

Session 7 How to Pray-Read the Word

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. “*The Word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished.*” —E. M. Bounds
- B. Jesus corrected the Pharisees for thinking they would experience God’s life or presence simply by knowing the Bible. He was saying, in essence, “You study the Bible, but you are not willing to come to Me in an ongoing conversation that you may experience God’s presence.”
³⁹***“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of [point to] Me. ⁴⁰But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life [experience God’s presence].” (Jn. 5:39-40)***
- C. It is not enough just to study the Word—we are meant to talk with God as we read it. Bible study is meant to create an active dialogue in our hearts with God. One way in which we gain strength in our prayer lives is by feeding on the Word through engaging in conversation with God as we read it.
- D. Scripture gives us the conversational material for our prayer lives. Talking to God as we read the Word makes prayer easy and enjoyable. We speak the truths of the Word back to God as we read.
- E. I liken the Scripture to a “neon sign” pointing to Jesus. It testifies of Him telling us what He is like. Jesus referred to them *not coming to Him*—they did not talk to Him. Coming to Jesus in this context speaks of more than being forgiven. It is a call to commune with Him as we read the Bible.
- F. When I moved from a purely “study mode” to a “dialogue mode” when reading the Bible, it changed my spiritual life. I began my journey into what I term “pray-reading” the Word. I could feel His presence in a greater way. I began to love God’s Word. This was a new feeling.
- G. When I look back on over forty years of walking with Jesus, I realize that pray-reading the Word—using the Bible as the “conversational material” in my prayer life—has been *the single most significant activity in my spiritual life*. This simple activity is essential to abiding in Christ (Jn. 15).
- H. ***God’s Word will abide in you.*** Great change will surely come in the spiritual life of any believer who continues to abide in Jesus by speaking to Him as they read the Word. Over time, God’s words will abide, or live, in their heart and will affect their prayer life as Jesus promised (Jn. 15:7).
⁷***“If you abide in Me, and My words abide [live] in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (Jn. 15:7)***
1. God’s Word living in us will cause new, godly desires to be formed in us, which will make us more sensitive to the Spirit’s leading, including which prayers we choose to pray.
 2. The Scriptures living in our heart will impact our mind and emotions; thus our prayer life will be more in unity with God’s heart and will for our life.
 3. Prayer will become enjoyable and more effective as the Word abides more in our heart.

II. TWO CATEGORIES OF SCRIPTURE TO PRAY-READ

- A. There are two broad categories of Scripture related to pray-reading the Word—*promises to believe* and *exhortations to obey*.
- B. Category #1: Promises to believe
1. When we come across a *promise to believe* while reading the Word, we turn it into conversation with Jesus. There are many verses with promises to believe, such as “God loves His people” and “God forgives us” and “God will provide for and guide us.”
 2. I encourage you to do two things when talking to God about a *promise to believe*. First, thank God for that truth; second, ask the Spirit to give you more understanding of it.
 3. First, we thank God for a particular truth—turn it into a declaration of thanksgiving or trust. For example, when reading that Jesus loves you as the Father loves Him, pray, “Thank You, Jesus, that You love me with the same intensity with which the Father loves You.”
“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)
 4. Second, we ask God for more understanding of a specific truth. For example, while reading that Jesus loves you as the Father loves Him, pray, “Jesus, give me more understanding about how You love me with the same intensity with which the Father loves You.”
- C. Category #2: Exhortations to obey
1. When we read *exhortations to obey* in the Word, we turn them into conversation with Jesus, just as we do with God’s promises. Many verses *exhort us to obey* related to our time, money, speech, work, attitudes, food, drink, eyes, sexuality, service, relationships, etc.
 2. Jesus exhorted His people to abide in His love. Obeying Him in this involves dwelling on, or focusing on, His love—searching it out and going deep in understanding it.
“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)
 3. I encourage you to do two things I do when talking to God about an *exhortation to obey*. First, I commit myself to obey that truth; second, I ask the Holy Spirit to help me.
 4. First, we commit to obey a truth—we make simple declarations of our resolve to obey it. In this case we pray, “Jesus, I commit to abide in and focus on Your love. I set my heart to study and search out this truth from Your Word and to live in it.”
 5. Second, we ask God to empower us to obey the particular truth. We ask Him to help us by giving us wisdom, motivation, and power to obey in specific areas. For example, when reading that we are to abide in love, simply pray, “Jesus, help me to abide in Your love.”
 6. One exhortation that I have drawn strength from throughout my life is the one that says Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look on anything that would stir up lust (Job 31:1).

