

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

*The session tonight is one of the most simple of this entire series, but also the **most essential** of this entire series. I call it **How to Pray-Read the Word**, a very, very simple principle. As I have interacted with people over many years, I have found that many believers do not know to do this. When I lay it out in five minutes, they say, “Oh wow, I never thought about that. That makes sense. That is so easy.”*

*The next point I want to make is that it is not only the simplest, but it is probably the **most essential principle in our spiritual life**. When I look back over forty years, forty-plus years of walking with the Lord, this one issue right here I say boldly—I have said it many times so I have thought about it many times—is clearly the most significant issue in my spiritual life, this one I am sharing right here. We covered a little bit of this in Session Five in the first semester, just for a few moments. I want to spend an entire session on it.*

E. M. Bounds said something that is very accurate. E. M. Bounds—many of you would know his name—was one of the most celebrated authors on prayer in the twentieth century. He wrote tremendous books on prayer and was one of the giants in history in prayer according to his contemporaries. He wrote many books on it. He said, “The Word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished.”

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.** ⁴⁰**But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life [experience God’s presence].” (Jn. 5:39-40)***

In my early journey when I was seventeen, eighteen years old, I wanted to be serious about growing in prayer, because my youth leaders told me that if you did not grow in prayer you would not going to get very far in the things of the Spirit. I read a number of biographies of missionaries and people whom God used powerfully, and they all talked about prayer. I did not like prayer at all. Prayer was miserably boring to me.

This one issue right here—when I found how to mix the Word of God and prayer together—made prayer easy and made prayer enjoyable. This one issue did. It is not the only issue, but it was the primary issue. It started with John 5:39; this was the verse. I remember the day! It was one of those lightening-strike moments in my life, one of those moments I will never forget. You know “the hills are alive with the sound of music” type verses. I was so excited when I read this verse because it struck me.

The Holy Spirit was being very kind. He knew this would be one of my primary life verses. I was eighteen years old and did not know that at that time. I was reading, I had my regular Bible time on a daily basis or a near-daily basis, but did not like it at all because it was so boring. I was reading the Bible and praying, probably reading the Bible an hour a day and praying an hour a day, something like that, and felt like I was backsliding. I was feeling the presence of God less and less. I thought, “This is really bad! The biographies do not describe it this way.”

I set the clock an hour a day to pray, and it was a miserable hour. I just complained most the time about why I had to pray. “God, why are You running Your kingdom this way? There are better ways to do this...” I would

explain to Him. Then I would do my Bible study, and I was always confused, not always, but so many times I did not know what I was reading about, and it did not connect.

So I was going through John 5 in my systematic reading. I read this verse. Jesus was correcting the Pharisees. He said this, “You search the Bible. You search it, and you study it night and day, for in the scriptures you think you have life.” That is, you think that you will experience the presence of God, the life of God. The life of God and the presence of God are interchangeable terms. He goes on, “The scriptures point to Me”—the scriptures are like a neon light, like a neon sign pointing, “Go that direction and talk to Him”—then He says, verse 40, “But you are unwilling to come to Me.” That is, you are unwilling to interact with Me. That is where the presence of God is: in interacting with Me. It’s not in just reading the Bible, but talking to Me.

As I read that, the light came on, I mean in a moment. It was one of the great moments of my spiritual life. Even though I was a young believer, as I look back over forty years, this is one of the great moments. I said, “I am searching the scriptures”—an hour a day to me was radical—“I am trying to experience God, and I cannot.”

Verse 40 it connected, “You are not coming to Me.” “You are not talking to Me” is how it came to my understanding. The Holy Spirit was leading me here. “You are not talking to Me,” the Lord was saying, “when you are reading the scriptures.” It never crossed my mind to talk to Him when I read the Scripture. I did not think of the written Word leading me into conversation with the living Word; that never crossed my mind. Right there it just became so clear. I began to talk to Him, I mean right then, and I felt His presence.

