

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages

Sermon Notes & References

“Desire for God” (Thoughts on Personal Devotions)

Psalm 42:1-2

July 28, 2013

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D. Some Practical Tips on Bible Reading

1. Ask Questions:

- a. Is there any example for me to follow?
- b. Is there any command for me to obey?
- c. Is there any error for me to avoid?
- d. Is there any sin for me to forsake?
- e. Is there any promise for me to claim?
- f. Is there any new thought about God or the Lord Jesus?
- g. Is there a verse I can turn into prayer or praise?
- h. Is there a verse I should commit to memory?

2. Note Related Verses – margin cross references give verses that

- a. say the same thing in a different way that makes it clearer
- b. or contrast with it
- c. illustrate it
- d. prophesy about or fulfil it

3. Keep Notes

- a. in the Bible
- b. in your journal
- c. as provided by Bible computer programs

4. Treat Chapters Divisions Lightly

- a. read connected, natural sections
- b. make titles for these sections
- c. make your own book outlines.

5. Plan your reading – some variants are

- a. balance between poetic, historic, teaching, prophetic sections
- b. alternate between old and new testaments
- c. cover the entire Bible
- d. go through the Bible chronologically
- e. read short books at one sitting

E. Conclusion

1. Fellowship with God
2. The Desire for God

A. Introduction

1. Ease Off on the Throttle —{2}.

- a. Bob Griffin was a missionary aviator for JAARS, the aviation support team of the Wycliffe Bible Translators. In this work, starting in 1956, he logged over 7,000 hours of flying. In 1998, he wrote 'Cleared for Takeoff,' which recounted his true adventures on the mission field.
- b. In that book he comments that many of the fighter planes used in the first world war were not equipped with a throttle – the aeroplane equivalent of the accelerator or gas pedal in a car – such as we know it. Rather they had an all or nothing device – full on the gas for full speed; full off the gas to cut the engines. Even if not shot down, those engines with the constant revving at full speed did not last very long
- c. In contrast to those planes, Bob flew an aircraft with a throttle and a tough Lycoming engine that came with these instructions: 'Takeoff power (full power) may be used for only a maximum of 5 minutes.' The pilot was instructed to back off from full power as soon as possible. Trouble was ahead for those who ignored the warning.
- d. God did not create us to run at full speed all the time. We may race for a while with open throttle through our Christian lives, packing our time with one activity after another, but if we don't slow down occasionally we are headed for burnout or a crash landing.

2. 'Come Ye Apart'

- a. In Mark 6, Jesus returned to Nazareth, a place where He wondered at the response of unbelief from the people of His home town
- b. then in verses 6 and 7, Mark recounts, '... He was going around the villages teaching. And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;', giving them directions for carrying out this practical work assignment
- c. 'They went out and preached that men should repent. And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.' (Mark 6:12-13)
- d. this was important and fruitful work that they were doing

- e. it wasn't just employment, but it was also kingdom work
- f. after a period of time, they returned to turn in their reports
- g. 'The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)' (Mark 6:30-31)
- h. and we, like they, periodically need to retreat from the busyness of life to spend time with Jesus: in reflection, prayer and Bible reading.
- i. that is our subject for today: personal devotions a.k.a. Quiet Time
- j. without this, our spiritual life can shrivel up and fade

3. Feeding Our Spirit

- a. when we come and accept Jesus by faith, receiving Him into our lives, there is engendered in us a new, spiritual being – the new man that is created in us in Christ Jesus, described in Ephesians 2:10
- b. as David sang about in one of our psalms this morning, there is then implanted a thirst and a hunger to be with God – 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.' (Psalms 42:1)
- c. that is a good hunger, a good thirst, for it carries with it a promise: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.' (Matthew 5:6)
- d. when you have a new-born child, he or she certainly lets you know when it is feeding time – as well as other times – to neglect this would spell disaster
- e. so with that new-born life in us – the hunger and thirst will be there – but if it is neglected, there is spiritual disaster ... the new life withers
- f. so Peter tells us, 'like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,' (1 Peter 2:2)
- g. we have a responsibility in nurturing that implanted desire for God
- h. to this end, every believer needs to set apart a quiet time

