

Pray-reading God's Word

Scripture Reading:

Hymn: 811

- Eph 6:17-18 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Jer 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, and your word became to me the gladness and joy of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.
- Psa 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

I. Knowing the essence of God's word:

- A. God's word is the **breathing** out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.
- B. The Bible is the **spiritual milk**—1 Pet. 2:2.
- C. God's word is our **spiritual food**, our bread of life—Matt. 4:4.
- D. God's word is **spirit and life**—John 6:63.
- E. God's word is **Christ—God Himself**—John 1:1, 14.

II. The meaning and function of pray-reading the Lord's word:

- A. "And receive...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit..."—Eph. 6:17-18.
- B. Using our spirit to pray-read God's word to **enjoy** the Lord by eating, drinking, and breathing the spirit and life in God's word—Eph. 6:17; Jer. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:2; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16.

III. The exercise and practice of pray-reading God's word.

- A. Personal pray-reading:
 1. Hungering for the Lord; hoping in God's word.
 2. Praying with the spirit; touching the spirit in the word.
 3. Not relying on our mind; according to the Spirit.
 4. Daily, morning and evening; eat, drink, and enjoy.
- B. Four words for corporate pray-reading:
 1. Quick: Follow quickly; connect quickly; add to quickly. Do not fight—fighting causes confusion. Do not wait—waiting results in depression.
 2. Short: Short sentences pick up the spirit—masticating not swallowing.
 3. Real: Release the spirit by forsaking the self. The feeling is real when it is expressed from deep within.
 4. Fresh: Following the Spirit to express fresh feelings. Do not try to be funny.

Referenced Books: *The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, Chapter 1 and 2; *The Way to Enjoy Spiritual Food*, **published in Chinese but not in English**, Chapter 2, 4 to 6; *A Living Coinhering with the Lord in Spirit*, **published in Chinese but not in English**, Chapters 6 to 7; *The Proper Way for the Believers to Meet and to Serve*, **published in Chinese but not in English**, Chapter 3; *The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy*, Chapter 8; *Life-study of Ephesians*, Message 97.

Excerpts from the Ministry:**Knowing the Essence of God's Word**

Now let us see the essence of God's Word in a simple way. If we want to know God's Word, we must know the essence of God's Word. The Word of God is the Bible. Its essence is:

(1) God's Word is God's breathing out (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is God's breathing out; that is, it is the breath breathed out by God. The Bible is God's breathing. To God, it is a matter of breathing out; to us it is a matter of breathing in. Through God's breathing out and our breathing in, God's word enters into us and becomes our life and life supply. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must understand that the Bible is not merely black words on white paper, but it is the breathing out of God. It is full of spiritual breath. Therefore, we must not only understand the Bible with our mind, but we also must contact the word of the Bible with our spirit. Whenever we read the Bible we come to contact God.

(2) The Bible is the spiritual milk. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter said that we need to be like newborn babes desiring the guileless milk of the Word. In the Word of God there is the element of milk. This is also implied in Hebrews 5:12, which says, "You . . . have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food." God's Word is our spiritual breath; therefore, we must breathe it in. God's Word is also our milk; hence, we must drink it. We must desire the guileless milk of the Word.

(3) God's Word is our bread of life, our food of life. This is indicated in Matthew 4:4, a word out of the Lord's mouth and a quote of Deuteronomy 8:3 "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." Therefore, whenever we read the Bible, we must breathe in the spiritual air, that is, the Spirit of God. We also must drink the spiritual milk and eat the bread of life, which is the Lord Himself.

(4) The Word of the Lord is spirit and life. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

(5) The Word is God. The consummation of the Word is Christ Himself, because Christ is the Word of God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God." This Word became flesh, and His name is Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the word in the Bible is God Himself. It is the embodiment of God Himself. This does not mean that we consider the words in black and white as the living God. What we mean is that the words in black and white contain God Himself. This God is Christ; He is our bread of life. This Christ is also the Spirit, who becomes our spiritual milk and our spiritual breath. (*The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, pp. 16,17.)

The Meaning and Function of Pray-reading God's Word**The Meaning of Pray-reading God's Word**

In Greek, the antecedent of "which" in verse 17 is the Spirit, not the sword. This indicates that the Spirit is the word of God. Both the Spirit and the word are Christ (2 Cor. 3:17; Rev. 9:13). We need to receive the word of God by means of all prayer and petition. According to verses 17 and 18, we are to take the word of God by means of all prayer. These verses indicate that we may take the word by pray-reading, that is, by praying with the words of Scripture and over them, using the words of the Bible as our prayer to God. The term pray-reading is not found in the Bible. However, the fact of pray-reading is according to the Scripture. (*Life Study of Ephesians*, Messages 97, p. 817.)

We also need to pray-read the word (Eph. 6:17-18). Pray-reading was a term invented by us to describe the practice of reading the word of God by prayer and with prayer. Our

spiritual dictionary has been broadened to include this word. When something is invented in a culture, there is the need of a new word. The unabridged dictionaries are much larger than they were fifty years ago. Language goes along with culture. Now that we have been transferred into the kingdom of God, we have a spiritual culture, a Christian culture. We need the term of pray-reading to match the reality in our Christian culture.

Many saints pray-read throughout church history, but they did not have the term pray-reading. Many of us pray-read the word without any realization of what we were doing. After we got saved, we may have read a verse that was so inspiring and pleasing to us. Spontaneously, we repeated it in the way of praying. Andrew Murray was one among many saints who turned God's word into prayer (see *'Lord... Thou Saidst'*, pp. 66-67, published by Living Stream Ministry). Many saints throughout church history pointed out that the best way to understand the word is to read it prayerfully.

