

The Necessity of Daily Praying and Reading the Bible

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Tim: So, I want to address something tonight. This is not anything that anybody has sent in. Something that I feel like I just would like to have us discuss and think about tonight. I think one of the pastoral dilemmas - I just remember John MacArthur saying that he felt like one of the most difficult aspects of pastoring was the fact that the people that he is teaching don't always, in fact very often, are not living up to the truth that he teaches. And he described that as being one of the greatest frustrations of pastoring. And ... as elders, you know, we get together, and we have elders' meetings, and we're constantly evaluating the condition of the flock. And we think about people, individuals. We have lists. We oftentimes can go down through either before or during the elders' meetings, where we hear about people's lives. There's all manner of channels of communication today. You got all sorts of people, and voices, and there's social media, and things happen, and we're just ... we're watching, and seeking to shepherd the flock. We want holiness, and we want to see health in the church. And honestly, there is regularly something that, as pastors, is grieving in the church. And oftentimes it's the kinds of things that... You just think, we think: It ought to be obvious, that this isn't good. It ought to be obvious that this is not healthy Christianity. And, you know, thinking about that, and thinking about, sometimes, the immaturity that we see... I think one of the things that's really obvious is: There is a connection back to our walk with the Lord. And there is a connection with our closeness to Him. And there is a connection with the time that we spend with Him.

And the truth is, that as Christians, Scripture says that we're not under law, we're under grace. That doesn't mean that there aren't commandments. That doesn't mean that there isn't instruction. That doesn't mean that we don't have epistle after epistle after epistle of commandments and instruction and principles that are laid down in scripture for our life. But the thing is, I think it's safe to say this. Maybe somebody else has said it exactly how I'm gonna say it. I don't know, but... I think if we think about it and if we were to say something like: Christianity is not primarily a list of rules. It's primarily about relationship. There may even be cliché sayings that are similar to that. I don't know. But, we don't want to press that so far that we miss the fact that there are lots of commandments and instruction given to us in Scripture.

But can anybody think of a passage that might lend itself to the fact that eternal life is far more about relationship than it is about rules? There's really a classic text that defines for us what eternal life is. This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Exactly. There is a knowing of God that goes with that. Now, obviously, as we know God, and as we fellowship with God, the desire, like we looked at on Sunday, should be perfect as God is perfect, merciful as God is merciful. It's the new man that's created, really, in this image of God: righteousness, true righteousness, holiness. And so, really, even when we think about the rules and the regulations, commandments, instruction, principles of Scripture...

They're all about conforming. It's walking with God, and, as we see Him, and behold Him, there is a conforming into His image. That's really what it is all about. It's communing with Him. It's fellowshiping with Him. And it's us as we do it... becoming like Him. You know what Scripture says: You want to be a fool? Hang around fools. There is a reality that we want to avoid corrupt companionship, or communication. It corrupts good manners. There is a reality that we have a tendency, by what we surround ourselves with or who we surround ourselves with, we tend to become like those we're around. You want to be wise? You walk with the wise. But even more than that there is a supernatural principle that the more we're in the presence of God like Moses, the more our face glows. And, that being the case...

My wife and I were talking earlier today, and we were talking about this very thing, about the Lord. Communing with the Lord is obviously the key to deepening godliness, and to deepening maturity, and to deepening Christ-likeness. There is no question. My wife said well, you know, I'm gonna jump on my soapbox here and say that it comes back to Scripture and to prayer. And I said something like: Yeah, that's obvious. And she said: Oh, I don't know that it is. And I thought, you know what? It's obvious to me. But I think she is right. I'm not sure that it's obvious to lots of people. And maybe especially to young believers it needs to be emphasized. Because maybe it's not so obvious as it ought to be.

I watch some people flounder in sin, sputter. I watch some people who make professions. Somebody else comes along, maybe five years later they make a profession. They outrun this guy that is five years older than they are in the Lord. That kind of thing happens. People pass each other up. And I think if we think about it: What is there to Scripture? What is there to prayer? What can we find in Scripture itself that speaks to these things? As far as maturity, as far as promise, as far as where we will be spiritually if we're applying these things to our lives.

Look, here is the reality: There is this thing about every single individual in the room. There is our track record. In other words: God keeps a book of remembrance. From the time you profess to be a believer until this day. There is a reality. There is a record about what your prayer life looks like. And there is a reality to how much of your life you've devoted to Scripture, to meditating therein, to memorizing, to being in the Word, in the Word and prayer.

