

### SIDE TOUR 3: Soul Nourishment First

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, a 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 I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted; I might seek to benefit believers; I might seek to relieve the distresses; I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit. Before this time my practice has been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Words of God, and to meditation on it, ***that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart be brought into experimental 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 as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I meditated upon, but for ***the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.*** The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession or to thanksgiving or to intercession or to supplication; so that, though I did not as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, ***yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.*** When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or were, turning all, as I go into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it, but ***still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object 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 ***that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened*** and that by breakfast time, with rare exception, ***I am in a peaceful, if not, happy state of heart.*** Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, either very soon after or at a later time, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but ***for the profit of my own inner man.***

With this mode I have likewise combined the being out in the open air for an hour, an hour and a half, or two hours, before breakfast, walking about in the fields and in the summer sitting for a little on the stiles, if I find it too much to walk all the time. I find it very beneficial to my health to walk thus for meditation before breakfast and am now so in the habit of using the time for that purpose that when I get into the open air I generally take out a New Testament of good size type, which I carry with me for that purpose, besides my Bible; and I find that I can profitably spend my time in the open air, which formerly was not the case for want of habit. I used to consider the time spent walking a loss, but now I find

it very profitable, not only to my body, but also to my soul. The walking out before breakfast is, of course, not necessarily connected with this matter and everyone has to judge according to his strength and other circumstances. The difference then between my former practice and my present one is this: formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, ***in which case I read the Word of God for food, or for refreshment or for a revival and renewal of my inner man, before I gave myself to prayer.*** But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half hour or even one hour on my knees before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or quarter of an hour or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father and to 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. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private *conversation* with a brother stirred me up to this matter. ***And, yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning, is to obtain food for his inner man.*** As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time except we take food and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that as everyone must allow. ***Now, what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just like water runs through a pipe, but considering 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 in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire and the season, therefore, ***when this exercise of the soul can be most effectively 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 instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us.*** We may therefore profitably meditate with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. Thus there is far less to be feared from wandering of mind than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had time previously for meditation. ***I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter.*** By the blessing of God, I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I had ever had before; and after having now about fourteen years in this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. In addition to this I generally read, after family prayer, larger portions of the Word of God, when I still pursue my practice of reading regularly on ward in the Holy Scriptures, 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 take also, either then or at other parts of the day, time more especially for prayer.

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

**By George Mueller** May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1841 Autobiography of George Mueller p 152