

Daily Communing with God

J. R. Miller (1840-1912)

The Necessity of Daily Bible Reading

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Colossians 3:16)

Probably prayer is less neglected in devotions than is the reading of the Bible. Many people who would not go out any morning without a few moments of prayer, will go forth day after day into the thick of life's duties and perils without reading even a verse of Scripture! They feel the necessity of asking God to keep, guide, and bless them, but they fail to realize that it is in and through meditating on His Word that God chiefly gives His richest and best blessings.

It is in His Word that God reveals Himself. We cannot know what He is like, nor what the attributes of His character are, unless we ponder the Scriptures. We cannot learn what God's will is, nor what He would have us to do and to be, if we do not look into His Word. There is nothing that we need more than to hear God speaking to us every morning. This is possible only as we open the Bible and let its words whisper their messages to us.

No matter how familiar we may be with the teachings of the Scriptures, we need to ponder them anew every morning to keep their pure ideals and lofty requirements ever before us, lest we allow our standard of holy living to be lowered.

A celebrated painter always kept some purely-colored stones on his table. When asked by a visitor why he did so, he said it was to keep his eye up to tone. When he was working in pigments, unconsciously his sense of color was weakened. By keeping a pure color near him he brought his eye up to tone again, just as the musician by his tuning-fork brings himself up to the right pitch. In the same way, we continually need to turn to God's Word to keep our thoughts, character, and life up to the true standard.

Rubenstein used to say that he could never omit his daily practice on the piano; for if he did, the quality of his playing would at once begin to deteriorate. He said that if he missed practice for three days the public would know it; if he missed practice for two days his friends would know it; and if he did not practice for even one day he himself knew it!

It is no less true in Christian life, that in order to keep its holy tone up to what it should be, there must never be a break in the continuity of the study of God's Word. If we leave off for only one day, we shall become conscious of a loss of power in living. If for two successive days we fail to look into God's perfect Law, our friends around us will notice the

failure in the beauty, the sweetness, and the grace of our character and disposition. If for three days we fail to study the Scriptures to see how God would have us live, even the people of the world will see a lowering of the spiritual quality of our life!

One of the ways the Bible helps us is by making Christ known to us. The noblest Christian is he before whose eyes the character of Jesus shines in brightest splendor. Indeed, it is only when we have clear visions of Christ that we really grow like Him.

“It seems to me,” says a writer, “that nowadays men think and talk too much about improving their own character but meditate too little on the perfectness of the divine character.” Christ will never appear really great in our eyes unless we make His Word our daily study. *And only as He becomes great and glorious in our thought will our character and standard of life be lifted up to what they should be.*

Many of the blessings we seek in prayer *can come to us only through the Word of God*: we ask to be kept near the heart of Christ, but our Master tells us that only those who keep His commandments shall abide in His love (Joh 15:10). In order to keep His commandments, we must know them, and we can know them only by reading and re-reading them.

We ask God in the morning to guide us through the day, and in one of the psalms is the prayer, “Order my steps in thy word” (Psa 119:133). That is, God leads us by His Word. If then we do not read the words of God, how can we get His guidance?

The leading He promises is not general, by long stretches, but by little steps. The Psalmist says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psa 119:105). It is not said that prayer is the lamp—but the Word. We must carry it in our hand, too, as one carries a lantern to throw its beams about his feet.

We pray to be kept from sin, and in the Scriptures one says, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11). Our prayers to be kept from sin can be answered only by getting the Word of God into our heart!

These are suggestions of the necessity of reading the Bible daily, as well as of praying. Neither is complete in itself alone. We must talk to God, but we must also listen to God talk to us through His Word.

We must pray for blessings, but only through the divine words of Scripture can these blessings come to us.

The Necessity of Daily Prayer

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:6)

In the Christian’s devotional life, *prayer* has an essential place. The godly men of the Bible were all *men of prayer*. Jesus, who showed us in Himself the ideal Christian life, had

regular habits of prayer. He who would live the Christian life well must regularly commune with God!

