

THE MORNING WATCH

— AND —

BIBLE STUDY FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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THE MORNING WATCH.

There is no more encouraging fact in the life of the Church at the present time than the increase in the number of Christians who observe the morning watch. This tendency is most marked among students in all parts of the world. By the observance of the morning watch is commonly meant the spending of at least the first half hour of every day alone with God in personal devotional Bible study and prayer.

What are the advantages of keeping the morning watch? Without dwelling at all upon the general helpful results which come from the devotional study of the Bible and from communion with God, it should be emphasised that at the very beginning of the day the soul is in its most receptive state. The mind has been refreshed by the rest of the night, and is also much less occupied than it will be at any subsequent hour of the day. Moreover, the outer conditions in the early morning are most favourable. The first hour is pre-eminently the still hour. The noises of yesterday have receded, and the din of the world of to-day has not yet broken in upon us. It is easier to say, "My soul be thou silent unto God." It is easier to heed the command, "Be still and know that I am God." Furthermore, by having secret prayer and Bible study for spiritual growth the very first thing, we make certain of them. By assigning these important exercises to a later hour in the day, we multiply the chances of their being abridged, interrupted or crowded out entirely. In this connection we should heed the words of McCheyne: "I ought to spend the best hours of every day in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not, therefore, to be thrust into any corner." The morning watch prepares us for the day's conflict with the forces of evil within us and around us. We do not wait until the enemy is upon us before we gird on the armour and grasp the sword. We fortify ourselves before any avenue is opened through which Satan might assail us; for example, before reading the morning paper, before entering into conversation with others, before turning our own thought currents upon the plans and work of the day. It is always wise to gain a march upon the enemy.

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The keeping of the morning watch is the secret of largest and most enduring achievement in life and in service. Without doubt our failure to prevail with man and against evil in the world during the day is too often due to our more fundamental failure to prevail with God at the beginning of the day. When Miss Havergal was asked to explain why the Church does not accomplish more, she attributed it to the fact that Christians are not spending the first hour of the day alone with God. Let us never forget the vital truth expressed by Faber, that "the supernatural value of our actions depends upon the degree of our union with God at the time we do them." Therefore, if our lives and words and acts throughout the busy day are to possess supernatural value, we must take the earliest opportunity in the day to establish a vital and complete union with God. Why delay the forming of this union a single hour? Why be satisfied with having man alone work a part of the day if the energy of God may be manifested all the hours of the day?

Notwithstanding the great importance of the morning watch, there are Christians who say that they do not have time to devote a full half hour or more of every day to such a spiritual exercise. It is a striking fact that the busiest Christians, both among laymen and among those who are devoting their lives to direct Christian work, constitute the class who plead this excuse the least and who most generally observe the morning watch. It may be questioned seriously whether there is any Christian who will not, after honestly and persistently following this plan for a month or two, become convinced that it is the best possible use of the time, and that it does not interfere with his regular work. He will find that the morning watch promotes the wisest economy of his time. It makes him more conscientious in the use of time. He learns to redeem it. It helps him to see things in true perspective. He enters the day well poised, under the control of the Spirit, not distracted; and thus he works without friction, strain, uncertainty and waste. This suggests an adequate and satisfying reason for the oft-mentioned custom of Luther, who, if he had a peculiarly busy or trying day before him, would double or treble the amount of time which he ordinarily spent in prayer.

To promote the most profitable observance of the morning watch, certain points should be borne in mind and incorporated into practice. First of all, form an inflexible resolution to keep the morning watch. It will prove most dangerous and disastrous to permit any exception. Special caution and foresight should be exercised, therefore, to guard

against such possible exceptions. Nothing but the unmistakable will of God should be permitted to prevent us from beginning the day with conscious and unhurried communion with God.

Be sure to be thoroughly awake before entering upon the observance of the morning watch. If necessary, first take a brisk walk in the open air. Let us present unto God for this all-important exercise not only the body, but also the mind, as a living sacrifice.

Have some general plan to follow in this devotional hour. Many persons begin with a few moments of prayer, follow this with a season of Bible study, then spend some time in meditation, and close with special prayer. It is possible, however, to be over methodical. Beware of formalism at such a time above all times. It is also wise not to attempt to crowd too much into this hour.