B. Some Practical Tips on Quiet Time

1. The 'Method'

- a. the Methodist churches are so called their founders, John and Charles Wesley, who while attending Oxford, formed the 'Holy Club' along with others, and were so nicknamed for following rigorous 'methods' of spiritual practice to attain personal piety in their manner of life
- b. it is not that there is one method suitable for each of our personal quiet times, a set of the rules for us to follow – every one of us in the church of Jesus Christ is a unique individual – God has made us that way
- c. but the question arises, 'when is the best time for personal devotions'
 - (A) some find this time is in the morning, after the night of rest has refreshed them and the concerns of yesterday are seen in perspective, that this times prepares them for the day ahead
 - (B) others are built differently ... they don't really wake up until they are half way to work (their driving shows it!) ... only when the day and its deadlines are over can they settle down to devotions
 - (C) the best time for devotions is what is your best time
 - (D) it is interesting that the busy administrator of an empire, Daniel, in common with Jewish practice, found time to stop for prayer three times a day: morning, noon and night
 - (E) also, while you may reserve a special time for devotions, in actuality one's whole day can be spent in the company of God – 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17) describes that conscious contact that we can have with God throughout our day
 - (F) and of the blessed man, Psalm 1:2 says, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.'
- d. and a second question, 'what do devotions involve?'
 - (A) some find help in the readings from a devotional book such as the Daily Bread that we distribute, or using the readings in the devotional calendar that we get annually from the Bible League
 - (B) essentially, devotions involve three things: prayer, Bible reading and meditation to hold the other two together
 - (C) which do you do first? that is immaterial, since they are so closely linked together
 - (1) while prayer is generally God-ward, it is not necessarily so, for one pauses to consider what God's word has to say on the matter for what has just been prayed

- (2) while Bible reading is generally man-ward, again one pauses to speak to God about what has just been read
- (3) meditation is what takes place in these pauses

2. The Magnitude

- a. it is said somewhat with tongue (or steak) in cheek that a Texan is a man who says if a 5-ounce steak is good, a 5-pound steak is better
 - (A) that saying probably came from R. J. 'Bob' Lee's opening the Big Texan Steak Ranch on route 66 back in 1960
 - (B) their claim to fame is offering a 72-ounce steak free of charge to anyone who can eat it within an hour – and it's been done!
- b. personal devotions do not work the same way
 - (A) setting out to read so many verses, or chapters, each day when a person's constitution cannot handle it, nor their background take in what is written, can be totally unprofitable
 - (B) that is why the devotional day books from the Bible League give a number of different suggestions: reading through the Bible in a year, or in 5 years, or just some carefully chosen selections
 - (C) nor are most of us built with the knees nor the concentration to pray for the hours of which we read some saints of old doing – we are more equipped for the short prayers that Nehemiah sent up like arrows to God as the need arose
- c. set a length of time and an objective that you can achieve, and then, as the Lord gives grace, expand them as God may lead

3. The Solitude

- a. Jesus said to His disciples as a group, 'come ye apart and rest a while'
- b. so there is a place for public worship and public prayer – but in these alone, there is insufficient time to furnish and to replenish our souls
- c. but there is also the need to get apart individually, away from all the distractions of life; just as Jesus did, 'After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.' (Matthew 14:23)

- d. in the sermon on the mount, Jesus advocated a secret closet for prayer – ‘But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.’ (Matthew 6:6)
- e. but be careful: I must confess that in my life there have been times that this closet is so secret, neither God nor I knew where it was.

