

## Soul Nourishment First, by George Mueller

[Edited and adapted to modern English usage by Rev Joe Purcell]

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost, for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that *the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished.* For though I might seek to witness to the lost, or to benefit other believers, or to relieve the distressed, or in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; *nevertheless, if I myself am not happy in the Lord, and have not been nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all of these other things might not be done in the right spirit.*

Before this time my habitual practice had been, at least for ten years previously, to give myself to prayer immediately after having gotten dressed in the morning. *Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it,* so that in this way my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and *that, by means of the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experiential communion with the Lord.*

*I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning.* The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon his precious Word, was *to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but simply for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.* The result almost invariably is this, that after a very few minutes I have been led into prayer of some sort, whether confession, or thanksgiving, or intercession, or supplication; *so that, although I do not give myself specifically to prayer, but rather to meditation, nevertheless my meditation upon the Word turns almost immediately more or less into prayer.*

After a time of confession, or intercession, or supplication, or giving of thanks arising out of my meditation upon a few words or a verse, *I then go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or for others, as the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the goal of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and my inner man is nourished and strengthened spiritually, so that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I find myself in a peaceful and happy state of heart. In addition, not only am I fed spiritually, but also during these times of meditation the Lord also communicates to me truth which later I find to be spiritual food for other believers—* even though in the first place it was not for the sake of teaching or preaching or the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but simply for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between the way I prayed before and the way I pray now is this: Before, when I awoke, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer.

But what was the result? *I often spent 15 to 30 minutes or even an hour on my knees in prayer before deriving any benefit from it, and often, I would really begin to pray only after having had my mind wander for the first 10, 15 or 30 minutes. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way* because my heart, having first been nourished by the truth of God's Word, has been brought into experiential fellowship with God. As I commune with God around His Word, *I then speak to Him as my Father and my Friend* (vile though I am, and unworthy of it) *about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word. It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point.*

I never read about this method in a book, nor did anyone ever tell me about it. *And yet, now, ever since God taught me this concerning meditation and prayer, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God should do every morning is to first obtain food for his inner man. Just as our outward man is not capable of working long unless we eat, and as this is one of the first things that we do each morning, so it should be with the inner man.* We should take food as well for the inner man.

Now, what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; *and here again, not merely reading the Word of God without comprehension, so that it simply passes through our minds like water running through a pipe, but instead, taking time to consider what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.*

When we pray, we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time from the heart, generally requires a certain amount of inward strength or godly desire, *and the time when prayer can be most effectually performed is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God—where we find our Father speaking to us*, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us.

*We can profitably meditate, with God's blessing, even though we are ever so weak spiritually; in fact, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. When we pray in this manner, our minds will wander far less than if we simply give ourselves to prayer without first taking time to meditate.*

I emphasize this point so much because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I have gotten from it myself, and I strongly encourage all my fellow believers to consider what I have said. I believe that it is because of this method of meditation and prayer that I have received from God the help and strength to pass in peace through deeper trials than I had ever had before; and after having now practiced this method for over fourteen years, I can most fully recommend it to you.

*In addition to meditating on the New Testament and praying like this first thing in the morning, it is my practice later in the day to read larger portions of the Word of God, as I read systematically through the Bible*, sometimes in the New Testament, and sometimes in the Old, and for more than twenty-six years I have proved the blessedness of it. *I also take other opportunities during the day just to pray.*

How different it is when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one without such spiritual preparation.