Make sure at the very outset of the devotional hour each morning that you are right with God. If there be any unconfessed sin, wrong motive, or spirit contrary to Christ, it must be made right before we can receive what God has in store for us for the day. Sin is a terrible thing. It completely insulates us from God. It is vain, then, to expect real spiritual help from Bible study and prayer unless we are willing to give up any known sin. Happy is the man who closes each day in fellowship with God, and who is able to say with David, "When I awake I am still with Thee."

Recollect morning by morning the real object of the morning watch. What is it? It is not simply to enable me to say that I have observed it. It is not to satisfy conscience by observing it because I had formed a resolution to do so. It is not to enable me to prepare Bible studies and spiritual meditations with which to help others. The true object should be—and it is necessary to remind ourselves of this constantly—to meet God, to hear His voice, to receive guidance and strength from Him, which will enable me to please Him to-day in thought, in word, in activity.

Select and arrange in advance the portions of the Scriptures upon which to meditate at the time of the morning watch. We should keep as much purely mechanical work as possible out of the devotional hour. The portions selected should be taken from the more devotional and practical parts of the Bible. They should be brief. They should, so far as possible, be complete in themselves, and yet often it will be desirable to have portions which, though each is complete in itself, will be related to some common theme. The following examples are meant to be suggestive: The best thirty

or sixty Psalms; thirty or more biographical portions; selected Epistles, especially some of the shorter ones; thirty of the exceeding great promises of the Bible; thirty portions bearing on each of such topics as prayer, faith, the Holy Spirit, temptation, our conversation; thirty commands of Christ; thirty or sixty portions of the Gospels bearing on the character of Christ as our example. If a person will take a few hours on three or four Sabbaths during the year, he will be able to outline subject enough for use throughout the entire year. He will then come to his Bible each morning with something definite. It will prevent drifting around and loss of time. It will also promote a more symmetrical spiritual development. The pamphlet, "Bible Study for Spiritual Growth," gives many suggestions as to the manner and spirit in which the Bible should be studied for the greatest devotional profit.

Give prayer a large place in the morning watch. There needs to be prayer not only at the beginning and close of the hour, but the Bible study, meditation, and self-examination also should be conducted in the spirit of prayer. As this aspect of the subject is treated so fully in the pamphlet, "The Secret Prayer Life," it is not enlarged upon here. Only by filling the quiet hour with prayer can we keep our formalism and make the morning watch a great reality and force in our lives.

Remember that the hour of the morning watch is the still hour. After praying and during Bible study it is well to pause and listen to what the Lord shall say. Too often we fill up the devotional hour with our own thoughts and prayers and leave no still place for listening. Our actual attitude and practice might often be characterised better by the words, "Hear, Lord, for Thy servant speaketh," than by the words, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." It is difficult to obey the command, "Be still, and know that I am God." After we shut out the voices of the world's turmoil, after we banish the suggestions of the tempter, after we cease to listen to the thoughts about the morrow, after we silence the sound of our own cares, questions, and prayers—then we hear that still, small voice which His true followers always know. His voice is not like that of the fire, or strong wind, or earthquake, but is like unto "a sound of gentle stillness." Do we wonder that Paul exhorted us to study or to be ambitious to be quiet. He knew that it would require study and resolution to learn this great secret.

Who keep the morning watch? At once we think of some of the men of Bible times: Moses, who knew God face to

face, and to whom in the early morning hours God revealed the Law: Isaiah, whom God awakened morning by morning to hear as a true disciple; Jeremiah, to whom God's mercies and compassions were new every morning; and David, who declared, "In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will keep watch," who reiterated, "I myself will awake right early" and "will give thanks," and who learned from experience that "It is a good thing to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning." The example of Jesus Christ is most impressive. We are told that "in the morning, a great while before day, He rose up and went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Tradition teaches that the observance of the morning watch was widely prevalent among the early Christians. Rev. Webb-Peploe has said that "All the great saints have been early risers"; and he might have added that they rose early primarily to begin the day with unhurried communion with God. There come to mind such men as Rutherford, McCheyne and Andrew Bonar, Wesley and Whitefield, David Brainerd and Henry Martyn, George Muller and Hudson Taylor. It is said of Joseph Alleine, that wonderful preacher of the seventeenth century, that he devoted the time between four and eight o'clock every morning to prayer and Bible study, and that if he heard a blacksmith at his work before he himself began his morning watch, he would exclaim, "How this noise shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?" On our recent journey around the world we were deeply impressed by the large numbers of young men and women who entered into covenant to keep the morning watch. All the men and women who have gone out from the universities of America and Britain to lead the Christian movements among the students of India faithfully observe this watch. In Ceylon we were impressed, not so much by the beautiful and luxuriant tropical vegetation, nor by the heathen shrines and temples, as by the sight which greeted our eyes very early one morning of Tamil students walking under the palms with open Bibles in their hands, and their lips moving in silent prayer. We visited one college in the Levant where, according to the last report, over two hundred boys and young men keep the morning watch. We know of no college in Christian lands of which this could be said. There are ten great student movements in the World's Student Christian Federation, but that of China is the only one of them of which we could say last year that practically all of its active members began the day with Bible study and prayer. It was while visiting a college, not in America, or England, or Scan-