And let's think about the dynamics of both of those things. Prayer: we're speaking to the Lord. That's where we're communing with Him. That's where we talk to Him. That's where we worship in prayer. We confess our sins in prayer. There's supplication, we're asking for things. There's intercession, we go and ask things for other people. Those are some essential components. We're talking to Him. We speak. That's what prayer's all about. Extremely biblical, you know that. We're gonna look at some of those texts in Scripture.

The Word, that's where we go to hear Him speak. You see, when we have communication with one another, we talk back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. I was just thinking today about a certain situation. I don't know how you are, maybe if you don't like to talk at all, maybe you're very comfortable if you get in a conversation that really isn't a conversation, it's basically

hearing the other person talk. There is no exchange. You ever talked to somebody like that, they basically dominate the whole thing. They wanna talk the whole time. But that's not the relationship that God wants with us. If there's a healthy relationship...

Often, when I do pre-marriage counseling, I want to know about the communication. Like, I typically ask a couple: When you take a ride in the car for twenty minutes, give me a percentage of time, or if you sat down and had coffee with each other for an hour, give me a percentage of the time that you talk and that you talk. Because you can tell things. You can tell things about the communication that's gonna take place or not take place when they get married. It's typically you would say: fifty-fifty. That's pretty healthy, that's pretty good. You know... John MacArthur has very funny things to say about how much women talk over against how much men talk. And you know what? Typically there's probably something to that that on average women talk more than men. But it's interesting. When I do pre-marriage counseling, it's surprising, I do get a number of fifty-fifties.

Anyways, I say that because that is what the Scripture is all about. The Scripture is us hearing from God. The prayer is us talking to God. And that's the communication. We read in 1st John about fellowship. Fellowship. Brethren, I'll tell you this: Fellowship: There is no way that whatever kind of experiences we may look for... There just simply is not going to be fellowship, unless there is this back and forth communication, where we speak in prayer... By the way: God desires that. ... and then we go into the Word. And God desires that. There are texts, probably they're coming to your mind, that, where we can prove both of those.

But here is the reality: Each one of your lives, there is a testimony that could be brought out, if all the facts were known, if all the truth was known, if, what God knows, was set on the table right now. And I had it, right here. Here's Pedro. Here's James. Here's Mario. Then OK, we're gonna put these in. And this basically is going to show you the last six months of their life and we can see how much have they been in the Word? How much of their life has been devoted to prayer? Scripture actually says we should be devoted to prayer, or be constant in prayer. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We put these in. We're gonna look at our lives. What would it say?

And here is what I know, brethren: That those who have been in the Word most, those who have been in prayer most, they likely are the ones that are running fastest. In fact, you can almost guarantee that, unless that time in prayer is just hypocritical, unless that time in the Word is just for the sake of study and attaining knowledge that puffs up. I mean there are people that professionally study the Word, and there are people that put on a good show like... I can think of Catholic priests and, you know, they bury themselves away in a monastery somewhere, and it's basically just a work of the flesh. But I'm talking about somebody who's walking before the Lord, and pouring themselves out in Scripture and in prayer. These are the people who are going to make the greatest strides in Christianity. These are the people that are going to outrun and surpass others. These are the people that are going to overcome. These are the people that are

going to begin to resemble Christ all the more because as they're in His presence and beholding Him. That's transformational. Communing, back and forth. You can't get away from it.

The reason the Apostle Paul brings in that reality from the Old Testament, where Moses would go into the presence of the Lord, and commune with Him, and come out, and his face would glow. The very reason he brings that imagery into the New Testament is because there is a spiritual principle that he is wanting to drive home to you and me in the New Testament church. And it's the same reality that if you spend time in the presence of God something happens. And I'm concerned at this point, that I have a feeling, that those individuals or groups of individuals that produce the greatest sighs and groans in the elders, in our elders' meetings... I suspect, if we brought out their record, and we stuck it in the machine, it'd be like... No wonder! No wonder! He sleeps in late. He prioritizes everything else in his life above and beyond it. He'll talk about prayer. She'll talk about being in the Word. They talk a good talk. They can talk certain doctrines. But the reality is: They're lazy. They sleep in. They make other things a priority. They'll eat... They don't live as though man doesn't live by bread alone. They live as though man does live only by bread alone. And it's not a priority to be in the Word. The time that's in it doesn't go deep. There's no memorization. They little know it. It's little on their lips. It's little applied to their life.

