

**Week 3:
The Word of Life and Pray-reading the Word**

Weekly Reading Materials

(All reading materials are available at: <http://www.ministrybooks.org/alphabetical.cfm>)

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Week 3 Day 1

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

5:39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.

1. A Basic Understanding of the Bible

Reading: *The Life-study of Genesis*, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 3-4

THE MAIN REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible mainly life is revealed. Life is the focus of the whole Bible. But what is life, or who is life? The answer is in the word of the Lord Jesus. He says, "I am life," and "I am come that you may have life." The Bible is a revelation of Christ as life. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must realize that we are coming to contact Christ as our life.

The whole Bible is a book of life, and this life is nothing less than the divine and living Person of Christ Jesus Himself, Who is our portion. When we come to the Bible, we must come to contact Him. We should not repeat the pitiful history of the Jewish people who researched the Scriptures because they thought there was life in them, yet would not come to the Lord Jesus (John 5:39-40). We should not contact the Bible without contacting the Lord. Whenever we open the Bible we have to say, "Lord Jesus, You have to be here. This is not merely a book, this is Your revelation. I don't like to read this book without contacting You. I don't like to hear something from this book without hearing You. I don't like to read this book without seeing You. I like to see Your face. I like to see what You are from the printed page. O Lord Jesus, enlighten Your Word and anoint every line that I may touch You." We need such a spirit to contact this living Word.

2. Exercising Faith to Fully Receive Every Word from the Bible

Reading: *The Life-study of Ephesus*, msg. 65, sec. 1, par. 6-8

Along with faith in God's heart, we should have faith in God's faithfulness. We may change, but God does not change. As James 1:17 says, there is no shadow of turning with Him. Furthermore, He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), but is always faithful to His word.

God is not only faithful, but also able. Therefore, we need to have faith in God's ability. In 3:20 Paul declares that God "is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think."

Still another aspect of our faith is faith in God's word. God is bound to fulfill all that He has spoken. The more He speaks, the more responsible He becomes to fulfill His own word. We can tell Him, "God, You have spoken, and Your written Word is in our hand. Lord, You are bound to fulfill Your word." Hallelujah for God's faithful word!

3. Testifying concerning Jesus Christ

Reading: *The Life-study of John*, msg. 14, sec. 5, par. 7

To "search the Scriptures" may be separated from "come to Me." The Jewish religionists searched the Scriptures, but were not willing to come to the Lord. These two should be kept together. Since the Scriptures testify concerning the Lord, they should not be separated from Him. We may contact the Scriptures and yet not contact the Lord. Only the Lord can give life. We should never separate the Scriptures from the Lord Himself. Whenever we search the Word, we must come to the Lord Himself. We must make searching the Word and touching the Lord one thing. Whenever we study the Bible, we must open our spirit to the Lord. While our eyes are reading the words and our mind is understanding them, our spirit must be exercised to contact the Lord through the Scriptures. Then we shall not only have the understanding of the black and white letters in our mentality, but also have the life in our spirit.

Week 3 Day 2

John 1:1 **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

2 Tim. 3:16 **All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

1. The Bible Being the Word of Life, as the Definition, Explanation, and Expression of God

Reading: *The Life-study of John*, msg. 2, sec. 2, par. 1

2. The Word—the Definition, Explanation, and Expression of God

The Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God; hence, it is God defined, explained, and expressed. God is mysterious. He needs the Word to express Him. If you want to appear mysterious, the best way to do it is to be silent, for the more silent you are, the more mysterious you become. However, the more you talk, the more you expose yourself. All that is deep within you is revealed by your words. This is the meaning of the Word. Although God is a mystery, Christ as the Word of God defines, explains, and expresses Him. Thus, this Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. Eventually, this Word is God Himself, not God hidden, concealed, and mysterious, but God defined, explained, and expressed. The Word is not the invisible God, but the very God who is visible. In the beginning this Word was with God; it was not separate from God, but always had God in Him.