dinavia, but in Japan, that we were awakened over an hour before daybreak, and taken through the city, across the valley, and to the crest of the famous Flowery Hill, to meet with the members of the Christian Association of that institution for special prayer, as was their custom.

The practical question for each one of us is, Why should not I keep the morning watch? Next to receiving Christ as Saviour, and claiming the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we know of no act attended with larger good to ourselves or to others than the formation of an undiscourageable resolution to keep the morning watch. Is there anything which can stand before the bar of my own reason or conscience that should be allowed to keep me from forming this life-expanding resolution? Is there any excuse or reason acceptable to God which I can plead why I should not devote at least the first half hour of every day to secret prayer and devotional Bible study? What would keep me from it? God? Certainly not. Is it not far more likely self, with its love of ease and its shrinking from the formation of a difficult habit; or Satan, who, if he cannot keep us from studying the Bible and from prayer altogether, is anxious to have us place them as late in the day as possible, because the only things which have ever defeated him have been prayer and the Word of God? Am I willing to pay what it costs to form this important habit? What will it cost? Readjusting of habits of sleep, which means earlier rising, and, it may be, earlier retiring; economising of time; more than one failure possibly; repeated and persistent efforts; increasing vigilance and real watching unto prayer. Am I willing to pay the price in order to form this habit, which has so much to do with triumphant life and fruitful service? If so, when shall I form the resolution? And how shall a resolution be formed which shall stand? "It is God that energiseth you, both to will and then to work for His good pleasure."

BIBLE STUDY FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

Let us note at the outset that it is the Bible of which we are to think in this discussion; not books about the Bible, no matter how many or how helpful, or how accessible they may be. Let us also bear in mind that it is Bible study that is to engage our attention, not the subject of Bible reading, although we might profitably spend much time upon that. Nor are we to consider the subject of Bible listening, although that is almost a lost art in these days. It is Bible study which we are to emphasise, with all that the word study means to us as students. Moreover, it is Bible study for personal growth. It is not that form of Bible study designed to equip us to lead others, one by one, to Jesus Christ, although it furnishes an essential part of our equipment for such work. Nor is the object of such study first of all to enable us to help other Christians spiritually, by preparing us to give Bible readings, or to make spiritual talks, or to teach Bible classes, or to guide the Bible study of others, although it will prove invaluable as a preparation for all such work. It is Bible study for each man's own life which we shall keep clearly before us. It is intensely personal. Its object is personal growth.

What kind of growth is meant? Not growth in knowledge, although the world could far better afford to lose any other sixty-six books than these, viewing them simply as a storehouse of essential knowledge. Not intellectual growth, although it may be stated confidently that there is no other group of writings the study of which affords the same intellectual suggestiveness, grasp, breadth and power. Above and beyond all this is the meaning of the term to which we shall limit our thought—Bible study for each man's spiritual growth. It is that Bible study which will make us better men to-morrow than to-day; which will find us far higher up the mountain path of Christian experience a year hence than at present; which enables us to meet God and to hear His voice and to know that it is His voice. It is that Bible study which opens up to us, each day, further and further vistas into the possibilities of the life hid with Christ in God.

I.—IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY.