When you look at their prayer life, it's these kind of quick little things, these little deals. Yes, it's there when there's crisis. Yes, it's there when there is need. Yes, it's there when they're lonely, and they want a spouse. But, other than that? They don't pray for other people. They're not confessing. They're not just enjoying to be in the presence of God. The prayer is little, it's far between, it's mechanical.

You see, brethren, why do I...? "How can you just say that?" "Is he just being judgmental?" I can say it because of this, brethren: Because if we look at the Word, there are promises about what's going to happen to the life of an individual when... .. when we're ... devoting our lives to these two different things. Just open your Bibles to Luke 6:12. This is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. We want to deal with prayer first. In Luke 6:12 ... In these days he, Jesus, went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

Brethren, let's just start right here. I know Christian men and women who, when we have weeks of prayer and fasting, they seriously fast. Or they'll spend special seasons in prayer. They'll miss other things in life for the sake of prayer. Jesus went the whole night. This is crucial. Look, the whole point about growing in this life, it's not... This is what I have... since we've restarted these Bible studies, what I've been trying to stress. Look, religion... You can find lots of religions that are all built on rules. But this really is Christianity, true religion. It is built on an ever deepening relationship with God. And you simply cannot get deep with God if all you're trying to do is fit God into the little cracks and crevices of your life. You can't. You'll never get deep with Him. You know what? There's lots of good intention. Well, I hope to get in the Word today. I hope to spend some time in quality prayer. But you know what? You don't prioritize it. You don't do... If you... I know there are those who do. But I'm talking about those who just simply try to fit God into the

cracks and the corners of their lives. Where it's not something that takes the primary, the first place. Other things do. The life is not prioritized right.

And so, what happens is: Though your intention be ever so good, you're going to fit God in where it's convenient. But then it never becomes convenient. And you know what you end up? You end up cold. You end up dry. You end up with no spiritual power to resist sin. And you fall. You fail. You flop. And you act worldly. And it's noticeable, and the elders see it, and we talk in a meeting, and we sigh, and we groan over the condition of people who embrace worldliness, or carnality, or immaturity.

And it's like: Why? And, brethren, you can trace it right back to this kind of thing. The lives of those who are walking close to the Lord, it's apparent, it comes out. It doesn't mean that everything they do is always going to be exactly what the elders would do, or that we would agree that life, and every choice that they make. But I tell you this: That life will be head and shoulders above the rest. There will be a marked difference. Just like there was a marked difference in Moses when he came down from the mount.

Now listen: You have to recognize that Paul is using that Old Testament illustration because there is a reality in it for us if we're spending time viewing the glory of the Lord. That reality is there. And just like if you would have stood Moses next to the guy that hadn't been up on the mountain, you'd see a big difference. And you see: It's by degrees. It's kind of like the thermometer: You can turn on the refrigerator, and you stick your hand in there, and you don't feel it right off.

But I tell you this: That brother, that sister who are in the word of God faithfully every single day, and they're setting aside some of the quality best time in their day to talk to the Lord, and commune with the Lord... I can tell you this, just like turning that refrigerator on: When you first turned it on the temperature inside and outside were the same. If you come back and check one minute later it doesn't feel a whole lot different. But you know what? Come back a day or two later. This is how when you come back a month later, six months later, twelve months later... And you begin to look at the life of the person that is spending all this quality time, and suddenly you recognize there is a glow on that person's life that the others don't have, the people who treat this with... Well, you know how they treat it. I was gonna say a word like "disdain", but it's just ignored. It's just not prioritized.

Here is the Lord Jesus. His bed's empty. The old evangelical Anglican John Berridge said: "All decays begin in the closet; no heart thrives without much secret converse with God, and, listen to this, nothing will make amends for the want of it." Listen, here is the reality: Those brothers and sisters that have a time in their day that's specifically dedicated to communing with the Lord, they have to pass up other things. You see the people that don't have that, they don't pass those same things up. They indulge. They don't prioritize right. Prioritization is about what's first, and then what comes after. It's about: What is most important in my life, and... I'm going to make sure that happens even if the other things don't happen.

