find that it is a course of blessing!

Application Questions

If you are struggling with seeking to figure out what God is showing you in a passage, here are some example questions for you to look at.

Is there an example for me to follow?

Is there an example to avoid?

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there a prayer to repeat?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a condition to meet?

Is there a verse to memorize?

Is there an error to mark?

Is there a challenge to face?

Is there something for my heart here?

Is there something for me with my family?

Is there something for me with my work?

Is there something for me and the world?

Is there something God wants me to understand about Him?

Quiet Times

With this last booklet, we finish up our How to Study the Bible. It seemed good to conclude this all by trying to be practical and talk about how this should impact our life from here on out. We want to see how we can apply what we have learned on a daily basis. The location that we need to focus on is what we commonly call our “quiet time”.

What is a Quiet Time?

“Quiet time” sounds like it could refer to those precious moments after the kids are in bed! Yet, as we use the term today, for Christians, a quiet time is much more than that. Quiet time, or daily devotions, refers to our daily time spent directly with God. It is a time where we take “time” for God and tune out other distractions in “quietness”. I am not going to debate whether this is a good term for this daily time with God or not, although some do. My main concern is that you see a need and establish a practice of spending time with God daily.

Now this is in no way a comprehensive study of what a quiet time is or how to have one, but as we seek to apply this, we want to cover a few points about this time with God.

Why Should I have a Quiet Time?

Examples are consistently held up in the Bible for us. We see Job who said that he “*treasured the words of His mouth more than his necessary food*” (Job 23:12). Consider for a moment that priority again. Job is telling us that as far as he is concerned, his time in the Word is more important than eating our appointed or daily food. The idea is that if push came to shove and one of them had to be left undone, then Job would take his Bible over his dinner. That is a daily priority!

We see the picture in the children of Israel traveling through the wilderness. Daily God provided manna for them. Yet it had to be daily. You could not gather for more than one day at a time. Any you tried to rely on for the next day became rotted and worm infested. Daily you had to get it, and interestingly early in the

morning, before the sun melted it away. Daily too, we need to seek the manna of the Word from God to maintain our spiritual lives.

Consider Daniel who even when a law was passed against it, continued his daily time with the Lord. In fact, for Daniel it was three times a day he set aside time for the Lord. It tells us that he kept up that regimen since his youth and at this point in Daniel, he is an old man – having served at least two kings. (Daniel 6:10-11). Such is an example of a person who seeks God and will not miss his time with God. Sadly, today many miss their time with God and it is far from against the law. We miss it for selfish reasons and reasons of lacking priorities. Oh that we would have the consistency of Daniel.

Truly we see examples all the way throughout the Bible. Paul tells us how that day by day as we, through the Spirit, consider Jesus in the Word, how we will be transformed. Peter tells us that it is our hunger for the Word like a newborn baby that will cause us to grow.

But the top of all the examples is our Savior, Jesus Christ. We see how He lived His life here, as God and yet fully man. Daily He relied on God and sought Him. We see His example as it says this of Him:

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. (Mark 1:35)

We see that Isaiah tells us that the way that Jesus lived and the way that we can live – is morning by morning letting Him direct us:

“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned. (Isaiah 50:4)

I could add more at this point, but feel that it is probably not necessary. Most likely we don't wrestle with the reality that we need daily time with God, but how to do it and that perhaps we are not doing it. So let's go further.

When should I have a Quiet Time?

Is there a right time of day to have a quiet time? Well, it is interesting that many of the examples we have are in the morning, from the passage about Jesus being directed morning by morning and the picture of the manna and such. So we ought to at least consider the appropriateness of the idea of giving the first part of our day to God.

Yet having considered that idea, I have another thought. God has wired each of us differently. Some of us are morning people, some of us are evening people, and some are even afternoon people. Which is the best time? My answer is that I believe you should give the best of your day to God. If you are not mentally even there for the first hours of the day, then perhaps when you are at your best, then is the time you should give to God. This is something that deserves a lot of consideration. The truth is that it will be the hardest time to give up. Our “best time” of the day is the time we could likely get the most done in anything we set ourselves to. I challenge you to give that time to the Lord.