(1) To us as Christians. It is the test of true discipleship. Christ says, "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples." We may call ourselves His disciples, but that does not prove that we are. Our names may be on the roll of his professed disciples, but that is not sufficient proof. The real test is the life, and that is not possible apart from devotional Bible study. If you abide in the Word—that is, if you spend time there, if you dwell there, if you live there—then will you necessarily be a true disciple. Such Bible study alone shows us the needs of our spiritual lives. It reveals to us the weak places in our armour, the points of least resistance in our lives. It shows us ourselves as we are, and therefore as God sees us. Chrysostom says, "The cause of all our evils is our not knowing the Scriptures." Therefore, if we would overcome doubts, temptations, passion, evil imaginations, unclean, unholy and proud thoughts, let us centre our energies upon such study. The devotional study of the Bible alone shows us the possibilities of our spiritual lives. Why be satisfied with living on the dead level or in the valley if God intends that we be climbing in the peaks? The only place where the great mountain peaks of Christian experience are revealed is in the Scriptures. Would we be Christians of more than ordinary spiritual power? Then we must be great feeders upon the Word, which is not only quick but powerful. De Quincey has divided all knowledge into the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The sacred writings constitute pre-eminently the literature of power. To have real power with God we must give ourselves to this study. This is clearly taught in the words, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Other helps to spirituality without devotional Bible study may become dangerous. The habit of meditation, for example, without the Bible, is likely to lead a man to become morbid and melancholy; whereas, conducted with the aid of the Bible, it is a most healthful process. Secret prayer, moreover, is practically impossible without Bible study, because real prayer is not monologue but dialogue. It requires two to have true communion. We must give God an opportunity to speak to us as well as we to Him.

(2) To us as Christian teachers. Think over your teachers, either in things intellectual or things spiritual. Which of them helped you the most? Were they not the teachers who had the life behind the words? Devotional Bible study alone gives sincerity. And no one detects insincerity or cant so

quickly as the unbelievers who are in our classes or who watch us in other relationships. Moreover, it is noticeable in colleges having the elective system that the best students prefer drinking from a running stream to drinking from a stagnant pool; that is, they prefer to enter the classes of teachers who are themselves growing rather than of those who are giving old material, without at least living over it again. In Australia recently some new gold fields were discovered. We met hundreds of persons on their way to these new fields. So it is, if a teacher keeps finding new riches he sets all his pupils to digging. If he rejoices with David "as one having found great spoil," many others will be attracted to the search. In a word, therefore, if we would hold the interest, enthusiasm, or even the attendance of Bible classes, let us give attention to enriching our spiritual lives.

(3) To us as Christian workers. Would we work without friction, strain, anxiety, worry? Then let us apply ourselves to this kind of Bible study. We may not work so many hours, but we shall accomplish more, and, when we leave, our work will not have to be undone. Without deep devotional study there is danger that our work become purely mechanical. It alone will make our experience fresh, rich, and full, and keep the realities of our faith vivid. If we would shape the work, and not be shaped by it, we must through these studies preserve a strong and ever-expanding inner life. Moreover, our fruitfulness in Christian work is absolutely conditional on our abiding in the Word. Above all, it is impossible to have the power of the Spirit of God as a constant possession apart from the study of the Bible. To do the work of God we must have the power of God. To have the power of God we must have the Spirit of God. The Bible is the channel through which the Spirit comes into the life. We do not find Spirit-filled men apart from deep, devotional Bible students. If we would be filled with the Spirit, keep filled, and have our capacity constantly increase, let us become possessed with the Bible study passion.

(4) To us as Christian leaders. If those over whom God has placed us are to be spiritual, we must be spiritual leaders. The stream never rises above the fountain head. Moreover, if we would be safe leaders we must study with intensity the mind of God concerning our work and problems. The Bible is the principal place where that is revealed. More than all, if we would have the true idea and spirit of Christian leadership, we must study with diligence the life of that Leader of Leaders, as clearly set forth in the Scriptures.

II.—HINDRANCES TO DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY.

Let us clear the ground, first of all, of that supposed hindrance—lack of time. In each country that we visit the Christian men and women claim that they are busier than those of any other country. We have had to admit this point in at least fifteen countries within the past fifteen months. There are many persons who conscientiously think they do not have half an hour a day to spend in Bible study. Let us suggest two ways of meeting this hindrance. There is time to do the will of God. Is it the will of God that I grow spiritually? Yes; for He does not wish me to become unspiritual or to stand still. Has a man ever grown spiritually apart from devotional Bible study? We have not found that man. Have you? Therefore, there is time to study the Bible daily for our own spiritual growth. This, you say, is logical, but theoretical. Well, then, will you for one month try the plan of spending the first half hour of the day in Bible study, and at the end of the time let us know whether it has interfered with your regular work or standing or efficiency? Hundreds of persons in different parts of the world have accepted this challenge. Thus far not one has reported that his work or standing has suffered in the least. On the other hand, many of them report that such study has enabled them to do more and better work. Is it fair, therefore, for any of us, without trying it, to say that this cannot be done?