2. The Words of the Bible Being for the Expression and Explanation of God Himself

Reading: *On Knowing the Bible*, ch. 1, sec. 5, par. 1

A. Explaining God Himself

The Bible is God's words. First, these words explain God Himself. All words are for explanation and expression. The words of the Bible are for

the expression and explanation of God Himself. If one does not read or understand the Bible, he will not understand or know God. For example, today, if you do not understand Chinese, you will not know me as a person. You may hear my voice, but you will not know what I am expressing. The Bible as God's word firstly explains and expresses God Himself.

3. The Bible Being the Word of God, the Breathing Out of God

Ibid., sec. 6, par. 1, 5

III. THE BIBLE BEING GOD'S BREATH

The Bible is also God's breath. It is the breathing out of God Himself. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God. "Inspired" in the original Greek means "breathed." Hence, some have translated this word as "breathed" in English.

The Bible is the breathing out of God, in the same way that my speaking here this morning is the breathing out of myself. Please excuse me for saying something about myself. Since five-thirty this morning, when I got up, I have been full of matter within me. I wished that eight-thirty would come sooner, so that I could breathe this matter out. What was in me? It was the word. How could I let out my feeling, the things within me, and the word in me? It is by breathing. What I am speaking is the breathing out of myself. In a similar way, the Bible is God's word. It is also God's breathing out.

A. Having God's Element

As the Bible is the breathing out of God, it has the element of God. I dare not say that the Bible is God. However, I dare say that if you touch the spirit in the Bible, you touch God Himself. This is something we cannot imagine or fully comprehend with our mind. But it is a reality in our spirit. Do you not feel many times when you read the Bible that you are touching God? We cannot say that the Bible is God. If we say this, we are almost superstitious. But we must admit that in spirit we surely touch God

Himself when we touch the spirit of the Bible. It is not only a matter of being in God's presence, but a matter of touching God Himself. When you touch the spirit of the Bible, you touch God Himself. Why is this so? Because the Bible is the breathing out of God Himself. It is God breathing Himself out through the words. Therefore, we have to admit that within this breathing there is the element of God.

The Bible is the breathing out of God. This means that the Bible is not only the words breathed out by God, but is God Himself breathed out in His word. Hence, within the word there is the element of God. This is the difference between the Bible and any other word. There is no element of God in any other word, whereas there is the element of God in the word of the Bible.

The Bible is the word of God. It is not only the breathing out of God, but is God Himself breathed into the word. Thus, there is the element of God in this breathing out. Once you touch this breathing, you touch the element of God. For this reason, many times when we read the Bible, not only do we feel the presence of God, but we feel that we contact and touch God within.

4. The Bible Being God's Breathing: to God as a Matter of Breathing Out, and to Us as a Matter of Breathing In

Reading: *The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, ch. 1, sec. 5, par. 2

The Divine Breath

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.

5. Learning to Use Our Spirit to Contact the Bible—the Breathing Out of God

Reading: *On Knowing the Bible*, ch. 1, sec. 6, par. 10

We do not read the Bible only for enlightenment, teaching, or instruction. There is something higher and deeper than all these. It is to touch God Himself in our inward parts. The Bible is not merely God's thought, doctrine, truth, or teaching. The word in the Bible is the breathing out of God. It is God who breathes Himself out. God Himself is in the word. He Himself is in the breath. Therefore, we cannot understand the word only with our mind. This is not enough. We must learn to use our spirit to contact these words; we must touch God's breathing out in the words and must touch His element in the words. When we have such a contact, not only will we feel that we are in the presence of God, and not only will we have touched God, but we also will feel that we have tasted God; God will become our enjoyment within. Whenever we have a good Bible reading, we have a good eating and drinking. It will satisfy us within, and we will truly have tasted the sweetness of God Himself.