Perhaps you are a morning person and you wake up ready to tackle the day. It will be hard to give that time to God, because you could easily do so many things. Yet, I believe that time - that best time should be God's!

Perhaps you are an evening person. Honestly, a quiet time in the morning might be as much an excuse not to get going. In truth, your mind and heart are not fully engaged until midday. Then I challenge you to give you best time of the day to God. Again, it will be difficult, because that time is the time you can get the most done, it is the time you can enjoy the most in other pursuits. Yet, that best time is again, I believe God's.

Now the morning person may be wise to close the day with a devotional and short time of prayer. As well the evening person might be wise to begin the day at least seeking God though a devotional and a short time of prayer. But leave the quiet time of seeking God's presence for your best time of day.

Having said this, this is not a restriction that it has to be one or the other. Many set aside more than one time a day for God. Again, Daniel is an example of how three times a day he sought God. There is wisdom about having a time in the morning we begin with God, and then sometime during the day set aside some time to refresh us in God and then ending our day seeking God and reviewing our day with Him. It is not a requirement that it be one way or another. The challenge is that you have this time with God and it to be your best time and a consistent time with God.

What should my Quiet Time be like?

That is a question that is best answered by you. There is no mandated requirement for what we need to have or do or in what order. Obviously there are some basics, but how we flow through it will differ for each.

It should be a time of prayer. Perhaps a given, but if it is going to be time with God, it should be a time that we pray. That part of our time should cause us to be talking to God. Some prefer to do this at the beginning of their time and others at the end, and others interspersed throughout. But it needs to be a daily part.

It should be a time in His Word. The Bible is the lamp unto our feet, it is our daily bread. Therefore our quiet time is to include studying the Bible. How we do read the Bible will differ by each person and even be different at various times in our lives. Yet I have this warning: Be wary of only reading the Bible devotionally, that is just using a devotional that focuses you on a few verses without challenging you to read it all.

I believe we need to be in the whole Bible and our quiet time should reflect us. I think every Christian should consider the challenge to read the Bible through at least once a year. It takes a little over three chapters a day to do this. Yet, to read it every year will give us a familiarity with the Bible that is required.

Further, then you may do a deeper study, whether working through a book or journeying with us through our three year study. But the goal obviously is to approach the Bible as a whole, not just a few great verses.

Other optional parts of Quiet Times

Some have found it helpful to incorporate a time of worship as a part of their quiet time. It can be done in worshipping with your own musical instrument, with a worship CD or just quietly before the Lord – focusing on Him, His attributes and more.

Some have found journaling to be helpful in their quiet times. Noting what God is teaching them, showing them and how He is using them. Helpful too is noting how He is using your prayers to work in His kingdom.

Some have found Devotional books to be helpful as a time of reflection or even to “kick start” them in their time with God. There are hundreds of devotionals out there, many of which are very good. Some common ones include “Morning by Morning” and “Evening by Evening” by Charles Spurgeon. Oswald Chambers’ “Utmost for my Highest” is another favorite. There are ones by AW Tozer and many more. I am sure you can find one that really helps you to pull closer to the Lord.

Some have found that having a time of literal quietness before the Lord is very helpful. The idea is seeking not to just fill up the time with studying and praying, but to wait before the Lord in quietness. Allowing Him to comfort and calm our soul and often showing us something in that time.

Some have found that having a special place in their home set aside for that time with God. It becomes like a special meeting place.

Some have found it helpful to have a set time or times for the Lord. Having an appointment helps us to keep our time with the Lord.

There are many more things that I suppose could be added. But I am confident that God will help you to grow your quiet time with Him to what is best for you, if you will just let Him. I urge you not to miss what He has for you.

How do I study in my Quiet Time?