4. The Attitude

- a. Psalm 119:18 gives a wonderful, short little prayer for us to adopt in coming to our quiet time: ‘Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.’
- b. the religious rulers of Jesus’ day took great pride in their knowing all the minute details of the law of Moses and how men should live; but when God came in the flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, they failed to recognize Him; Jesus told them, ‘You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me’ (John 5:39) – each one of us has to come with the humility of a student, not with the arrogance of these teachers
- c. if we are to learn from our reading of the word of God – devotions are just one form of studying His great book – to learn to know Jesus, to know God – we must come prepared to obey, for as Jesus says to us: ‘If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.’ (John 7:17)
- d. and a final word on attitude: come believing – ‘And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.’ (Hebrews 11:6)

C. Some Practical Tips on Prayer

1. For What?

- a. ‘I cannot think of what to pray for,’ you may say. The Bible answers:
- b. according to the Model Prayer, ‘Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name... ’ (Matthew 6:9)
- c. rejoicing in Who God is, and What He has done: let us read Psalm 95:1-6 in unison (AV on the overhead)

- d. confession: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9)
- e. thanksgiving: 'in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- f. for fellow Christians: 'With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints' (Ephesians 6:18)
- g. for the ministry: 'and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.' (Ephesians 6:19-20)
- h. for enemies: 'But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,' (Matthew 5:44)
- i. for our own every need and concern: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.' (Philippians 4:6)
- j. and that is only a most general and partial list.

2. Journaling

- a. if you are using those Home Bible League day books
 - (A) keep a record of those things for which you have prayed
 - (B) then note the answers – they will be occasions for thanksgiving and for further prayer
 - (C) when God answers, 'yes,' that is usually fairly easy to recognize
 - (D) how do you recognize 'no'? – sometimes it is self-evident as the event your feared comes to pass – but sometimes it is less clear, but rather that over time as you read His word, as you hear it preached, the truth is brought home that God has other plans – even so, record it because you know God has answered you
 - (E) and then, there is 'wait' – when by various ways and means, as just noted, God says to you, 'not now my child; you will see.'

D. Some Practical Tips on Bible Reading

1. Ask Questions:

- a. Is there any example for me to follow?
- b. Is there any command for me to obey?
- c. Is there any error for me to avoid?
- d. Is there any sin for me to forsake?
- e. Is there any promise for me to claim?
- f. Is there any new thought about God or the Lord Jesus?
- g. Is there a verse I can turn into prayer or praise?
- h. Is there a verse I should commit to memory?

2. Note Related Verses – passages other than what you are reading that

- a. say the same thing in a different way that makes it clearer
- b. or contrast with it – Proverbs gives many examples of these first two
- c. illustrate it
- d. prophesy about or fulfil it
- e. (the marginal or cross references are often a good source for these)

3. Keep notes

- a. in the Bible either by underlining or using the margin – some Bible have especially wide margins for this purpose
- b. some Bible computer programs let you keep your own notes so that they are side by side with the verses

4. Treat Chapters Divisions Lightly

- a. but read connected, natural sections
- b. make titles for these sections as well as your own book outlines.

5. Plan your reading – some variants are

- a. balance between poetic, historic, teaching, prophetic sections

- b. alternate between old and new testaments
- c. cover the entire Bible over a specific time period
- d. go through the Bible chronologically (that will take some study!)
- e. read short books at one sitting (when you can do so at leisure)

E. Conclusion

1. Fellowship with God

- a. an ongoing, daily relationship with God
- b. perhaps that sounds strange – even a little far out – to you
- c. yet it is the reason that God the Son entered this world as Jesus
- d. so that God might redeem us from the curse of sin
- e. and restore us to fellowship with Himself
- f. if you have any questions respecting this, or our subject today, then feel free to come and to speak to Pastor Carlos or to myself

2. The Desire for God

- a. Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts
- b. ... we turn unfilled to Thee again
- c. that is our prayer for continuing fellowship, our desire for God

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BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. Adapted from Radio Bible Class devotional, '*Let Up on the Throttle,*' – Kerux illustration #34562