Week 3 Day 3

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation,

1. The Bible as the Lord's Word Being Our Bread of Life

Reading: *How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God*, ch. 13, sec. 2, par. 1; sec. 3, par. 1

THE BIBLE BEING GOD'S FOOD FOR US

Since we desire to be persons who eat, drink, absorb, and breathe in God, we need a drastic change in our concept concerning the Bible. We need to see that the Bible is the food God has given us. We read the Bible with the purpose of eating, drinking, absorbing, and breathing in God, because we know that the Bible is the Word of God. John 1 says that the Word of God is God Himself. God's Word is God's coming forth. When God is expressed and presented to us, we have the Word, the Bible. Since God wants to be our food, His expression and manifestation to man as the Word means that the Word is man's food.

Reading the Word Being to Receive the Lord's Word as Food

Prayer is to breathe in the Lord's Spirit, and reading is to receive the Lord as the Word. The Lord as the Word is our food. Man does not live by bread alone, because he is not composed of only a body; within man there is also a spirit. The physical body requires physical food, but man's spirit requires a different type of food. Physical food is not enough to make man live. Hence, the Lord says that man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). All the words that proceed out through the mouth of God are man's spiritual food. For this reason, the prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them" (Jer. 15:16).

2. Receiving Nourishment, Supply, and Life from the Lord's Word

Ibid., sec. 3, par. 3

Reading the Word with an Attitude of Eating and Drinking God

Our attitude should be that the Bible is our food. The Bible is a book of food. When we read the Bible, we should eat this food. Whenever we read the Word, we should have the attitude that we are coming to eat and drink God. If our motive is merely to study truths, analyze teachings, or understand doctrines, we are not eating and drinking God, and the Bible is a book of doctrines and teachings to us. We must have a change in concept to see that the Bible is not a book of God's teaching or truth; it is God's food for us.

I hope that we would thoughtfully receive this word. This does not mean that the Bible does not contain teachings and truths. The Bible is full of teachings and truths. However, when we receive this book merely as a book of teachings and truths, and we attempt to study it only with our mind, we are but a student of truths and a learner of teachings. The Bible will merely be teachings and truths to us; it will not be life and food to us. But if our view changes, and we consider the Bible to be God's expression and His breathing out, the Bible will be a different book to us. We will realize that since God is food to man, the Bible as His breathed-out word must also be food to man. When we come to the Bible, we must eat and drink God as our food; we must breathe in God Himself and enjoy Him. If we read the Bible this way, it will no longer be a book of teachings, commandments, truths, or doctrines. Instead, it will be God's embodiment, unveiling, expression, and exhaling. It will also be our rich food. We will receive nourishment, supply, and life from every word.

3. As Newborn Babes, Longing for the Guileless Milk of the Word

Reading: *Pray-Reading the Word*, sec. 1, par. 1, 3 6

PRAY-READING THE WORD

When a baby is born, his most immediate need is to take some milk for nourishment. Without nourishment the new babe will not only fail to grow properly, but will soon become very weak and eventually even die. After we are saved and born again, our most immediate need also is that we learn how to take in the Lord as our spiritual milk and nourishment. Without this spiritual nourishment, we also have no way to grow properly and will in a short time be spiritually dead.

In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus presents Himself as a feast for us to drink and eat. He says in John 4 that He is the living water for us to drink. In the sixth chapter of the same book, He says that He is the bread of life to be eaten. Then the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we “were all given to drink one Spirit.” We drink Him, we eat Him, and thereby enjoy Him and receive Him as our spiritual nourishment. We have to praise the Lord that Jesus Christ has presented Himself to us as a feast to meet all our need and to be all our supply. We all know that His name is the great I AM, which means I AM whatever My people need.