This is in a sense the main question for us, as we have been working through this study. I have taught you how to Observe a passage, Interpret it and then Apply it to your lives. I truly believe that seeking to have a daily quiet time will transform your life. But the practical question becomes how?

If you take my challenge and seek to read the Bible every year, then it is obvious that you cannot study three chapters every day in detail.

Further, if you also continue with us in our journey through the Bible that will take us three years – again, even a chapter a day is too much to ask you to study.

So how do we use what we have learned in this course?

I challenge you to continue with us in our working through the Bible at the pace we are doing as a minimal. Then, as you read that chapter, ask God to show you one verse in that chapter to study. That verse will be what God is seeking to show you. Then keep that verse with you throughout the day. I have personally used this method for years and found it to be very fruitful. One verse is usually enough of a challenge to do in a day, but not too much. But with reading the whole chapter, you keep it in context. It is an exciting way to do it. Plus it becomes exciting to see what verse God will call you to study...I find it to be a thrill and I pray you will too.

I find myself wanting to say so much more at this point. I find myself thinking about how this ongoing practical application has been my whole aim. I find myself yearning and praying that for many of you that this focus will transform your daily time with God. Oh how I pray it is so!

I will close with a reminder that Solomon gave to us in Proverbs 2. In it he speaks as a father to his son, which has a warm and wonderful feeling. I challenge you to read this as if God were speaking to you as His kid.

My son,

If you are His child, then this is addressed to you!

if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you

If we will get it from God, receive it from Him like daily manna and hold onto it. If we will carve out that time for God and guard it – treasure it in our day...

So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding

This speaks of us intentionally and with a certain amount of serious effort seeking to hear from God.

Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding,

This speaks of us approaching His word with a dependence on Him, on the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us. This is an active dependence!

If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures;

This shows the seriousness of our seeking. Not just casually picking up with it on the surface, but digging for it, hunting for it and with fervor seeking what God has for us.

Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

This is a promise. It is a promise that if you will put yourself in this kind of seeking mode after God, then you will understand! This is a promise. God says we will get it; we will hear from Him and understand it.

For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;

The joy here is that God promises that He will open up His truth to us. Our understanding of it is not based on your background in learning. It is not based on your GPA or IQ. It is based on God and His promise! He opens it to us if we are in the mode of seeking Him!

He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. (Proverbs 2:1-9)

These are the benefits and protection that such study will have on your life. O it is so worth it! I pray that you discover it afresh yourself!

A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We read our chapter, have our short devotions and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting. ...

The tragic results of this spirit are all about us: Shallow lives, hollow religious philosophies, the preponderance of the element of fun in gospel meetings, the glorification of men, trust in religious externalities, quasi-religious fellowships, salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit. These and such as these are the symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.

A. W. Tozer in The Pursuit of God

Early African converts to Christianity were earnest and regular in private devotions. Each one reportedly had a separate spot in the thicket where he would pour out his heart to God. Over time the paths to these places became well worn. As a result, if one of these believers began to neglect prayer, it was soon apparent to the others. They would kindly remind the negligent one, "Brother, the grass grows on your path."

Andrew Bonar, a great man of prayer, had three rules:

1. Not to speak to any man before speaking to Jesus;
 2. Not to do anything with his hands until he had been on his knees;
 3. Not to read the papers until he had read his Bible.
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Closet communion needs time for the revelation of God's presence. It is vain to say, "I have too much work to do to find time." You must find time or forfeit blessing. God knows how to save for you the time you sacredly keep for communion with Him.

Arthur Tappan (A . T) Pierson

I Met God in the Morning - Author Unknown

I met God in the morning,
When my day was at its best
And His presence came like sunrise,
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered;
All day long He stayed with me;
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed,
But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us a peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind.
When I too had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.

So, I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way;
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.

This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion and religious meditation, Scripture-reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. I had better allot two hours or an hour and a half daily. I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had but a hurried half hour in a morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean. But all may be done through prayer -- almighty prayer, I am ready to say -- and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, pray, pray, pray!