And you know how it was with Whitefield: 10 p.m. every evening. Didn't matter who he was speaking to. Very easy to justify. "Oh well, you know, I'm having a good conversation with brother so-and-so..." Nope, no matter who he was speaking to... It was said, though he was speaking to the queen of England, he would depart at ten o'clock to speak to the King of the universe.

Can you imagine the scene? I've often thought... Maybe you heard me say this before: I've thought that we talk about the empty tomb, and rightly so. He's risen. That's huge. But I've often thought about the empty bed. Because that tells me something about the prayer life. The empty bed. Jesus... Jesus prioritized the need He had for His Father and the love that He had for His Father over and above sleep. That's what happened there. See, the problem is, brethren, we've too many people... They're okay, they would rather hear of God, they would rather hear about God, they would rather hear doctrine about God, sit in the preaching and listen, rather than actually speaking to God.

Brethren, what do we call that? When a Christian has reluctance to dwell in God's presence? What is that? Let's talk about peace. James is at this text, I believe, in Philippians 4, let's look there. Peace. Scripture says that God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him. You see, this comes back to prayer life. That's reiterated for us here in Philippians 4: 6 and 7. But you think about this: People who have anxiety all the time, people who can't rest, people who are troubled, people who are disturbed, people... Brethren, Scripture says if our mind is stayed on Him, if God is being central, if God is the focus, if we're going to Him, we're living in His presence, we're communing with Him, we're setting aside time.

Listen to this: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

It says: in everything. Make sure you see that. One of the main reasons that certain people don't stay devoted to prayer or constant in prayer, as they ought, is because they don't commune with God about everything. Müller said... Back in those days I believe they had fountain pens, and you had to fill them. And he said if there is something in his life worth doing, it's worth communicating to God about. One of the reasons that people don't pray as they ought is because we have a lot of people who are wired to pray only when the crisis comes.

Brethren, have you ever read in the Proverbs: The prayer of the upright is God's delight. And you can take that reality over to the Song of Solomon. Just turn to the Song of Solomon. Here we have a picture of Christ and His church. Somebody read Song of Solomon 2:10! My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. How about verse 13? The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let

me hear your voice... And so, there you have a picture of Christ and the church. Let me hear your voice, let me see your face.

I told this story before: I remember when I worked at Miller Curtain... I just had this picture in my mind of one of the guys that worked there in the engineering department getting married and then coming to work with his sleeping bag and sleeping under his desk every day. You'd say: "What are you doing?" "You're married!" "Go home, man, go home to your wife!" "Go home and sleep in your bed at home!" You would say: The man's a fool to bring his sleeping bag. He just got married. His wife is at home waiting for him. He sleeps under his desk. You see, that's what's happening when you get professing Christians that just walk around and all their prayer is crisis praying. "O, I'm lonely! Give me a wife!" "O, I'm this, I'm that. Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme..." It's like you're missing something. It's like we have to go back to the starting point. If the prayer life is just some duty and some drudgery, I'm afraid you're not partaking of Christianity. I'm afraid you're partaking of something that is of your own creation. Because this eternal life, that we're talking about, is to know God and to know His Christ.

Somebody read Song of Solomon 4:9! "You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! You have captivated me..." And, of course, we could go on, we could go over to chapter 5, and, you know, the picture there of Christ coming to the door and He puts His hand to the latch, and it's locked, and He calls for His bride, and she delays. Why? She begins to think: "My feet are clean, and I'm already in bed, and if I get up..." And it's kind of like the Lord coming to us and calling us away in prayer...

Brethren, I recognize that there is a discipline in prayer. But there is also gonna be a real sweetness as well. And those who walk in that, that sweetness, and they're going to the Lord, and they're communing with the Lord... It's His delight. The prayer of the upright is His delight. He longs to see our face. There's peace. We saw that from Philippians chapter 4: There is peace. How about this: Jeremiah 33:3 Somebody read that. "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." Do you hear what that's saying? It's kind of like Moses. You know what happened to Moses when he went into the tent of meeting, and that pillar came down, and settled right over the top? Or when he went up on mount Sinai, and God descended? Moses was brought into the inner counsels of God. You see, what's being said? If you call on Me, there's secret things. There's a special, hidden, secret revelation that God... You know what happens? You begin to understand things about God that other people just don't understand. And I think that's part of it. I think that's part of it, where... Sometimes you look at people, and they're walking on another plane. They're walking on a plane like they don't really know God. Or they wouldn't do or say the things that they do or say. You're looking, you wonder... I'm saying this because I'm hoping that it produces an appetite. That you'd wanna... The peace of God is to be found. Great and hidden things are to be found. There is also a closeness.