THE WORD OF GOD BEING FOOD TO US

In 1 Peter 2:2-3 we have a most important passage. “As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.” These verses are important to us because they tell us clearly how to taste the Lord: drink “the guileless [pure] milk of the Word.” If we would taste Christ, we must take into us the milk of the word. Then we will be nourished for spiritual growth. Praise the Lord, the Bible says *tasted!* It does not say that we *know* this aspect or that aspect about the Lord, but that we *taste* the Lord. When we drink the milk of the Word, we are actually tasting the Lord. Therefore, the way for us to taste the Lord is simply by drinking the milk of the Word. The Word is not only for us to study or learn, but even more for us to taste. The way the Lord nourishes His Body is by His Word. If we desire to enjoy the Lord and be nourished by the Lord, we must come to the Word to taste the Lord.

However, the concept which most of us have of the Bible is that it is a kind of teaching, a book full of doctrines. Thus, we come to the Word with the intention of understanding and knowing something. In all of our Christian life, how much of the Word have we taken in as food to our spirit? We must answer honestly that most of us have taken in very little. We must not come to the Bible only to learn and to understand. The Bible is not the tree of knowledge; it is the tree of life! If we take the Word of God as the tree of knowledge, we misuse the Bible, because 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the letter kills. We must never take the Bible as a book of letters, but as a book of life.

All Christians know that the function of the Word of God is to reveal God to us. Although this is true, this is not its main function. The main function of the Bible is to *impart God into us as life* and as the nourishment of life. It is not only to give us knowledge about God and His love, but to impart God Himself into us. Whenever we read the Bible, we should not merely try to know or understand it, but take something of God's essence into us just as we take our food. Then, like food, this substance will be assimilated into our very being.

First Timothy 4:6 says that we are “nourished with the words of the faith.” No doubt we have read this verse many times, but have we noticed the word “nourished”? Praise the Lord! The concept of the apostle Paul was that God's Word is food to nourish God's children. We too must have the same realization regarding the Word of God. We should not consider it only as knowledge, but as food to nourish and supply us all the time.

First Timothy 1:10 speaks of things that are “opposed to the healthy teaching.” The King James Version uses the word “sound” instead of “healthy.” God's Word is not just sound doctrine for the mind, but healthy doctrine for life. This word “healthy” in Greek is equivalent to the English word “hygiene.” Hygiene is very much related to health. We must have more than a sound word; we must have a healthy word which nourishes and supplies us.

Week 3 Day 4

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

1. The Bible Being the Lord's Word as Spirit and Life

Reading: *How to Study the Bible*, ch. 1, sec. 1, par. 1

I. THE NEED TO BE SPIRITUAL

A. "The Words Which I Have Spoken...Are Spirit"

In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit." The words of the Bible are not only letters but spirit. We also should recall the Lord's word in John 4:24: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." Here the Lord points out a fundamental principle: God is Spirit, and man can only touch Him with his spirit. God is Spirit, and we can only worship Him with our spirit; we cannot worship Him with anything other than the spirit. God is Spirit, and we cannot worship Him with our mind, emotion, or will. Colossians 2:23 speaks of "self-imposed worship." This means worshipping with the will. This is wrong because God is Spirit, and because God is Spirit, those who worship Him must worship in spirit. John 6 says that the Lord's words are spirit. The basic principle is the same: Since the Lord's words are spirit, we have to read them in spirit. In other words, we can only touch spiritual things with the spirit.

2. Only Those with a Regenerated Spirit Being Able to Understand the Bible

Ibid., par. 2

The Bible is not only a book with words or letters printed on pages of paper. The very nature of the Bible is spirit. For this reason, everyone who reads this book must approach it with his spirit; it must be read with the spirit. The spirit that we are referring to is the spirit of every regenerated