William Wilberforce

TABLE FOR TWO

by Kirsten Burgess

He sits by himself at a table for two.

The uniformed waiter returns to his side and asks, "Would you like to go ahead and order, sir?" The man has, after all, been waiting since seven o'clock--almost half an hour.

"No, thank you," the man smiles. "I'll wait for her a while longer. How about some more coffee?"

"Certainly, sir."

The man sits, his clear blue eyes gazing straight through the flowered centerpiece. He fingers his napkin, allowing the sounds of light chatter, tinkling silverware, and mellow music to fill his mind. He is dressed in sport coat and tie. His dark brown hair is neatly combed, but one stray lock insists on dropping to his forehead. The scent of his cologne adds to his clean cut image. He is dressed up enough to make a companion feel important, respected, loved. Yet he is not so formal as to make one uncomfortable. It seems that he has taken every precaution to make others feel at ease with him.

Still, he sits alone.

The waiter returns to fill the man's coffee cup. "Is there anything else I can get for you, sir?"

"No, thank you."

The waiter remains standing at the table. Something tugs at his curiosity. "I don't mean to pry, but..." His voice trails off. This line of conversation could jeopardize his tip.

"Go ahead," the man encourages. His is strong, yet sensitive, inviting conversation.

"Why do you bother waiting for her?" the waiter finally blurts out. This man has been at the restaurant other evenings, always patiently

alone.

Says the man quietly, "Because she needs me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, no offense, but assuming that she needs you, she sure isn't acting much like it. She's stood you up three times just this week."

The man winces, and looks down at the table. "Yes, I know."

"Then why do you still come here and wait?"

"Cassie said that she would be here."

"She's said that before," the waiter protests. "I wouldn't put up with it. Why do you?"

Now the man looks up, smiles at the waiter, and says simply, "Because I love her."

The waiter walks away, wondering how one could love a girl who stands him up three times a week. The man must be crazy, he decides. Across the room, he turns to look at the man again. The man slowly pours cream into his coffee. He twirls his spoon between his fingers a few times before stirring sweetener into his cup. After staring for a moment into the liquid, the man brings the cup to his mouth and sips, silently watching those around him. He doesn't look crazy, the waiter admits. Maybe the girl has qualities that I don't know about. Or maybe the man's love is stronger than most. The waiter shakes himself out of his musings to take an order from a party of five.

The man watches the waiter, wonders if he's ever been stood up. The man has, many times. But he still can't get used to it. Each time, it hurts. He's looked forward to this evening all day. He has many things, exciting things, to tell Cassie. But, more importantly,

he wants to hear Cassie's voice. He wants her to tell him all about her day, her triumphs, her defeats....anything, really. He has tried so many times to show Cassie how much he loves her. He'd just like to know that she cares for him, too. He sips sporadically at the coffee, and loses himself in thought, knowing that Cassie is late, but still hoping that she will arrive.

The clock says nine-thirty when the waiter returns to the man's table. "Is there anything I can get for you?"

The still empty chair stabs at the man. "No, I think that will be all for tonight. May I have the check please?"

"Yes, sir."

When the waiter leaves, the man picks up the check. He pulls out his wallet and sighs. He has enough money to have given Cassie a feast. But he takes out only enough to pay for his five cups of coffee and the tip. Why do you do this, Cassie, his mind cries as he gets up from the table.

"Good-bye," the waiter says, as the man walks towards the door.

"Good night. Thank you for your service."

"You're welcome, sir," says the waiter softly, for he sees the hurt in the man's eyes that his smile doesn't hide.

The man passes a laughing young couple on his way out, and his eyes glisten as he thinks of the good time he and Cassie could have had. He stops at the front and makes reservations for tomorrow. Maybe Cassie will be able to make it, he thinks.

"Seven o'clock tomorrow for party of two?" the hostess confirms.