Many conscientious Christians raise the question whether the reading of devotional books will not take the place of Bible study? We firmly believe that much of the lack of spiritual fibre among Christians to-day is due to a second-hand knowledge of the books of God. We would not be misunderstood, for we have derived too much benefit from such books as "The Confessions of St. Augustine," "The Imitation of Christ," by Thomas à Kempis, "The Spiritual Letters of Fenelon," "Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest," Jeremy Taylor's two spiritual classics, "Law's Serious Call," and the more recent writings of Murray, Meyer, Moule, and Miss Havergal. The point is, why not go to first sources? One, in speaking of some of these writings, has said that in their most appealing tones they echo the voices of the Bible. After all, these things ought we to have done and not to have left the other undone.

Some people are hindered from studying the Bible devotionally because they are afraid to do so. One day while in India two young men said to us: "If we study the Bible in this way, we are afraid it will compel us to abandon our

plan of entering Government service, and to devote ourselves to Christian work." A Mohammedan student in Egypt told us that, if he studied the Bible in this way, he would have to become a Christian. In another place a young man said it would make it necessary for him to give up a certain bad habit. Afraid of the light! How unscientific and unscholarly and cowardly! The reason why some do not study the Bible devotionally is because they have no suitable course of study to follow. This leads to the third point.

III.—SUGGESTED COURSES OF DEVOTIONAL STUDY.

It would be an excellent thing if each one of us had studied the Bible as a whole and the different books composing it—their setting, construction, contents, and purpose. The more of such study we have, the better use we can make of the Bible devotionally. But to complete such a scheme of study would require a lifetime. Fortunately, it is not necessary to master the Bible critically before we begin to study it for daily spiritual profit.

The first suggested course would be the study of the more devotional books of the Bible. Some books of the Bible are better for devotional study than others. One of the foremost Bible students in Britain has said that for devotional purposes we should study first, foremost, and in this order:—The Gospels, Colossians, Hebrews, Psalms, Isaiah, Deuteronomy. We submitted this list to one of the greatest devotional Bible students in America. He suggested only one change namely, the placing of Deuteronomy before Isaiah. It seems to me that it would be well for Christian workers to place the Book of Acts after the Gospels. There are different methods of studying a book devotionally. The outline studies of St. Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts by Robert E. Speer, and of St. John's Gospel by W. W. White, will be found specially suggestive and helpful on this point.

A second course, which has been followed with great profit by many, is "The Messages of the Epistles to Me." We are indebted for this method of Professor H. C. G. Moule, of Cambridge University. The outline which he recommends, and which may be followed in our study of any epistle, is as follows:—

- (1) Account of Christ: (a) Human history; (b) Divine history; (c) Relation to His followers.
- (2) Account of the Christian life: (a) Inward; (b) Outward.

(3) Account of the writer's life in Christ. We would suggest that at first the shorter epistles be taken.

The study of biographies has always proved stimulating to the spiritual life. What incentives to growth and endeavour would come from a close, practical study of a series of lives; e.g., Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, John the Baptist, John, Peter, Stephen, and Paul. To guide us in such study we might take a simple outline like the following: a man's preparation for his life-work, qualifications, difficulties encountered, achievements, the secret of his enduring influence.

The topical study of the Bible is also very fruitful. Mr. Moody every year at Northfield urged the importance of devoting at least one month of Bible study to each of the great doctrines, for example: sin, the atonement, regeneration, faith. When in college two of us met for the study of the Bible. We wanted something to counteract the effect of sceptical philosophy. We took up the topic of the Holy Spirit, thinking we might finish it in three months. We spent the year upon it, and then felt that we had only opened the door. It proved, however, for us, to be the very unlocking of the Scriptures devotionally. Or we might take the topic prayer, or the Kingdom of God. It is not necessary to prolong the list.