III. BENEFITS OF PRAY-READING

- A. The prophet Hosea told us to “take words with us” when we come to the Lord in prayer. Taking words with us is an important principle to follow when we give our hearts to God. As we articulate our love, gratitude, and requests to Jesus in simple phrases, the Spirit touches our lives.
²Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips [words of love, trust, and obedience].” (Hos. 14:2)
- B. When you pray the Word, you and the Spirit flow together, resulting in Him teaching you in a way that is tailor-made for your life. When you talk to God while reading the Word, you say new things to God. It is the Spirit speaking through you, giving new insights—ones coming from your mouth.
²⁷But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things... (1 Jn. 2:27)
- C. While you are pray-reading the Word, I encourage you to speak slowly and softly (not shouting or preaching at the indwelling Spirit) and use short phrases (not paragraphs).
- D. Take time to journal—to record your thoughts and prayers as you pray-read the Bible. Journaling will help you capture the truths the Spirit gives you and develop language to talk with God.

IV. PRAY-READING THE DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS

- A. The book of Revelation contains over thirty different descriptions of Jesus (Rev. 1-3). I use the acronym **A-R-K** to pray through these descriptions of Jesus. I use *ark* in reference to the ark of the covenant, the place where God’s presence dwelt, and Noah’s ark, a place of safety in the flood. By encountering Jesus in this way, we experience the ark of His presence and the ark of His safety.
¹⁰The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. (Prov. 18:10)
- B. **A-R-K** stands for Agreement, Revelation, and Keep the prophecy. These are three aspects of the conversational prayers that I encourage people to offer related to the thirty descriptions of Jesus.
- C. **A–Agreement**: We agree with who Jesus is in a specific way. We express our agreement by simply declaring to Jesus, with affection and gratitude, truths about who He is. By speaking out our agreement with His personhood, we gain inspiration and insights that equip us to know Him more.
- D. **R–Revelation**: We ask for revelation of Jesus according to each of the thirty descriptions based on Paul’s prayer that “the Father may give to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). Ask the Spirit to give you more insight into specific aspects of who He is.
- E. **K–Keep the prophecy**: We respond in practical ways as we ask for help to “keep the prophecy.” This refers to acting on the commands and plans of Jesus described in the book of Revelation. We apply them to our lives by responding in faith and obedience to the specific truths about His name.
⁷“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Rev. 22:7)

- F. We keep the prophecy by responding in three ways:
- By *obeying* the commands of God that are implied in the thirty descriptions of Jesus
 - By *saying* the message of God as we proclaim the main truths that are related to the descriptions
 - By *praying* to experience God’s strength to obey and say all that is implied by the descriptions
- G. Examples of A-R-K: descriptions of Jesus as the “faithful witness” and “firstborn from the dead”
⁵ ***...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead. (Rev. 1:5)***
1. Jesus as the faithful witness
 - a. ***Agreement:*** Jesus, I thank You that You are the faithful witness of what the Father is like and of all truth. You are the truth. I thank You that You always tell the truth. I trust what You say because You are reliable. You took a stand for truth that cost Your reputation and Your life.
 - b. ***Revelation:*** Holy Spirit, give me more insight into Jesus as the faithful witness.
 - c. ***Keep the prophecy:*** I commit to speak the truth, regardless of what it costs me. Holy Spirit, help me to speak up for the truths that are not popular.
 2. Jesus as the firstborn from the dead
 - a. ***Agreement:*** Jesus, You are the firstborn from the dead. I thank You that You have supremacy over all, that You have power over death itself.
 - b. ***Revelation:*** Holy Spirit, reveal Jesus to me as God’s firstborn from the dead. Teach me more about His supremacy over all things, including death.
 - c. ***Keep the prophecy:*** Jesus, I will serve You as the One who is preeminent by obeying You and drawing others to You instead of to me. I set my heart to live in light of the resurrection. Holy Spirit, help me to walk out this commitment.
- H. There are 24 distinct descriptions in Revelation 1 (7 descriptions in v. 5-7 plus 17 directly related to Jesus as the Son of Man in v. 10-16) and 18 descriptions in Revelation 2-3, **totaling 42**. Since 12 are in both Revelation 1 and 2-3, we can identify **30 distinct descriptions** (Rev. 1-3).
- I. In Revelation 1:5-7 there are 7 descriptions—*Jesus* (v. 5), *Christ* (v. 5), *faithful witness* (v. 5), *firstborn* from the dead (v. 5), *ruler* of the kings of the earth (v. 5), *Him who loved* us (v. 6), and *He who is coming* with clouds (v. 7).
- J. In Revelation 1:10-18 there are 17 descriptions—*voice as a trumpet* (v. 10), *voice as many waters* (v. 15), the *Alpha* (v. 11), the *Omega* (v. 11) the *First* (v. 11, 17), the *Last* (v. 11, 17), in the *midst* of the seven lampstands (v. 13), *Son of Man* (v. 13), *garment to the feet* (v. 13), *head and hair white* (v. 14), *eyes like a flame of fire* (v. 14), *feet like fine brass* (v. 15), in His *right hand seven stars* (v. 16, 20), out of *His mouth a sword* (v. 16), *countenance like the sun* (v. 16), *He who lives forever* (v. 18), holding the *keys* of the kingdom (v. 18).