"That's right," the man replies.

"Do you think she'll come?" asks the hostess. She doesn't mean to be rude, but she has watched the man many times alone at his table for two.

"Someday, yes. And I will be waiting for her." The man buttons his overcoat and walks out of the restaurant, alone. His shoulders are hunched, but through the windows the hostess can only guess whether they are hunched against the wind or against the man's hurt.

As the man turns toward home, Cassie turns into bed. She is tired after an evening out with friends. As she reaches toward her night stand to set the alarm, she sees the note that she scribbled to herself last night. '7:00,' it says. 'Spend some time in prayer.' Darn, she thinks. She forgot again. She feels a twinge of guilt, but quickly pushes it aside. She needed that time with her friends. And now she needs her sleep. She can pray tomorrow night. Jesus will forgive her. And she's sure he doesn't mind.

Practical Help on Prayer

This course has been specifically aimed at growing us in our study of the Word. But as we close thinking about our Quiet Times, I wanted to give you a quick word on prayer.

This is in no way a study on prayer, for that could take much longer than we have even spent in seeking to learn how to study the Bible. But what I want to do is give you something practical to consider. Many struggle with prayer and how to pray in a Quiet Time. I find it interesting that when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray that He gave them and us what we often call “The Lord’s Prayer”. But in truth it is not His prayer but one He gave for us, it is Our Prayer. I personally have found it helpful to use the Lord’s Prayer daily as a template to guide me in my prayers. In a very quick way – I want to lay it out as a suggestion and template for your prayers.

In this manner, therefore, pray:

Jesus tells us that this is an example we can follow in our praying.

Our Father in heaven

Begin your prayers with relationship. The greatest commandment is that you should love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. In this part of the prayer, focus on that, reflect on it and seek it. Seek to grow in closeness and wonder of what it is to be a child of God. Seek to grow in your relationship to Him. Pray for others and this key area in their lives – that they know God!

Truly this is the greatest and highest aspect of prayer and yet sadly often the most neglected. Begin here and cover the most important area first!

Hallowed be Your name.

This is worship. As you move from the Relationship you have with God, focus on Him, His worthiness and who He is. A good place to review is Ex 34:5-7 as God explained what His Name was and is to

Moses. The idea here is not to focus just on what God has done or what He will do in our lives, but the focus is on God Himself. Just to consider in prayer His awesomeness.

Thanksgiving also becomes a large part of this and a powerful way to worship the Lord. We need to focus on His faithfulness in our lives. Seek to consider how worthy and wonderful our God is and has been.

Your kingdom come.

In this we are praying for God to be King! I find myself doing this in two ways.

One is evangelistically. It is at this point in my prayers where I pray for the lost and that people would come today into His kingdom. Jesus said that His kingdom is now and invisible. It is those that today submit to Him as King. I will pray for the lost I know, those God brings to my heart and often outreach groups, organizations and churches – that God would bring in the lost. Yet, the focus even in this is on the eternal kingdom and that these would be there.

Secondly is eternally. Here we begin to focus on eternity in heaven and our yearning for it. We agree with what it says in Revelation, Your kingdom come! We focus on what eternity will be like – when our relationship with Him will be awesome and our worship of Him will be perfect! This focus helps us so much and is a key focus daily. This is what the word “Maranatha” means that is used often. It means Lord come quickly!

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Here is where we pray for what God wants today. In one sense we are asking that things, specifically in our lives, will be like they will be in heaven where we will obey Him perfectly and completely. Jesus told us that if anyone wanted to come after Him we would have to *take up our cross daily* – that is what this is. It is what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane in taking up the cross – *Your will, not mine, be done!* We ask this for us and for others who are His, for His will in their lives. He will often give us specific things to pray

for – but the common denominator is God’s will.

Give us this day our daily bread.

