

## **READING AND PRAYING TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD**

- We need to practice mingling together our praying and reading, our reading and praying so that the word becomes food for us to eat
- We need to learn the secret of transferring the word into the spirit by praying because the word without the Spirit is knowledge and knowledge without life is death
- Let us practice taking the word by prayer in the morning and then throughout the day talking to the Lord based on what we have read and understood

### **The Practical Way to Eat the Word**

The way to eat the word is first not to read too much. Our time in the word is not to buy something from the supermarket; it is to eat a breakfast. Therefore, we should not take too much, just an adequate portion. Second, we should not try to understand too much. At other times we may need to exercise our mind by reading, but our time for eating the word is not for exercising our mind. We should simply read and understand whatever we can understand. We need not try to understand more than that; this will frustrate us. If we read a few verses or even half of a chapter and do not understand it, we should leave it and continue to read. Perhaps in the following verses we will understand something.

Once we understand something, we should ponder over it a little. I do not like to use the word *meditate*, because that word has been wrongly used. Sometimes to meditate is merely to exercise the mind. In that case, it is better not to meditate. When some Christians meditate too much, they travel throughout the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, back to the Psalms, and then back to Genesis. That does not help. However, when we are inspired with something from the word, we should consider it.

Right away we should pray over what we understand. It is by this kind of prayer that we have a fresh contact not only with the word but also with the Lord Himself through the word. Eventually, the Lord and the word, the word and the Lord, become one to us. In this way, our prayer and reading will be mingled. While we read and consider, we speak something to the Lord, and while we are speaking something to the Lord, we ponder on the word and consider what we understand. This is praying and reading, reading and praying, mingled together.

Matthew 8:1 to 4 says that the Lord Jesus “came down from the mountain” and healed a leper. When we read this portion, we may be inspired that the Lord came down from the mountain. Then we can say, “I praise You, Lord, that You have come down from the mountain. You have come down to the place where I am. O Lord, come down once again today that I may be healed. If You come, my leprosy will go away.” It may not be possible to read and pray in this way for an hour, but to take twenty minutes is possible. Try to do this in the morning and again during the day. I would suggest, especially to the young ones, that you keep a small Bible in your pocket. Throughout the day or during recess or rest you can open it and read two or three verses. Then you will get something, and you can pray over it.

Some may ask, “How can I read and pray? If I read, I have to open my eyes, but if I pray, I have to close them.” Forget about opening or closing your eyes. If you need to close your eyes, close them spontaneously, but if you do not need to close them, do not make that a form. Even when we close our eyes, we still can “read,” because the word has already gotten into us.

It is very convenient to have the word within us. Many times people do not realize that I am reading the word, because I am not reading a Bible outwardly. However, many times I “read” inwardly. I recall Romans 8:1 and 2: “There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.” Spontaneously I say to the Lord, “Praise You, I am in Christ. Hallelujah, I am not in [Seattle]; I am in Christ!” When I am bothered by something, I say, “I am not in this place. I am in Christ. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! I am in Christ.” We have to be beside ourselves in this way to say, “Oh, praise the Lord, the Spirit of life! O Lord, You are the Spirit of life, and this life-giving Spirit is in me. With this Spirit there is the liberating law, setting me free from the law of sin and of death.” We can also turn to the enemy and say, “Satan, I am not afraid of you any more. I have another One who is stronger than you. If you come to fight with me, you will be defeated.” This is the living way to read the word.

Ten minutes before dinner is served, we can come to the word to read and pray. By the time dinner comes, we already will have had a good meal, eating the word and feeding on the Lord. Try this; you will see the difference in your Christian life. Your Christian life will be different from what you had in the past. You will know how to feed on the Lord and feed on the word. Eventually, you will be filled with the word and with the Spirit. It will be hard to differentiate between the word

and the Spirit. In Colossians 3:16 the word of Christ fills us, but in Ephesians 5:18 we are filled in spirit. These two—the word and the Spirit—are one. When we are filled with the word, we are filled with the Spirit.

