

Manna In the Morning

~Other Speakers M-R: Bobby Moore:

One of the most important experiences of my life took place in the morning service of a Bible conference at First Evangelical Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. Stephen Olford was the speaker, and his sermon, "Manna in the Morning," was about the Christian's quiet time. That morning, God's Spirit confronted me with the fact that I had never developed a meaningful personal devotional life.

At the time I discovered this sad truth about myself, I was a young college and seminary graduate and the pastor of a church. As I thought about it, I realized that I had studied to pass tests in Bible classes, I had prepared lessons and sermons, but I had failed to establish a personal devotional life in which I focused on God and His Word for worship and for my personal spiritual development. How ashamed I felt!

When Dr. Olford gave the invitation that morning, I was the only person who made a public response. At the close of the service, Dr. Olford took me aside and gave me instructions on how I could have a personal devotional life.

It is difficult to put into words what that day meant to me. It was the beginning of my daily devotional practice, and as a result, my life has never been the same again. I have experienced a fresh and deepening love relationship with God that I did not know was possible.

As a result of developing a devotional life, I have experienced important changes in my priorities, perspective, personality, and purpose.

Changes in My Priorities

Meeting with the Lord every morning has become the number one priority of my spiritual life. Looking at my daily devotional time as a personal appointment with the Lord motivates me to be faithful and consistent in my daily devotional life.

In order to make my meeting time with the Lord my first priority, I have been forced to evaluate and readjust the other priorities in my life. In the morning, most people are focused on preparation for the work day or the school day, which includes showering, getting dressed, eating breakfast, and perhaps reading the paper or watching the news on TV. It was the same for me; I had allowed the urgent to take the place of the most important in my life. But all that has changed. I now manage my morning schedule in such a way that there is always time to be alone with God.

As I began to have a consistent daily devotional time with the Lord, I discovered the power of Jesus' words: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The words of Job also challenged me: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

But of course, having a daily devotional time isn't an end in itself; it's a means to an end. While setting aside time for devotions is a top priority in my daily schedule, my real purpose for doing this is to come to know God more intimately. What matters is seeking, loving, and worshiping Him.

Changes in My Perspective

One of the great things about spending time with the Lord is that we begin to see things as God sees them. As I have met with God in my devotional time, my perspective in a number of areas has changed.

My perspective on God has changed. Before I developed a personal devotional life, God was someone I knew largely from what others said about Him. Even though I had saving faith in Christ, He was something of a distant acquaintance. But as a result of my spending time with God every day, He has become near, real, intimate, adequate, and awesome to me.

My perspective on myself has changed. As I met with God daily, I began to realize who I am in Christ. I saw myself as God sees me: a saint, a servant, a soldier, a secure one in Christ, one having the strength of Christ and one whose sufficiency and satisfaction are in Christ.

My perspective on others has changed. I began to see others through the eyes of God. I saw people as the objects of God's love and care. And I saw that, as I ministered to and served others, I was in reality ministering to and serving Christ.

My perspective on circumstances has changed. God revealed to me that circumstances are His stances and that disappointments are His appointments. I started to see that even the "bad things" in life can be good if we see God at work in them.

My perspective on who I can become has changed. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul states, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." God is in the process of changing me as I meet Him daily in my personal devotional time. As I see Christ in all His glory, He changes me into His likeness.

Changes in My Personality

Spending time with Jesus every morning changed my character. Insecure, unstable, irritable, independent, undisciplined, and selfish were words that described my personality prior to my starting a personal devotional life. I wouldn't say that the antonyms of those words now consistently describe my personality. Still, slowly but surely, the Holy Spirit is transforming my personality from that of a flesh-driven Christian to that of a Spirit controlled Christian.

For example, in my devotional times, God began to change me from a person who takes things for granted to a person of gratitude. He changed my response of bitterness to one of blessing when I began to thank Him for the people, pressures, and even problems He allowed in my life.

Through time spent alone with the Lord, I am becoming a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). A different person--a fully devoted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ--is being developed in me during my daily devotional times with the Lord.

Changes in My Purpose

As I spend time daily with the Lord in His Word and prayer, He has given me a sharper sense of the purposes to which I should be dedicating my life. I do not live haphazardly; I have goals and guidelines for living. I have come to recognize and embrace God's purposes for my life:

1. To know and love the Lord (Matt. 22:37-38)
2. To live under the authority of God's Word (Ps. 119:105, 128, 133)
3. To live for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31)
4. To become like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29)
5. To fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)
6. To be a servant (Matt. 20:26, 28)
7. To experience revival and become an instrument for revival (Ps. 85:6; Isa. 57:15)

It took regular times with the Lord for me to discover these purposes for my life. But the sense of satisfaction I've experienced as a result has made the time and effort I put in well worth it.

With changes in my priorities, perspective, personality, and purpose, my life has become very different from what it was before I heard Stephen Olford speak about the need for a personal devotional life. I thank God for how He's molded me through the time I've spent with Him daily.