Brethren, think with me here: What did James say in James 4 about drawing close to God? If you draw close to Him... What does it say? Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you. That's what James says. You see, it's this kind of thing where you draw near to Him, and He comes near to you. You say: What is that? I'm talking about your spiritual senses pick Him up. You say: Isn't He any near to all of us? Doesn't scripture say somewhere, He is not far from any of us? Yes. What does it mean for God to draw near? Isn't He everywhere all the time? Yes. To draw near means that your senses, your spiritual senses pick up His presence. He gives you ears to hear His voice, eyes to see His person, the ability to comprehend the hidden things and the secret things, and joy, and love. We read in Scripture about the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. This is something that the Spirit does.

Or we think about the Spirit bearing witness. Brethren, there is a witness bearing, there is a love, there is a presence, there is a joy. And I'll tell you this: When He comes close, there is a fear. And there is also something that happens that you wanna protect. You don't wanna lose that. In other words once that happens, you want it to happen again. And again, and again. And if you really think that if I go and do this thing that I'm about ready to do and I lose that, then I don't wanna go do what I'm about to go do, because I want that more than the thing I'm about to go and do.

You see, that's the thing. That's the thing that confounds me. I watch some Christians go do things, that I know, that's going to be grieving the Spirit. Why would they go do that? It's because they don't value communion with God more than that. And the reason that I suspect that they don't, is because it's foreign to them to draw near to God and have Him draw near to them. They don't know that in its fullness to where it prevents them from doing that thing that they do.

Brethren, we're told to watch in prayer. Watch! Watch! Watch! You remember the Lord Jesus on the night that He was betrayed... They not only took the Lord's supper, he went out to the garden Gethsemane. And you remember, He told His disciples: Watch and pray! Watch and pray! That you not fall into temptation! Brethren, what in the world was happening out there that night? The devil was moving. The devil was seeking to sift Peter. The devil had entered into Judas. Jesus was under extreme turmoil. Things were happening in the spiritual realm. And Jesus says to all of us: Watch! Watch! Watch! Why? We have an enemy that is moving. We have an enemy that is seeking to devour. How do we watch? Brethren, we watch in prayer. We watch in prayer. Prayer makes us discerning. Prayer makes us sensitive to temptation. It makes us sensitive to demonic activity. It makes us sensitive to danger. That's why we're told, that's why those two words go together: Praying and watching. They go together. Watch and pray! Scripture says: Watch and pray!

Let's turn to Ephesians 6:18. 6:18 is about putting on the armor... Chapter 6 is about putting on the armor of God. When you get down to verse 18, you come to... all prayer it is, how it is in the KJV. I say it that way, because that's how it is in Pilgrim's Progress as well: All prayer. Does somebody read Ephesians 6:18? ... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and

supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ... Did you see this, did you hear that? How do you keep alert? How do you persevere? Through prayer. That's how you keep alert. Isn't it interesting? See, brethren, things happen when you talk to God. When you talk to Him, there is something that happens spiritually. And what this is a promise of is people who are sleeping in the church... Write it down! They're staying in bed. They're not getting up in the morning and praying. They may purpose to pray in the evenings. They're hanging out with their friends. They don't do it. Mark it down. People who are not alert, people who are not awake, people who foolishly stumble into sin, stumble into worldliness, stumble into carnality, stumble into... Brethren, if they're not watching, they're not watching, they're not attentive... These things go hand in hand.

Also, you have confession. Brethren, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them. Brethren, what you have to recognize is this: You can go to the Lord's prayer, and it talks about Anybody cite the Lord's prayer to me? Somebody's gotta have it memorized... Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, Right there! Right there: Forgive us our trespasses. This is Jesus teaching His disciples to pray, not lost people. Forgive us our trespasses. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive.