It is important, however, that we understand clearly *what it is to pray*. It is not enough that at stated times we go over certain *forms* of prayer. We only pray when we speak to God what is in our heart, as a desire, a longing, or a burden.

Jesus teaches that we are to *pray to God as our **Father***. We must come to Him, therefore, *as His redeemed children*—with the genuineness, the simplicity, the confidence of children. When we stand at God's throne of grace and speak the name "Father" and ask for a child's blessing, we are sure of instant welcome.

Many people think of prayer only as coming to God with *requests*. They only tell Him their needs. They never bow before Him nor speak to Him unless there is something they wish Him to do for them.

What would you think of a friend of yours who never came to you nor talked with you except when he wanted to ask some favor of you? True friendship finds many of its sweetest moments when there is no help to ask but when only love's communion fills the happy time. It should be so in our relation with our heavenly Father. If we care to be with Him only when we have a favor to ask of Him, then there is something lacking in our love!

We are not to suppose that when Jesus spent whole nights in prayer, He was making requests all the time. He went away from the trying, struggling, troublesome life of the busy days among the people to find shelter, rest, and renewal of strength in sweet converse with His Father. Just so, most of the time we spend in prayer should be given to communion with God.

A minister relates that one Saturday morning, when he was in his study preparing his sermon, his little child opened the door and came in, stealing softly to his side. Somewhat impatiently, the father turned to her and asked, "*What do you want, my child?*"

"*Nothing, papa,*" the child replied. "*I only want to be with you.*"

This is oft-times the only desire of the true Christian when he comes to pray. He has no requests to make—*he just wants to be with his Father!*

The most profitable season of devotion is that in which there is also *meditation upon God's Word*. It is related of a godly Christian, who was known to spend much time in his prayer-closet, that a friend once secreted himself in his study to learn something of his devotional habit. The godly man was busy all the evening at his work. At eleven o'clock he put away his books and pen and opened his New Testament. For a whole hour he bent over its pages, reading, comparing, pondering the sacred words. Sometimes he would linger long over a sweet verse and his heart would glow with rapture. When the clock struck twelve, he closed the book and sought his bed.

He was not once on his knees during all the hour. He offered no petition in words. He had spent the whole time in *communing with God in His Word*, breathing out his love, his adoration, his longings and desires, and receiving into his heart the assurances, the encouragements, the promises, the joys of the Father's love.

There could be no better way of devotion than this!

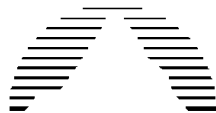
Praying alone without meditation on the Word of God meets only one phase of our need: we talk to God when we pray. But it is quite as important that God talks to us—and He will only talk with us when we open the Scriptures and wait reverently to hear what He will say to us.

What is the *help* that we are to receive from prayer?

First of all, prayer holds us close to Christ. We *breathe Heaven's air* when we commune with Christ. Life in this sinful world is not easy. It has its struggles, its duties, its difficulties, and its sorrows, which exhaust our strength. Hence, we need continually to return to Christ to have our *grace renewed*. We cannot live today on yesterday's food; every morning we must pray *for our daily bread*. Nor can we be faithful, strong, happy, and helpful Christians today on yesterday's supply of grace. We need to pray daily. Thus our life is kept from running down, and we are held near our Master all the while.

The true Christian life also grows, and it can only do so by daily communing with God. Our life should never run two days on just the same level. The *days* should be *ladder rungs* lifting our heart ever a little higher, nearer to God, into purer air, into loftier experiences, into holier consecration.

Prayer brings God down into our life. It was when Jesus was praying that He was transfigured. *True prayer always transfigures!* One who lives habitually with Christ becomes like Christ. Our earthly affairs become means of grace if Christ is with us. Prayer lifts all the experiences of our life and lays them in the hand of Christ, who makes them all work together for our eternal good!



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