I don’t know that it will be that way the first time anybody does it, but I just felt the presence of the Lord like for an hour. I was so excited! Again like that, “The hills are alive dah-da-da-da...” I was so excited and filled with anticipation. I said, “God, this is remarkable! Reading the Bible might end up being doable, I mean it might be doable. This is really big news!” Now prayer was not at that level yet, and I did not really realize this was really a beginning of prayer becoming enjoyable.

- 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.

*So the premise is that not enough just to study the Bible for facts about God. We are meant to talk to God when we read the Word. We are meant **to come to Him**; that is the key phrase. He is not talking about just coming to Him for forgiveness, He means “Come and interact with Me in an ongoing way.”*

Our Bible study is meant to create an active dialogue with you and God. The Bible is the conversation material. That was one of my big problems: I did not know what to say. You know, after I went through the, “Thank You God for arms and legs. Thank You I have food while all the people in the world starving. Thank You for this...help me do that,” I thought, “O my, fifty-nine minutes to go.” That is funny now, but that was miserable back then. I did not know what to say.

- 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.

I want to say it again: the Bible is the conversation material for our prayer life. That is what makes prayer enjoyable and what makes prayer easy. The E. M. Bounds quote we started with, “The Word of God is the food.” It is the fuel that makes prayer enjoyable and gives power. Not just power, it makes it doable. It nourishes our prayer life.

- 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.

When He says to “Come to Me,” I will say it again, He is not saying, “Just come to Me and believe Me for forgiveness.” That is involved in coming to Jesus, yes, but He is talking about far more than that right here to the Pharisees. He is saying, “I am the source. I am the fountain. Interacting with Me is the way to life or the presence of God.”

- 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.

Right then that day began my prayer journey, my journey into approaching the Bible switching from a purely study mode to a conversation mode. When my Bible time shifted from a pure study mode to a dialogue where I was talking to Him and dialoguing with Him, it changed my life. I do not mean the next day everything that was hard was now easy. That is not what I mean. I meant all of a sudden Bible study was becoming enjoyable because I was talking to Him. It took me a while to figure out that I was actually praying! I began my journey into what I call pray-reading the Word. I could feel His presence, not all the time, but much, much more than before.

- 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).

I love saying this. I started with this statement and I will say it again. When I look back over forty years the single most significant activity is this. It is the simplest but the most essential in terms of my spiritual life when I look back over forty years. There are ten or fifteen things I would say are important, but this is absolutely number one on the list.

- 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)

Jesus said so much in one verse, John 15:7, so much in one verse. He gave two conditions, and then He gave the promise. Condition number one, “if you abide in Me,” and I like to put the words there “if you talk to Me.” Abiding in Christ is more than talking with Christ, but it begins there, and that is the primary activity. That is not all of abiding—we looked at that in the first semester, taking a whole session on what it means to abide in Christ. If you will talk to Me, “if you will abide in Me”—that is where it begins—“and My Word lives in you,” meaning you interact with Me according to My Word. You cause the Word of God to be part of the conversation with Me, it will become alive in you.

Then the promise, “Ask what you desire, and it will be done.” One of the reasons you can ask anything you want and it is done is because the things you want are changed in the process. When I talk to Him, abide in Him and then His Word grows in me, it changes my desires. It forms my emotions in a different way, and then I actually pray in far greater sensitivity and unity with the Holy Spirit. Jesus literally meant this. You get into that

trajectory, that path of talking to Me and My Word living in you, meaning you are talking to Me about the Word and the Word is growing in you, then it is shifting the way you think and the way you feel. It really will change your prayer life dramatically, and it will change the things you pray about.

This is one of the most powerful verses. Again two conditions: Abide in Me and in My word, and My Word abides in you. The promise—your desires will change is the implication—you will have answered prayer, significant increase of answered prayer.

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*.

*This is so simple. I think of two categories of scripture when I think of the subject of pray-reading the Word. Two broad categories related to this subject: there are **promises** in the Bible you are meant to believe and there are **exhortations** to obey. Now there are more categories of the Bible than those two, but those related to this subject those are the two broad categories: **promises to believe, 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.”