person. We call this spirit the “regenerated spirit.” Not everyone has this spirit. Therefore, not everyone can read the Bible well. Only those who have this spirit can read the Bible well; those who do not have this spirit cannot read it well. This spirit is needed to worship God. This same spirit is needed to read the Bible well. Without this spirit, a man cannot know God. Without this spirit, he cannot know the Bible either. Perhaps we were born into a Christian family. Before we were regenerated, we probably had read the Bible already, but we did not understand it. We understood the history and facts recorded in the Bible, but we did not understand the Bible itself. This is not surprising, because God’s word is spirit. If we do not use our spirit, we cannot read this book. When can a man begin to understand the Bible? On the day he receives the Lord, he can begin to understand the Bible. From that day forward, the Bible will become a new book to him; he will begin to understand and treasure this book. Although he may not understand everything in it, he will begin to love it. He will read it daily and yearly. If he misses his reading, he will feel hungry; he will feel that something is missing in his life. When he reads God’s word this way, he will begin to understand it. He can understand it because he is now regenerated. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). We should put John 4:24, 6:63, and 3:6 together: “God is Spirit,” “The words which I have spoken...are spirit,” and “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The words in the Bible are spirit. The life which a man receives at the time of regeneration is spirit, and it takes a man with a spirit to read the words of spirit. Only then will the Bible shine within him, and only then will it become useful to him.

3. The Bible Being Not Understood by Talent or Research

Ibid., par. 3

No matter how clever and well educated a man is, as long as he is not regenerated, this book is a mystery to him. A regenerated person may not be that cultivated, but he is more qualified to read the Bible than an unregenerated college professor. The former has a regenerated spirit, while the latter does not have such a spirit. The Bible is not understood by talent, research, or intelligence. Since God’s word is spirit, only a man

with a regenerated spirit can understand it. The root, the very nature, of the Bible is spiritual. If a man does not have a regenerated spirit, he cannot understand this book; it will be a closed book to him.

4. Man Needing a Regenerated Spirit to Touch God's Word

Ibid., par. 6

God is Spirit. We know God today because we have a spirit. When some unbelievers argue with us, we may not match them in eloquence or wisdom, and we may not be able to tell them profound teachings, but we have the confidence that we know God because we are regenerated. We have a regenerated spirit, and we can touch God with this spirit. It does not matter if we can relate the doctrine or not. The fact is that we have touched God. Unbelievers want to find out about God through analysis, synthesis, and reasoning. But even when the analysis, synthesis, and reasoning are all well founded, they will still not believe in God, because God can never be analyzed or synthesized. Job said, "Can you find out the depths of God?" (Job 11:7). No one can find out God by research. There is only one way to find out God—by the regenerated spirit. Those who touch God with this spirit will know Him right away. There is no other way except this way. In order to study the Bible, a man must have a regenerated spirit, in the same way that he must have a regenerated spirit to touch God. Suppose a man has installed an electric lamp in his house. He wants to connect the lamp to the power source, but the only materials he has are wood, bamboo, and cloth; he does not have any copper wire. Although there is power in the electric power company, that power cannot cause the lamp to shine. No matter how much cloth, bamboo, and wood he has, he cannot tap into the electricity. Another man may not have any cloth, bamboo, or wood, but he has a little piece of wire. With that little wire he can light up the lamp because the wire transmits electricity. In the same way, a man must have a regenerated spirit before he can touch God. He must have a regenerated spirit before he can touch God's word.

Week 3 Day 5

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
18 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,

1. Contacting God Himself through Pray-reading the Lord's Word

Reading: *How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God*, ch. 6, sec. 2, par. 1

Reading the Word to Contact God Himself

When we contact the Word, we need to be clear that we are contacting God Himself. Whenever we open the Bible, our first thought should be to contact the living God. The living God has breathed out all that is within Himself as the Word. All the riches within Him are breathed out in the form of the word. Every word of the Bible, from the first to the last, is the breath of God. The Bible is not for us to study philosophy or literature. It is for us to contact what God has breathed out, what He has exhaled.

2. Turning the Verses into Our Prayer to the Lord

Reading: *The Life-study of Philippians*, msg. 45, sec. 3, par. 2;

THE SPIRIT EMBODIED IN THE WORD

It is even more difficult to define the Word than it is to define the Spirit. In the New Testament, the Son of God is called the Word. Revelation 19:13 says of Him, "His name is called The Word of God." In the past we have pointed out that for Christ to be the Word of God means that He is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. However, this understanding is not adequate. We must go on to see that the New Testament indicates that the Word is the Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). Furthermore, Ephesians 6:17 even identifies the Word as the Spirit.