The last course of study, and by far the most important, is the study of Jesus Christ. One day in Edinburgh I asked Professor Drummond to name three courses of study which might be recommended to Christians for spiritual profit. After a few moments of thought he replied, "I would recommend that they study, first, the Life of Jesus Christ; secondly, the Life of Jesus Christ; and thirdly, the Life of Jesus Christ." He is right. It takes us to the very heart of the subject. Pre-eminent and essential for the spiritual life is the constant and devout study of Christ Himself. We would recommend the following six phases of the study of Christ: The character of Christ, the divinity of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the commands of Christ, Christ as a worker, Christ as a man of prayer.

When so many courses of study are mentioned, there is danger that some of us will be confused, hesitate, and fail to take up any. It matters not so much what course we adopt. The main thing is that we decide upon some one course, and hold to it until it yields fruit in our lives and work.

IV.—MANNER OF DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY.

(1) Break up the subject to be studied into convenient or suitable daily subdivisions. In this way there will be some definite thing to take up each day, and valuable time will not

be lost casting about to find out where to begin. If we are to really search the Scriptures, we must have things in mind for which we will search.

(2) Be alone, if possible, while engaged in such devotional study. This will often be difficult, but it is well worth the effort. We need to be where we can speak aloud to God. It is said that David Brainerd, in order to be alone for meditation upon the Word, was in the habit of committing to memory passages of Scripture, and then walking alone in the streets of New Haven, or in the neighbouring fields, revolving these passages in his mind, applying them to his life, and conversing with God.

(3) Keep in mind constantly the object of this kind of Bible study. It is to meet my spiritual need, not that of another. It is to enrich my life. It is to lift my ideals. It is to enable me to meet God and to hear His voice, to me, personally. We do well to remind ourselves of this object many times during our study.

(4) Let there be resolute detachment of mind. Let us keep our thoughts from the thing which we have just been doing and from the thing which we mean to do next, and shut ourselves in alone with God and His Word. This is all the more important if our time be limited. If we have but half an hour to devote to such study each morning, we do not wish to spend half of it getting the mind fixed upon the subject.

(5) Do not be diverted from the main purpose of the study. This is the peril of many Bible students. We come to something which, as Peter says, is hard to be understood, and are apt to think that that difficulty must be removed before we can go further in our devotional study. Not so. Let us keep a paper on which we can note any difficulty that we come to, and at some subsequent time, as true scholars, let us seek to understand it. But let us not be cheated out of our daily spiritual food by mere intellectual curiosity, important as that is in its proper place.

(6) Be thorough. We have far too much surface study of the Bible. Gold dust is often found on the surface, but as a rule we have to dig for the nuggets. We need to sink a shaft in the Scriptures in order to get at the deep things of God.

(7) Meditate. Jeremiah best defines this process: "Thy words were found and I did eat them"; that is, I take these words into my mind. I store them in memory, I revolve them over and over again, I let them touch the springs of conscience, I let them find me, I let the will act upon them

and apply them, I give them right of way in my life, I make them part of myself, I realise in actual experience that the words of Christ "are spirit and are life."

(8) Record results. If you put down one point each day you will gain over three hundred points within the year. Most of us keep a financial record. All of us are in the habit of taking notes on what we hear men say. Is it not worth while to keep a careful record of God's dealings with us? It is my practice to carry slips of paper in the Bible constantly, on which to note such points. I would rather part with the notes taken when listening to the most distinguished lecturers I have ever heard than with these little papers, which contain the record of my own soul struggles and of God's personal dealings with me.

V.—SPIRIT FOR DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY.

(1) It would be an earnest or intense spirit. Ruskin says, "He who would understand a painting must give himself to it." He who would understand the deep things of God must give himself to them.

(2) It must be a spirit of dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The Spirit must interpret what the Spirit has inspired.

(3) This suggests that it must be a prayerful spirit. George Muller, in writing of his experience in Bible study, says: "Spending three hours on my knees, I made such progress that I learned more in those three hours than in years before. From that time I became a lover of the Word of God." Does he mean that he learned more facts in three hours than in years before? No; he means that he spent enough time with the light of God's presence shed upon the Word to have revealed to him a secret which in turn unlocked other secrets, and thus to have opened before him a whole vista of truth. Many times we need to turn from the sacred pages with this prayer: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." We can see the ordinary things without the help of God; but the unaided intellect, at its best, is absolutely unable to grasp the wondrous things of God.