Let’s look at the first category, promises to believe. When you come across a Bible verse that you are supposed to believe—God loves you, God forgives you, God promises to provide for you, God promises to direct your steps and not leave you in aimless wandering. He says, “I will direct you.” Those are promises meant to believe—what do you do when you see one of those promises? I got the choir joining me there. I think it is a delayed response to “my hills are alive” song that I sang earlier!

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.

When I read a promise to believe, I do two things. I encourage you to do two things; it is very, very simple. If you do this, good things will happen in your spiritual life. The first thing is to thank God for that truth, and the second thing is to ask God for more insight on it. You think that is simple enough, and it is so simple anyone can do it, but almost nobody does it. That is a guess, but it is probably an accurate guess.

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.”

⁹*“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.”

For an example I will use one of my favorite verses in the Bible, John 15:9. In John 15:9, there is a promise to believe and an exhortation to obey. So I will use it because it has one of each of the categories. “As the Father loved Me,” Jesus said, “I have loved you.” That is the promise. Here is the exhortation, “Abide in My love.”

So when we read a promise, we pause and we turn it into a declaration of thanksgiving. It is so simple. I will read the verse. It says, “The Father loves Me; I love you.” You pause, and you say, “Thank You.” You pray, “Thank You, Jesus, that You love me in the intensity the Father loves You.” When was the last time you spoke directly to the Lord and said, “Thank You that You love me? Thank You.”

You know He says, “My presence is with you.”

I read that verse and I say, “Thank You, Your presence is with me.” It is a piece of dialogue. It is the material for talking.

He would say, “Do not just underline it and put it on Facebook and tell your friends.”—That is good. I mean you can certainly do that—“Talk to Me about that promise. I am a real person. This is something I have said to you about My heart. Respond to Me.”

Then after I say, “Thank You,” very simply I say, “Show me more. Lord. Show me the intensity of the love You have for me.

If the statement or promise is, “I have forgiven you,” then, “Thank You, Jesus.” You pause, then, “You forgave me, thank You.” Remember, it’s not this, “Thank You that You did this way back when...” It is “Thank You that daily I receive forgiveness. Show me, give me greater insight about how this feels to You and what this means to me. Show me more about this simple truth called ‘You forgive me.’”

It could be provision, “I will provide for you. I will meet your needs.”

“Show me more about what this means and let me see it.”

“I will direct you. I will protect you.” Whatever the promise is. You know every few verses you are going to run into one of those promises and you pause—you do not just underline it or note it—you pause and you talk to the Man who said it or it is said about. His name is Jesus, fully God and fully Man.

C. Category #2: Exhortations to obey

Let’s go to the second category of Bible verses related to this subject, the exhortations to obey. When you read an exhortation to obey, do not just say, “Ugh.” Pause and turn it into a very short little conversation. I mean it can go long, but it does not have to go long. Many, many exhortations in the Bible that we are meant to obey are related to our time, our money, our speech, our attitudes, etc. The list goes on and on.

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.

⁹“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

Let’s go back to the verse that we looked a moment ago, John 15:9. The first part of the verse is a promise to believe: “I love you in the intensity that My Father loves Me.” Then there is an exhortation to obey. Now He says, “I am telling you to do something: abide in the love.” There are several dimensions of this that we are to obey; there are several implications of how we obey “abiding in the love.” One of the meanings of “abide in the love” is to live in it. To abide in it means live, focus on it, and dwell on it. Study this truth out is another way to apply this; search it out. Yet He means more than just search it out. He means to live it out as well.

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.

I will stop and I will read this verse, “abide in My love,” and there are two things I do when I run into an exhortation to obey. I make a simple declaration, “I will do it,” and then I ask God for power to help. It is just that simple.

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.”

So you read that verse, and you read, “As the Father loves Me so I have loved you,” and now we are at the exhortation part, “Abide in My love.”