This focus is on God’s supply. Simply we are asking Him to supply all that we need for the day. This includes spiritual strength, emotional strength, time, wisdom, health and finances. It is to look to God for everything. Again we do this for ourselves and others – asking God to supply exactly what He knows we need.

And forgive us our debts

Here we ask God to cleanse us afresh. This does not mean we are not saved if we don’t pray this. The focus here in this prayer is not for salvation, but relationship. If my child sins against me, it does not make them not my child anymore – just distant and in trouble. So at this point in prayer we ask Him to cleanse us. One key in this is agreeing with Him in how He sees things, which is called confession. But the joy is that He tells us that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven! (1 John 1:9)

Jesus said without this cleansing, that He pictured by washing the disciples feet, that we cannot be in fellowship with Him.

As we forgive our debtors.

This is important, God seeks to rescue us from bitterness and pain that unforgiveness brings. It is a daily and real need for all of us.

But it is also more, it is also a test. One way to determine if you are really repentant and confessing your sins effectively is by how you forgive others who sin against you. Jesus shows us in Matt 18 that if we are conscious of our sins being forgiven, then we will forgive others. Jesus also comments after giving this prayer to the disciples here in Matt 6 that if we don’t forgive others, then we are not forgiven. I don’t think that means we have not earned forgiveness, but that it is impossible if we are really repentant to hold others sins against them – thus a test daily to see if we are really dealing with our own sin.

And do not lead us into temptation,

Here we are not asking God not to pick on us. James tells us it is impossible for God to tempt us to sin. God takes no delight in our sins and would never lead us into them.

What we are asking in this part of the prayer is that God would save us from ourselves! It is asking God to lead us this day in a way that we will not fall. We are asking God to direct our day in such a way as to avoid places we will fall. Hebrews 12 tells us that we all have a sin that so easily stumbles us. God knows this even better than we do. So again, it is asking God to so direct our day that there will be temptations that will not even come our way! Jesus told the disciples that prayer could rescue them from temptation:

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mark 14:38)

But deliver us from the evil one.

Here we are asking God to rescue not from ourselves as the previous section, but from Satan’s goals and agenda on our life. A good place to pray through here is the Armor given in Ephesians 6. God says we can stand against all of Satan’s tactics against us, but we need to stand in Him. This happens largely in our prayers!

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This is a powerful closing to the prayer. It sums up what we have said and asks for this aim in all we have said.

We are saying that we are seeking God’s kingdom in all we are praying, not our own. Jesus commands us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

We are asking for His power and admitting our desperate need of it. We are asking God to work!

We are asking for His glory in all that happens that His glory and honor is our aim.

Amen – make it so!

I give this all to you with the hope that perhaps by using the “manner of prayer” that Jesus teaches us that you will be helped in your own prayer time. I do not see this as a burden that you have to pray exactly this way, and pray this way all the time, for you do not. But it is a help for those that are seeking to pray and to pray through all that God has for them to pray about. I personally find it to be a daily and wonderful help and pray you do as well!

Lord teach us to pray!

To pray well is the better half of study.

Martin Luther

Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees.

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983)

God never ceases to speak to us, but the noise of the world without and the tumult of our passions within bewilder us and prevent us from listening to him.

François Fénelon (1651–1715)

If man is man and God is God, to live without prayer is not merely an awful thing; it is an infinitely foolish thing.

Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)

Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to Satan.

John Bunyan (1628–1688)

Prayer is not an argument with God to persuade him to move things our way, but an exercise by which we are enabled by his Spirit to move ourselves his way.

Leonard Ravenhill (1867–1942)

Prayer is the most important thing in my life. If I should neglect prayer for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Prayer is the pulse of life.

Andrew Murray (1828–1917)

The prayer of the feeblest saint on earth who lives in the Spirit and keeps right with God is a terror to Satan. The very powers of darkness are paralyzed by prayer; no spiritual séance can succeed in the presence of a humble praying saint. No wonder Satan tries to keep our minds fussy in active work till we cannot think in prayer.

Oswald Chambers (1874–1917)