(4) It should be a childlike spirit. Bacon urges, "One must enter the kingdom of the natural sciences like a little child." Christ insisted, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," still less understand its deep mysteries.

(5) It should be an obedient spirit. We must be willing to let the Bible mean what it wants to mean. We must be willing to have our lives changed, cost what it may. "The organ of spiritual knowledge is an obedient spirit."

(6) Finally, it should be a practical spirit. This term is best defined in the Scripture language, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." If we would determine at once that henceforth in our Bible study, as we come to commands which we have not obeyed, we would with God's help obey them; as we come to precepts which we have not heeded, we would in His strength heed them; as we see examples which we have not imitated, we would under the Spirit's influence imitate them—our lives would grow by leaps and bounds.

VI.—TIME FOR DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY.

(1) Let it be a regular time. We should have a Median and Persian hour—that is, an unchangeable hour. It is a well-known law of psychology that to form a habit we must suffer no exceptions.

(2) Let it be a daily time. Some of us may have a regular time, for example, once each week; but the daily plan is the more excellent one. The world pulls us daily. Satan spreads his snares for us more than once each day. Self asserts itself many times each day. Therefore, we should fortify our lives spiritually at least once a day.

(3) Let it be an unhurried time. We should give ourselves believing time. It takes time to become spiritual. Spirituality is not a matter of chance; it must be preceded by an adequate cause. If we would have large spiritual results in our lives, there must be sufficient spiritual causes. There is natural law in the spiritual world. But some one asks, How much time is unhurried time? I trust it will not mean less than half an hour each day for any of us. Yet more important than this, it means time enough to forget time; time enough to forget the watch and the clock; time enough to forget the thing we have been doing, and the thing we mean to do next; time enough to meet God, and to hear Him speaking to the depths of our lives. I am not pleading for a mere form, but for an actual, personal, daily meeting on the part of each soul with its God.

(4) Let it be the very choicest time in the day. When is that? I used to think it was the last thing at night, but I found that usually the mind was tired or occupied with the many things which had taken place during the day. Then I tried the middle of the day, but found it impossible to avoid interruptions at that time. At last, several years ago, when I was at Cambridge, I heard of the Morning Watch—the plan of spending the first half hour or first hour of the day alone with God—and adopted the plan. With some of you who

are following the same plan, I firmly believe that it is the best time in the day. The mind is less occupied. The mind is, as a rule, clearer, and the memory more retentive. But forget these reasons if you choose. The whole case may be staked on this argument: it equips a man for the day's fight with self and sin and Satan. He does not wait until noon before he buckles on his armour. He does not wait until he has given way to temper, or to unkind words, or to unworthy thoughts, or to easily besetting sin, and then have his Bible study. He enters the day forewarned and forearmed. John Quincy Adams, President of the United States, noted in his journal, in connection with his custom of studying the Bible each morning, "It seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day." Lord Cairns, one of the busiest men in Great Britain, devoted the first hour and a half of every day to Bible study and secret prayer. We have all heard how Chinese Gordon, while in the Soudan, had a certain sign before his tent each morning which meant that he must be left alone. A friend recently saw his Bible in the Queen's apartments at Windsor, and told me that the pages of that book, which was his companion in the morning watch, were so worn that one could scarcely read the print. He always reminds me of Sir Henry Havelock, who took care to be alone each morning to ponder some portion of the Bible. When on the heaviest marches it was determined to start at some earlier hour than that which he had fixed for his devotions, he arose quite in time to hold undisturbed his communion with God. Ruskin, in speaking to the students at Oxford, said, "Read your Bible, making it the first morning business of your life to understand some portion of it clearly, and your daily business to obey it in all that you do understand." Francke spent the first hour of every day in private devotions. Wesley, for the last forty years of his life, rose every morning at four o'clock, and devoted from one to two hours to devotional Bible study and prayer. Rutherford was accustomed to rise every morning at three o'clock, and the whole of the earlier hours of the day were spent by him in prayer and meditation and study. Greater than all, we have it on the best of evidence that Christ rose a great while before it was day to hold communion with God. What he found necessary or even desirable can we do without? Spirituality costs. Shall we pay what it costs?