“Jesus, I set my heart to focus on this subject, this truth. I set my heart to search this thing out.” That is a part of abiding in it: to focus on it, dwell on it, search it out. I stop and I tell Him, “Lord, I am going to set my heart never to move on past this truth. Help me. Let me see it. Give me power to abide in this.”

So I set my heart. I make a sweet resolution to obey in that area. It can be something about bridling your speech. So you read a verse about our speech needs to be under control—there are many, many verses about this. You say, “Lord, I commit...”

I stop and say, “Lord, I set my heart to obey this.”

It is not enough to just think, “Hmm, heavy verse.” That is better than nothing, but that is not connecting yet. “Hmm, heavy verse,” and then you tell somebody, “That is a heavy verse.” Again, that is way better than nothing, but that is not going to connect your heart. You are not going to feel the power of it in any kind of ongoing way.

When you take the verse to Him in prayer, do not complain and do show gratitude. Those are all parts of our speech. Do not speak about other people in a negative way. I mean there is a biblical process to go through, so don’t do it outside of that process. I will read a verse like that and I will say, “Lord, yes, I set my heart. Yes, Lord.” You do not have to be real wordy. I mean He is a lot smarter than you; He gets it all. It is just that pausing, connecting with Him, and actually getting this into the conversation.

The first part of responding to the exhortation to obey is that you commit to do it. Again it is more than, “Hmm.” It is more than, “Ah.” You talk to the Man directly, and you say, “Help me, Holy Spirit, help me. Help me to walk this out. Remind me, motivate me, and empower me in the day to day.” You do not have to spend a long time on it, but a moment or two, like thirty seconds to three minutes on a verse; it does not have to be an hour.

Then you read the next verse, and it is neither a promise nor an exhortation. Maybe it is just a biblical fact. “Then Jesus went to Galilee.” I don’t think you do anything with that. You think, “Good, He went to Galilee, okay.” I mean you can ask the Lord to show you insights about that. There are ways to do that as well. Right now, so you do not lose the simplicity, we are talking about the exhortations to obey and the promises to believe. You pause and take a one or two minutes, a three-minute interchange; it does not have to be three minutes. It is remarkable.

So when it is a promise to believe say, “Thank You” and “Show me more.” When it is an exhortation to obey, “I set my heart, yes. Help me to obey. Motivate me. Remind me. Empower my emotions and let me feel more motivation for this, Lord. Help me to want to want this”—that is a legitimate prayer—“Lord, I want to want to want this more.”

He says, “Good, I will help you. I will help you on everything if you ask Me.”

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).

*Here is a very important exhortation that is so needed today. I mean it is needed all through history, but really needed today in this pornified culture that the world is finding itself being saturated and defiled with. I heard this verse in my youth. I was sixteen years old, I went to a seminar, and some guy taught on Job 31:1. It made a big impact on me. In Job 31:1, Job said, “I made a covenant with my eyes. I will not look on anything that will incite lust in my heart.” Bob Sorge has a most simple but profound book on this, **Covenant of the Eyes**. I highly recommend it.*

I not only read the verse, but I put it on my daily prayer list. Some verses I put on my daily prayer list and others I would just pray them when I ran into it. I would pray that prayer—when I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen and all the years since—especially when I was really needing to lock my heart into this reality. I said, “Lord, I say yes. I set my heart to obey this. I say yes.” Then I would say, “Lord, help me.” Again it does not have to be an hour-long prayer, just a few moments.

It realigns your heart over and over and over. This one verse can radically change your life, or the absence of it can allow your life to be led into great trouble, great trouble. I do not just mean some deep sexual addiction; I mean trouble long before it gets to that point. That is real trouble, but I mean there are a lot of things that defile and quench our spiritual lives and hinder our relationships, that set us on a wrong pathway with other people simply by not obeying this one verse. There are many dimensions of harm that happen by not obeying that verse. There are no super saints, so you cannot obey it just on your own strength, but you talk to Him about it. You say, “Lord, I say yes.” You talk to a Person, a real Person. “Holy Spirit, help me.” That gets to be part of your dialogue and I tell you He will help you. He will help everyone who asks Him to help. Nobody can do any of this stuff without help.