Brethren, there are two kinds of forgiveness: On the one hand you have a legal forgiveness. Justification. We're counted righteous. But, brethren, there is a relational forgiveness. You say: "What do you mean?" There is that kind of forgiveness where David has sinned and you get Psalm 51. Can anybody think about what Psalm 51 is all about? He confesses his sins. There is a place for the Christian to say: Father forgive me! There is a place for Christian to Christian, or husband and wife that are Christians, to say: Forgive me! You see: That's not a legal declaration of righteousness. That's a relational forgiving so that any grieving of the Spirit, any grief that was there, any separation that was there... Brethren, you know how it is: When we're living our Christian life, sin comes in, some callousness can come in, but if we're communicating regularly with the Lord, you know what: It's very difficult to continue a prayer life with the Lord if you've got some outstanding sin there. And having appointed times in your day where you go, or a main time where you go in prayer...

Brethren, I know, often one of the things that I do when I go before the Lord in prayer is, there is a searching. I don't want to just run into His presence. It's like, I don't want to be a hypocrite, but there is a place to do inventory. Is everything o.k.? Am I harboring anything? And there is a place for confession to start right off. A place for repentance. That is so healthy. Those who play at prayer or just stick it in the cracks, or just pray when there is some crisis... You're not doing that. And so there is not this constant short account keeping with God.

Many of you have heard, I've told this repeatedly, I like this, I've come across this, where one of Spurgeon's deacons was watching Spurgeon. They were both walking kind of parallel on two sides of the street there in London. And he was watching Spurgeon. Spurgeon stopped dead in his tracks, hung his head for a few minutes, or a few moments, I don't know if it got into minutes

or not, but he just stopped on the other side, and he watched him, and then he raised, Spurgeon raised his head, and went on walking. And the deacon crossed the street, and went over and said: Everything okay? And he said: Something came between me and my Savior and I needed to deal with it immediately. And it's that keeping of short accounts. If we're not praying...

Brethren, I would say this, battles are won, miracles are done, through praying. Think about the places in Scripture where they prayed. Think about the fact that we're told that mountains can be moved, or trees can be plucked up and, mountains and trees can be cast away... Think about that. Hezekiah, think about in Hezekiah's day! He is faced by probably the strongest ruler on the face of the earth, Sennacherib. He comes against Jerusalem. And Hezekiah prayed. And God heard his prayer. We could go on and on through the victories that have been won: James likes to tell the story about the king there that was up against incredible odds, and they prayed: "Lord, You know, we don't know what to do." "We're looking to you." Which king was that? Jehoshaphat. And that's all through Scripture. Lord, help! And we get help. You can be certain, brethren, that it's the praying people that are gonna see: These kinds of things happen. What are we told? Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. Isn't that interesting? James says that to us. In other words: Elijah was just like us. And what did Elijah do? He prayed. And it didn't rain for how long? Three and a half years. Then he prayed. And it rained.

Brethren, the people that experience manifestations of power, they're not prayerless people. Typically. You want the quick path to powerlessness in your life? Don't pray. Just don't pray. So we can go through all these things: You're brought into the secret place. Watch! There is... When we pray, there is an alertness. There is a perseverance. When we confess, the relationship is restored. God delights that we should do this. There is in the communing and the talking with him like Moses. There is this God-likeness that begins to be worked into the fabric of our being. We see miracles. Battles are won. There is a closeness, he draws close to us. There is a communing. There is a sweetness in all of this.

Now, let's transition over and talk about the Word of God. I want to go through some texts very quickly here, that have to do with Scripture. The first one that jumps out at me is Psalm 119:11. Somebody look there and read that. Somebody else, since most of you are gonna be turning there... Somebody else can turn to 1 John 2, verse 14. I think that's an amazingly helpful passage as well. As now we are coming to the other side, it's not just that we speak to Him. We need to hear His voice. And if we do, I just wanna go through a number of advantages, a number of blessings, a number of absolutely critical and necessary ways, in which this is our life, this helps us to be what we're supposed to be, to be Christians as Christians ought to be.

Somebody read Psalm 119:11. "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. That's a classic text." Brethren, when we go to the Word, we store up the Word in our heart, that we might not sin against Him. I suspect that where we see sin... Those in the church that walk most carnally... I believe that, based on a text like this, you can find correlations between how much time they spend in the Word. Do we play at reading our Bibles or are we serious? Like I have a feeling that... I have a feeling that if, again, if we could go back

to the DVD of your life, I have a feeling that there is a direct correlation between the people who have read the book of Hosea end to end and the purity in your life. You say: What are you talking about? Hosea? I'm talking about the minor prophets which is probably a portion of Scripture that if people have not read their Bible cover to cover, is probably an area that people have passed over. Or places like Leviticus. Or places like 2 Chronicles. I would imagine that the people in this room that have read Leviticus, 2 Chronicles, and Hosea, it's very likely that there is a pattern... And I'm not gonna ask for any show of hands. But people who take the Word seriously...