Hence, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, and the Word are one in a very mysterious way.

msg. 35, sec. 3, par. 5

RECEIVING THE WORD BY MEANS OF PRAYER

In Ephesians 6:17 and 18 Paul tells us to receive the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition. Here Paul covers the aspects both of the Word and of the Spirit. Furthermore, he tells us to receive the Word of God by means of all prayer, praying at every time in spirit. We may receive the Word of God by means of all kinds of prayer: audible prayer and silent prayer, long prayer and short prayer, quick prayer and slow prayer, private prayer and public prayer.

To take the Word of God by means of prayer is to pray-read the Word. Whenever we come to the Word of God, we should not merely exercise our eyes to read or our mind to understand, but also exercise our spirit. I can testify from experience that if we touch the Bible without prayer, using only our eyes and our mind, the Bible will be dead letters to us. Our reading of the Bible should be mingled with prayer. This is pray-reading. For example, in pray-reading Genesis 1:1, we may say, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, amen. Thank You, Lord, in the beginning. Oh, God was there in the beginning. Thank You, Lord, that You are the beginning, the origin.” When we pray-read the Word in such a way, the Word becomes to us the living breath of God, the Spirit. As a result, we are watered, nourished, refreshed, and enlightened. Far from being a book of dead letters, the Bible becomes in our experience the nourishing Spirit.

In Ephesians 6:17 and 18 Paul definitely charges us to receive the Word of God by means of prayer. Some who oppose the practice of pray-reading insist that these verses cannot be applied this way. However, according to the Greek text, we must say that we should receive the Word of God either by means of prayer or through prayer. Here Paul tells us to receive the Word of God and also gives us the way to receive it—by means of prayer.

Therefore, we cannot deny that in the Bible there is such a thing as pray-reading the Word.

We need to read the Word and receive it by prayer. Throughout the centuries many saints have practiced this in principle. Some have said that we need to pray when we read the Bible. Others have pointed out that we should read the Bible prayerfully. To read the Bible prayerfully is to pray-read the Word. Many of the Lord's people have practiced pray-reading without knowing this term. Spontaneously in coming to the Word they have prayed with the Word and over the Word. I believe that before you heard of pray-reading, you may have pray-read John 3:16. You may have read the words, "God so loved the world," and then prayed, "O God, thank You for loving the world. Father, I thank You that You loved me. You even loved me to such an extent that You gave Your Son for me." This is pray-reading.

3. Enjoying God as Food through Pray-reading the Lord's Word

Reading: *How to Enjoy God and How to Practice the Enjoyment of God*, ch. 14, sec. 4, par. 9;

He is our food. He is everything to us. In order to become our life, He is food to us as the Spirit and the Word. The Spirit is invisible and inside of us, and the Word is visible and outside of us. We exercise our spirit to touch God through praying and reading, reading and praying. We touch both the Word and the Spirit. The Word outside of us enters into us and is expressed through us. We pray, yet God prays. We live, yet God lives. This is what it means to eat, drink, and enjoy God. This is what it means to eat God as food and receive Him as our life. This is the mingling of God and man.

The Life-study of Philippians, msg. 36, sec. 3, par. 8-9.

PRAY-READING THE WORD

When we read the Word, we should mingle our reading with prayer. As we exercise our eyes and our mind, we should also exercise our spirit to

touch the Spirit. Then all that is in the Word will become in our experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

Let us use Psalm 133 to show the difference between analyzing the Bible and enjoying the nourishment contained in it by pray-reading. In their time of personal devotions, some Christians may read Psalm 133. As they read, they may begin to analyze and to ask about the precious ointment, the beard, the skirts, the dew, and Mount Hermon. Instead of receiving the bountiful supply, they are left with many unanswered questions. But if we pray-read Psalm 133, we shall take this portion in the way of life. As we pray-read, we may say, "Behold, amen! How good and how pleasant, amen." By taking the Word in this way, we shall apply the all-inclusive Spirit to our inner being. By pray-reading we exercise our spirit to receive spiritual nourishment from the Word. Through this nourishment we grow in life. We are nourished with the words of faith and healthy teaching. If we take even as little as ten minutes to pray-read a portion of the Word, we shall receive nourishment. Furthermore, we shall experience the various elements of Christ's riches.