Well, I told you this it is very simple. The exhortation is to obey, you resolve to obey, and you ask for help. The exhortations and promises to believe, you say, “Thank You.” You fill in the blanks of what you are thanking Him for—that particular truth—and say, “Show me more.” It will change your life; that simple little exchange will change your life.

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)

Hosea taught on the value of taking words with us to God when we go to prayer. Look what he says in Hosea 14:2. He says, “Take words with you when you return to the Lord.” He is talking about when you are giving your heart. It does not mean you have to be backslidden before this verse applies to you, but take words with you when you are giving your heart daily. When you are returning your heart in realignment, take words with you when you do it.

“Say to Him,” and he gives three or four categories—you can read the verses a little bit afterwards as well—ask Him for forgiveness, take away my iniquities. When you take words, ask Him to forgive you this day your transgressions. Then ask Him to receive you graciously—these are the words of Hosea—that is the whole realm of the grace of God. Offer the sacrifice of your lips. Express your words of love and trust and commitment, and gratitude, obedience. Offer those words to Him.

Instead of just making a big list to go down, as it strikes your heart when you are reading, you offer it in prayer. I mean I do have a prayer list. I go through the FELLOWSHIP prayers, those ten different prayers in the acronym FELLOWSHIP that we have gone through before. You do not necessarily have a prayer list of all the gratitude and thanksgiving, though you might. I mean I recommend it; if that strikes your heart, go for it. But here just as you read the Bible, every couple of verses, or five or ten verses, you are going to run into an occasion to stop and offer the sacrifice of your lips. In other words the offering—the sacrifice—means the gift. It is a sacrifice because it is the offering of yourself, the gift of your love by saying these words to the Lord.

I have found that when you articulate with very simple phrases—you do not have to be sophisticated, but you articulate your love, you articulate your gratitude, you articulate “I thank You that You said You would provide for me”—that simple articulation of your trust in His leadership, the Spirit will touch you as simple as it is. This is abiding in Christ.

- 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)

John said, “...but the anointing which you have received from Jesus abides in you.” The anointing that was on Him is on you. “You do not need anyone to teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things...” Now John the apostle is not against anointed Bible teachers. They are in the Bible; he was one. He is saying, “You do not need another person to convince you of the truth.” That is what he is saying. The anointing in you will convince you of the truth if you will fellowship with the Spirit, talk to the Spirit.

People you know go to another person and say, “Convince me that is what this means.” It is honest and okay to do that, but John was saying—again, he is not anti-Bible teachers, because apostles, prophets, evangelist,

pastors, and teachers are the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Body of Christ. He is not saying to neglect the teaching ministry but he is saying—to understand that the ability to be convinced is bigger than you having someone to talk you into it and explain it all to you. There is an anointing that is in you that will convince you and teach you these things if you will interact with Him. It is really the convincing and the marking of your heart that John is talking about.

Now what happens is when you pray the Word, you and the Holy Spirit are flowing together. When you pray the Word, when you say the Word back to God—for example, John 15:9 the verse we looked at, “Jesus, You love me in the way the Father loves You. Jesus, thank You that You love me. Show me more.” That is praying the Word. I mean it is that simple—what will happen is that as you are saying things about God loving you, all of a sudden you will know in the same way the intensity of the depths of joy the Father loves you, and you will feel, “Oh, the depths of joy! Oh, I never thought about that.” It will come right out of your mouth; you will just say it accidentally. You will just be elaborating on the truth as you pray it. You will get more insight in the Word in that mode than any other way.

I mean I am an avid student of other teachers in the Body of Christ. I love to receive teaching. I have quite an extensive library that I have developed over forty years. I read books from all facets, all different parts of the Body of Christ from all different centuries. I love the teaching anointing that has been deposited in the Body of Christ through history and today, not just the past ones, but today, a lot of teachers. I love it.