It is wrong to be filled with the word but not with the Spirit. Do not forget this formula: “The word without the Spirit is knowledge. Knowledge without life is death. When death becomes old, it has a stench.” Always reading without eating, without praying, merely amasses knowledge in letters. The letter kills (2 Cor. 3:6), and death brings its stench. Therefore, we have to transfer the word into the Spirit. Whenever we have the Spirit, we have life, and when we have life, we have a sweet fragrance. The sweet odor of Christ will constantly spread within us (2 Cor. 2:15). The secret, the key, is to transfer the word to the Spirit by praying. This does not mean that we should not read and study the word to gain knowledge. We all need to do this, just as we need to go to the supermarket to buy groceries and store them up. However, that is not all. We need to eat.

We may know much about the Bible, but how much have we eaten? This is the problem among Christians. We are not accustomed to eating, so we must now learn how to do it. This is why I have a burden to stress the matter of our eating. If someone does not have the desire to eat, he is sick. Only sick people do not have an appetite. Such a one must pray that the Lord would cure him. Healthy Christians, however, must practice to eat. Even if you feel you are clear about this, you still need more practice.

Psalms 35:1 and 2 say, “Strive, O Jehovah, with those who strive with me; / Battle against those who battle against me. / Take hold of buckler and shield, / And rise up as my help.” It is not very easy to apply a passage like this, except if under the Lord’s sovereignty we have a case like the psalmist’s. If we do not have such a case, we need not apply these two verses to ourselves. We should not try to force anything. If there is something in verses like these to digest, then we can digest it. Otherwise, we can simply go on to the following verses. There is no need to get something from every verse. The Bible is very rich; if we continue to read, we will get something eventually. It might be that on one morning we receive nothing from a particular passage, but a few months later when we have the need, the Spirit will bring it back to our understanding. At that time we can pray in a better way.

When we eat physical food, we should not swallow it too quickly. We have to chew it for a certain amount of time. In the same way, when we read and pray with the word, we should not read too quickly, and neither

should we compose formal prayers. We simply should read and talk to the Lord in a spontaneous way. When I was young, I was very religious. Whenever I prayed, I felt I had to kneel down and speak properly. This was too religious and formal. Later I realized that the Lord does not honor this. Rather, He honors that we know how to contact Him and eat Him. On the one hand, we should not be light, loose, and wild, but on the other hand, we should forget about formality and religion and simply be spontaneous. Sometimes we may read the word in the garden or in the car, sometimes we may sit to read and speak to the Lord, and at other times we may have to kneel down to read and speak to the Lord. We simply should contact the Lord by talking with Him in a very spontaneous way, yet in the spirit, to absorb Him by reading and praying, that is, by talking to the Lord based on what we have read and understood.

If we try to do this, we will see the difference in our Christian life. Many problems will be solved spontaneously by this kind of eating, because we will digest many spiritual “vitamins” that deal with the problems and swallow up death. There are many problems that we cannot solve and that no one can help us to solve. Likewise, there are many questions that no one can answer for us. However, simply by feasting on the Lord in this way, the inner supply and nourishment will take care of all our problems. The nourishment will solve the problems. The vitamins will meet the need and kill the germs.

At one time I felt that I had a problem with my eyes. By the evening time it was hard for me to see or to read. When I contacted an eye specialist, he told me that I needed to eat something with vitamin A...The problem was not that I could not see; the problem was that I was short of vitamin A. In the same principle, many problems in our Christian life are due to one thing—we are short of Christ. I do not mean that we are short of the knowledge of Christ. We may have too much knowledge of Christ. We are short not of the “prescription” but of the “vitamin” itself. We simply need to take more Christ. Then we will be well. Do not argue with this; simply go to try it. Then you will be thankful for this word. (*Enjoying Christ as the Word and the Spirit through Prayer*, Chapter 6)

#### **Fellowship Questions:**

1. What are some practical ways for us to take the word not primarily for knowledge but as food? Practice reading and praying some verses in this way.
2. What challenges have we faced when we tried to pray over the word? What has helped us overcome some of these challenges?

3. How does the word we prayed in the morning continue to nourish us during the day? Share some experiences or helps in this area.