For me as a young believer, to know that there was even part of the Bible that I had not read yet, something God had actually spoken to me, and I hadn't read it yet... The thought of that was unbearable. I want to hear His voice, I want to know that. And when you store up that Word... There is a direct correlation to sin. That's what Scripture says. Think with me: All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. When I store up the Word in my heart... Substitute that: If sin is falling short of the glory of God, I store up His Word in my heart that I might not ... what? That I might not fall short of the glory of God. You see: If life, as the old Westminster Confession says... What's the main purpose of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. If indeed, the purpose of man is to glorify God, then it's not to spend my life falling short of His glory. And, I guess, what baffles me, is that sometimes, young Christians who are doing things that... they just don't seem to be a reflection of the glory of God. Some of the things that some Christians do, I'm quite certain that if they just had the experience that Isaiah had, and they walked out of the temple, having seen the Lord, in that year that king Hezekiah died, high lifted up and His train filled the temple, and the seraphim... You come walking out of there... I doubt, Isaiah ran off and did some of the things that... .. sometimes young people, young professing believers do.

Brethren, did somebody turn to 1 John 2:14? "I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning." Okay, now, don't worry about the fathers. It's the young men. This is what I want you to hear. Listen to this: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Wow! To think about all those connections right there. Strength. The word of God abides in them. They've overcome the evil one. Brethren, Matthew 4. Jesus. Temptation. Face to face with the devil himself. In fact that's where He says: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He had the sword of the Spirit, and where was it? I tell you this: It wasn't in a book. It was in His brain. Mark that! O, that doesn't mean that He never read from the scroll. Obviously He grew in wisdom and favor. We see that in Luke. He grew in wisdom. How did He grow? Obviously, being taught. Obviously, reading. But you see where His sword was? The sword of the Spirit? The word of God was no longer in a book. It was in His brain. It was in His thoughts. How did He get there? By spending hours, and hours, and hours in the Word of God. By soaking it up. By meditating on it. By letting it course through your brain, and renew that mind. And your mind begins to be ... impacted by it.

Listen, if your brains are being exposed to worldly music, and worldly garbage on the Internet, and trash on the Internet, and you're surrounding yourselves either through the TV, through

movies, through the Internet, through actual companions you're surrounding yourself, with worldly ungodly people and influences... It's no wonder that your life is not gonna be in the same place as the life of the person who lives in that Word.

Here is what Jesus said, He says this in John 5: You search the Scriptures, because in there you think you're gonna find eternal life. But He said those Scriptures speak of Me. And you may remember on the road to Emmaus, He went through all the Old Testament Scriptures, and He basically showed those two guys Himself. All through. The law. And the prophets. All through the Old Testament. The Scriptures speak of Him. You see, that's where we see Him. What happens is that if all you do is pray, if all you do is talk to Him, you have no idea who you're talking to. It's when we go to Scripture, we see who our God is. We see His character. We get a feel for His person. It's in Scripture that we get a feel for the person. It's like, you go to Scripture, and He speaks to you and He says: This is who I am. And now that greatly impacts when you answer back in prayer, how you approach Him. What else can we say? Psalm 37:21 ... 31, rather Psalm 37:31 This may be similar. The idea in Psalm 119 is the fact that we not sin, we're not gonna fall short of the glory of God. Here, Psalm 37:31, the idea is: That our steps don't slip. Somebody want to read it? "The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip." Yeah.

Then, probably, one that I believe I memorized as a young Christian is Psalm 1. Psalm 1, the first three verses. Somebody want to look that one up? Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. Now, what is that? In his law he meditates day and night. It's like praying. Pray without ceasing. Devoted times, dedicated times are good. Discipline, get those in your life, go back to them. But don't ever think you're limited to them. We should be letting that word course through our minds day and night. Drift off to sleep, thinking about Scripture. Wake up, think about Scripture. Listen: You think about what you expose yourself to. Did anybody think of any verses that kind of make that connection? That what you see or what you hear, what you're exposed to... Bad company ruins good morals? That could be one. The eye is the lamp of the body. Perhaps. How about one that talks about just guarding the heart? Anybody think of a text that says anything like that? Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Out of it flow the issues of life. It's the idea that you guard...

