

MAKING the MOST of your DEVOTIONS



By George Mueller

Introduction

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By George Mueller Edited and paraphrased by Matt Schoenfelder and Martin Bennett.

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The following article will be very helpful for you if you've had struggles in this area. George Mueller gives some practical guidelines to help us come into the presence of God on a daily basis. How can we hope to know God's heart and receive His instructions for our lives unless we give Him our undivided attention and ample opportunity to speak? Our prayer is that this article will be a great encouragement to each of you. - Melody Green

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth that I really didn't have anything to do with. Although more than fourteen years have passed since I first wrote this, I haven't lost any of the benefits of this lesson.

The First Meal Of The Day

The Lord taught me that the first business I needed to attend to every day was to have my spirit happy in the Lord. My first concern shouldn't be thinking of ways to serve and glorify the Lord, but rather, how to get my spirit into a happy state, and how to nourish my inner man. Trying to speak truth to unbelievers or minister to Christians or relieve the distressed or behave in other ways as a child of God may be done in a wrong spirit if I'm not first happy in the Lord - being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day.

For at least ten years before I understood this, my practice had been to give myself to prayer as soon as I was dressed in the morning. But later, I saw that the most important thing to do was to read the Word of God and meditate on it. In this way my heart could be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, and instructed. And this meditation time on the Word of God was the door through which I entered into rich communion with the Lord.

One Bite At A Time

Starting at the beginning of the New Testament I began to meditate early in the morning. After asking the Lord's blessing on His precious Word, I began to think upon what I was reading, searching to get blessing out of every verse; not for the sake of teaching someone else, not for a new message to preach, but to obtain food for my *own* spirit. The result has almost always been that, after a very few minutes, I've been led to confess sin to God or to thank Him or to pray for the needs of others or to pray for my own needs. So, although I didn't start off praying, my meditation always led me into prayer.

After I have paused and poured out my heart in prayer, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all of it into prayer for myself or others - however the Word may lead - but still continually keeping in mind that food for my *own* soul is the first purpose of my meditation. The result of this is that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man is almost always noticeably nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I'm in a peaceful if not happy state of heart.

What the Lord shows me sooner or later in the day, is that the special things He gives me in the morning become food for other believers, even though it wasn't for their sake that I meditated, but for the strengthening of my own inner man.

Digesting The Word

I like to take my Bible and meditate outside, taking an hour or two before breakfast, walking through the fields, or sitting on the steps if I find it too difficult to walk the whole time. It's good exercise. I used to consider the time spent walking a loss, but now I find it very profitable, not only to my body, but also to my spirit. Walking outside before breakfast is, of course, not necessarily connected to morning devotions, and everyone should do what's best for them.

The real difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this: I used to pray as soon as possible, and spent almost all my time until breakfast in prayer. I usually began with prayer, except when I felt my spirit to be more barren than usual, in which case I read the Word of God. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour to an hour on my knees before being conscious of getting any comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often, I would struggle with my mind wandering for the first ten to thirty minutes before I was able to break through in prayer.

This rarely happens now. As I am nourished by the truth, and come into sweet communion with God, I speak to my Father and Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it) about the things He brings before me in His precious Word. It astonishes me that I didn't discover this point sooner. I never saw it in a book. No other ministry ever talked about this to me. No private discussions with a brother uncovered it. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it's as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do every morning is to obtain food for his inner man.

Our Daily Bread

Just as the outward man can't work without food, and food is one of the first things he needs, so it is with the inner man. Now, what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. And not just the simple reading of the Word of God - that's like water running through a pipe. We need to *consider* what we read, pondering it, and *apply* it to our hearts.

Praying for any length of time requires a degree of strength and godly desire, and a time set apart. The best time for prayer is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God. Our Father has been speaking to us, encouraging us, comforting us, instructing us, humbling us, and reproving us. Even if we are spiritually weak, we can meditate. In fact, the weaker we are, the more we *need* meditation to strengthen our inner man.

It's much easier to concentrate on prayer without having your mind wander if you meditate on the Scriptures first. I emphasize this point so strongly because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I have received from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly urge my fellow believers to consider this. I believe God has blessed these times that have given me the strength and peace to pass through the greatest trials I've ever known. Having practiced this method for fourteen years, I can most fully, in the fear of God, recommend it.

What a tremendous difference it makes to start each day with your spirit happy and refreshed in the Lord rather than facing it without spiritual preparation. Ready or not, the needs, the trials, and the temptations will come!

George Mueller (1805-1898) is probably best known as the "Father of Orphans." Meeting the needs of thousands of children taught Mr. Mueller to look to God, and God alone, as his supply. When he formed the scriptural Knowledge Institution in 1834, his goals were to assist day and Sunday schools, to distribute Bibles and tracts, and care for orphans. Little did he realize this organization was to become the leading distributor of Bibles and religious literature, and the biggest supporter of missions of its day.

George Mueller prayed in over seven and a half million dollars, and logged in his journal 50,000 specific answers to prayer - 5,000 were answered on the very day of their asking. He went on seventeen preaching tours in which he spoke to more than three million people. George Mueller lived a life of faith that continuously demonstrated his statement that "real trust in God is above circumstances and appearances.

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