On the one hand, the food we eat each day nourishes us; on the other hand, it contains elements that kill germs. There is no need for us to try to kill the germs in our body. We should simply eat properly and allow the elements in the food we eat to accomplish this work. In like manner, through pray-reading the Word, we experience both nourishment and the putting to death of the negative things within us. As we pray-read, we unconsciously and automatically partake of the basic elements of Christ's riches: divinity, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. On the one hand, the element of Christ's all-inclusive death kills the negative things within us. On the other hand, His resurrection strengthens us and builds us up. This does not come from outward teaching, but from inward nourishing.

Week 3 Day 6

Psa. 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Eph. 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are.

1. How to Pray-read the Word of God

Reading: *Life Lessons*, level 1, vol. 1, ch. 6, sec. 2, par. 5

D. Pray-reading

Another simple, spiritual, and most beneficial way to read the Bible is pray-reading. We take the Bible text as prayer and pray-read with it. Not only do we read and pray simultaneously, or pray and read, read and pray; but also we directly turn the text we are reading into the very words of prayer to pray with. At times we may apply the text to ourselves through prayer. The more we repeat this kind of pray-reading, the more uplifted and released our spirit becomes and the greater, deeper, and richer the benefit is which we receive.

2. Pray-reading the Word of God with Our Spirit

Reading: *The Full Knowledge of the Word of God*, ch. 2, sec. 3, par. 1

Pray-reading the Word of God with Our Spirit

Second, we need to use our spirit to pray-read the Word of God. To comprehend the Word literally we first need to read the black and white letters with our eyes as well as with our mind. Second, 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.

3. Pray-reading with Other Saints

Reading: *Pray-Reading the Word*, sec. 2, par. 6

PRAY-READ WITH OTHERS

For more enjoyment and nourishment and to pray-read the Word properly and adequately, we need the Body, the church. We may enjoy pray-reading the Word privately, but if we try it with a group of other Christians, we will be in the third heavens! The explanation of this is that food is for the whole Body, not merely for one member alone. We do not eat food simply for the sake of our arm; neither should we think that the hand can eat food by itself. No, the food is to be eaten by the Body, and the food is for the Body. The principle is that eating is for the Body, not just for the members. Therefore, the best way to pray-read is with other members of the Body. You will profit by pray-reading alone, but you will see the difference when you come together with other brothers and sisters.

4. Four Key Words to Remember in Pray-reading with Others

Ibid., par. 7-8

When we come together to pray-read with other brothers and sisters, there are four words we must remember: quick, short, real, and fresh. First we need to pray quickly, without hesitating. When we are quick to pray, we have no time to use our mind and to consider. Then our prayers must be short, because long prayers need some composition. We must forget about composing a long prayer and just utter a phrase or a sentence. Do it in a quick and short way. And we also need to be real, not pretending. Say something in a real way. Finally, our prayers must be fresh, not old. The

best way to be fresh is not to pray with our own words, but with the words of the Bible. Every part and every line of this book can be used as a prayer, and it will be the freshest prayer!

Thousands have proven that this is the right way to come to the Word of God. It has revolutionized their lives. It may seem awkward at first, but with practice and a sincere heart, you will touch the living Spirit. If you will try this both privately and corporately, you will be able to testify of the riches of Christ that have been imparted to you by pray-reading the Word of God. You will see blessing and growth in your spiritual life. There will be a great change. By contacting the Word in this way to enjoy Christ and be nourished by Him, you will be a person growing to maturity, full of life and saturated with this living One.