Listen: If you watch something before you go to bed, it's gonna impact how you think as you're going off to sleep. It's gonna impact your dreams. What we fill ourselves with, what we fill our thoughts with, what we fill our minds with... We're to be renewing the mind.

And, listen: Scripture... Think about what Scripture says: It's active. It's living. These are just pages and ink by themselves, but the truths contained, as they come to the eyeball and get processed in the thoughts, there is life. There is action. There is movement. There is power. There is a living Word in this book. The Spirit of God makes this alive. And when we bring that in, it has distinct and definite impact on us. Anyway, who is reading Psalm 1? Pick up where you left off and keep going all the way to the end of three. "He is like a tree planted by streams of

water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” Notice that. This man who meditates on the Word night and day, the law of God just fills his life, his heart, his mind. It's directly linked to the man who prospers, who's fruitful. I think of another one...

Anybody think of a text that talks about God saying to this man: I will look? Isaiah 66. Look it up, brother, quote it for us. Isaiah, chapter 66, verse 2. “But to this one I will look: to him who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word.” Who trembles at my word. I guarantee that that's somebody who actually is in the Word, meditates on the Word, understands the Word, takes the Word serious, and is concerned to live it out... God says: That's the man to whom I will look. That's a look from God. Doesn't He look everywhere? Again, it's a special, it's a unique, it's a look of blessing. It's a look of help. It's a look that you want. For God to say, He's gonna look at you, is all good. It's the look of everything that you want. If you could see things the way God sees them. And the way He sees them is the right way to see them.

But, if you just think about these verses: Our prayer life, our life in the Word. Man does not live by bread alone. The Christian lives by the words that come out of God's mouth. This has to be priority. If our Lord Jesus Christ says Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. You have to be thinking: Is our spiritual life more or less important than our physical life? How much do we eat physically ... versus how much we eat spiritually? Again, brethren, there is a reality. Everyone in this room has a reality about how much they're in the Word. There is a reality about our prayer life. There is ... look: I know that there is a way that we might wish it was. Or: There is a way we portray it to other people. But the truth is: There is a way that it actually is. And that's what counts. That's what really matters. These two aspects of the Christian life, prayer and the Word, it's our communication, it's the essential links to walking with our God and with His Christ. It's the essential links in knowing Him. It's the essential links in closeness to Him. It's the essential links in growth.

He is our good, He is our growth. It's nearness to Him that is going to produce everything good that we need to have produced. Separation from Him is never healthy. Closeness to Him, being attached to Him, being united to Him, fellowshiping with Him, communing with Him: That is where our life is. These two channels are the lifelines to Christ. They're the lifelines to our God. And, look, if you're not prioritizing, if this is sloppy, if it's being pressed in the corner, I'll tell you this: You will never go deep with God. And you will never become what you could become. And you will stay fairly immature, fairly carnal to the degree that you neglect these things. There is a direct correlation between your spiritual health and what I'm talking about here. A direct correlation. And you can't get away from it. And there is no substitutes for it. Anybody want to add anything, or any questions before we end this? James, you want to say anything about that?

James: Did you mention Job 23?

Tim: No.

James: Verse 12, "I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food."

Tim: Now see the thing, in Psalm 63, David said: I meditate on you in the watches of the night. It's like David's laying in his bed meditating on the Lord. Right. Anything else? Did George Müller read the Bible four times a year? Was that what it was? No, I actually think he only read it once a year. But he lived to be almost 100 years old, so, it was ... very consistent. That's what I think I remember. Only some biography, someone commented about it and said, he read it four times every year. Anybody know? I mean, that's good. If you can do it, that's great.

Okay, let's pray. Father, I pray that You would give us all ears to hear. Lord, draw Your people into Your presence. Draw us by Your kindness. Draw us with Your love. Draw us, Lord! Father, in our natural state we have no appetite for any of this. We have no desire for any of this. O Lord, if we do have, to the degree that we have it, it's from You. You give us the spiritual health to desire these things. And I pray, Lord, incline us. Draw us, Lord! As it says there in the Song of Solomon, in the King James version: Draw us, and we will run after you. Lord, please, draw us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.