To read the word with prayer and by prayer, to pray-read the word, is the best way to read the word. Mere reading only needs our eyes and our understanding, our mentality. But to receive God's word into the depths of our being, our spirit is needed, and the prevailing way to exercise our spirit is by praying. Whenever we pray, we spontaneously exercise our spirit. Then what we read with our eyes and understand in our mentality will go into our spirit through our prayer. Every word in the Bible needs our pray-reading. (*The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy*, pp. 79-80.)

Pray-reading the Word of God with Our Spirit

We need to pray-read, converting all that we see and all that we comprehend into prayer. When we pray, we use our spirit. At first, we may use our mind to pray, but after three to five sentences our spirit will rise up. This is a definite fact. Therefore, never forget that the essence of the Word of God is God's breathing out. When you read it, you should breathe it in. On God's side, it is a matter of His breathing out; on our side, it is a matter of our breathing in. The spiritual breath comes out of Him and enters into us. That which comes out of Him and enters into us is the spiritual breath. The Word of God is spirit and life. Our mind cannot touch the Spirit; only our spirit can touch the Spirit. If we do not touch the Spirit, we do not have life. Only by touching the Spirit can we have life. Ultimately, this life is Christ, and it is also God Himself. At first, we do not need to explain what we read, nor do we need to understand it; we only need to pray-read the Word literally. When we pray-read, our spirit touches the Spirit of the Bible, and thus we receive life. (*The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, p. 23.)

Eating, Drinking, and Breathing in the Spirit and Life in God's Word

The matter of pray-reading to eat, drink, and breathe the Spirit and the life in the Word of God is seen in the word of the Bible; hence, pray-reading is not superstitious. When we pray-read, the word in letters becomes spirit and life, that is, the Lord Himself. To pray-read is to receive "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition" (Eph. 6:17-18). Whenever we receive the Word of God by pray-reading, the result is that we eat, drink, and breathe in the Spirit and the life in God's Word. Even an Old Testament saint, Jeremiah, also said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God is edible; hence, it is our food. Therefore, we must "long for the guileless milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). . In addition, God's Word is also God's breathing out. When we breathe in God's Word, breathing in what God has breathed out, we receive Him. It is clear, then, that to pray-read is to eat, to drink, and to breathe, and the more consistently we practice it, the better. (*The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, p. 24.)

The Exercise and Practice of Pray-reading God's Word

Now we need to see what is the proper way to receive God's word when we come to it. We must read Ephesians chapter 6 verses 17-18. ...What is the way for us to receive God's word according to this portion? It is by prayer and petition. This is what we have been talking about—pray-reading. God's word is to be received by prayer and petition.

All you need to do in the morning or in the evening is to pray-read a few verses from God's word. You do not need to use your mentality to squeeze out some words. You also do not need to consider what you have read. All you need is to pray with what you have read. You can have a living prayer with every page and every verse. You do not need to close your eyes to pray-read. When you are praying, you may look at God's word. ...We must realize that we do not have to close our eyes when we pray. It is better to close your mind! ...We do not need to compose a sentence or make a prayer. We only need to pray-read God's word. According to what you read, pray with the word of the Bible. Finally, you will see that the whole Bible is a prayer book. You can open any page of the Bible and pray with any portion. ...You may be very familiar with Romans. However, even today, you need to pray-read one or two verses from it. We may know everything about food, but we still need to eat some food everyday. No matter how much we know about food, we still need to eat. To know is one thing but to eat is another...to enjoy is yet another. You may have been a Christian for many years but it does not matter how long you have been one and how many times you have read the Bible, you still not only need to read it but also to pray-read it. You must eat it everyday, receive it, and enjoy it. (*The Way to Enjoy Spiritual Food*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 9-11.)

Pray-reading Together with the Saints

In order to have more enjoyment and nourishment by properly and adequately pray-reading God's word, we need the Body, the church. We can enjoy pray-reading God's word individually but if we try to pray-read with a group of Christians, we would fly to the third heavens. Because food is for the whole Body and not only for individual members, therefore, the best way to pray-read is to be with other members of the Body. You will get the benefit pray-reading individually but when you pray-read with other brothers and sisters, you will see that it is very different.

Four Key Words for Pray-reading

We need to remember four key words when we pray-read with other brothers and sisters: quick, short, real, fresh. Firstly, we should pray quickly without waiting. When we pray quickly, we would not have time to consider with our mind. Secondly, pray short prayers because a long prayer requires composition. We must forget about a long composed prayer but pray a short sentence, even a phrase. We also should be real and not be false. Speak what is real. Lastly, prayer needs to be fresh, not old. The best way to be fresh is not to use our own words to pray but to use the word from the Bible. Every part and every line of the whole Bible is good for praying. This prayer is most fresh.

Thousands have proven that this is the best way to read the Bible. This way has caused a revolutionary change in their lives. When you are willing to practice with a genuine heart, you will contact the living spirit. If you try this individually and corporately, you will testify that the riches of Christ are dispensed into you through pray-reading God's word. You will receive blessing and grow in your spiritual life. You will have a great change. By this way of contacting God's word to enjoy Christ and to be fed by Him, you will grow gradually until you mature, you will be full of life and be saturated with this ever-living One. (*The Way to Enjoy Spiritual Food*, published in Chinese but not in English, pp. 12-13.)