At the end of the day, it is the Holy Spirit—as I am even talking about a new insight—who convinces and marks my heart. I will say things back to the Holy Spirit while I am just doing this prayer-reading type of interaction. I will say things that I never thought that about that verse. I say, “Whoa!” I mean it is the Holy Spirit, but it is what I call “supernaturally natural.”

So I am just talking, and I mean a lot of things I will say to the Lord do not move me. They move the Lord, but they don’t move me. Every now and then I will say something that moves me too. I think, “Whoa, Lord!” I learned this many years ago, I mean forty years ago, so I started bringing a notebook with me to my prayer time. I might only get one or two phrases, or I might get a paragraph or two. I might not get much, but I have the notebook there. Because when I say it to the Lord, it ends up every now and then, but more than just a little bit, I will say it in a way that is brand new to me.

It is the Holy Spirit in you, as you are talking to Him, actually giving you more. I say that He gives you teaching tailor-made to your personality, to your calling, and to your life circumstance. It will be tailored-made, and He will speak to you from your own words actually, while you are talking to Him, and He is inspiring you, and He is teaching you.

I tell you I just don’t like going to a prayer time without a note pad or without some way to capture some phrases. I do it sometimes, but usually I do not because usually I get a phrase or two or three or four and sometimes a lot more. Sometimes I will get into a flow and that passage will just open up, and other times it will not.

I will say something real, something kind of weird, just to get your attention, but it is actually true. I am going to say it in a weird way. My favorite teacher in the Body of Christ is me, and the same should be true of you—you should be your favorite teacher. I am saying that just to get your attention. What I mean is that it is really the Holy Spirit when you are talking to Him with an open Bible and you are writing it down. When the forty years come and go, you will get more insight from your pen or your own journaling than from anyone else in all those forty years, in fifty years, in seventy years. You will have received more from your own words with God than any other person. You will end up being your favorite teacher when it is all said and done because it is not

really you; it is the anointing of the Spirit in a tailored-made way marking your heart according to your personality, according to your calling, your gifting, your life circumstance.

The Holy Spirit really likes you, and He gets you better than you get you. He really understands you better than you do. I have a lot of favorite teachers in the Body of Christ, but when I look back over forty years, I have received more by those little phrases when I add them all up. Of course I am with me more than with anyone else! I mean some of it is the math of being always with yourself.

I am telling you, there is an anointing, there is a Teacher who lives inside of you, and there is a written book right in front of you, and there is the Living Word. Go for it! Do not wait for somebody to lay it all out. I mean, do get teaching. Again I have been teaching for years, and I still study zealously. I study the teachings from other people because I want to learn from the teaching anointing that has been manifest through the grace of God in the Body of Christ.

- 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).

When you are pray-reading the Word, speak softly, just like when I talked about fellowshiping with the Spirit; it is the same idea. When you are talking to the Lord, talk slowly to Him. Meaning, do not preach a sermon, do not kick into a rapid-fire gear. “Thank You, Lord. You love me like the Father loves You.” Pause. I mean do not kick into a rapid-fire mode right there. More like, “Thank You.” Pause. I encourage you speak slowly, speak softly, and do not get your soul so stirred up.

Actually you will receive more by dialing down and doing less. Speak short, little phrases to Him. Again, a lot of times nothing special happens, nothing that gets my attention or marks me, or there is nothing that is new. Enough times over the years I have received something that I am really convinced of the value of this. It is really called abiding in Christ.

- 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.

Take time to journal it and capture the truths. I am talking about a few phrases, a paragraph or two. I am not talking about writing ten pages every time you have a prayer time. If it comes, go for it. I am not against that at all, but I do not want you to feel like you have to do this really intensive thing to do it right. It may be just a few phrases here or there, a few paragraphs here or there. Sometimes it is a lot more, and sometimes it is less.

You will develop the language of your own heart in talking with God. You will develop it in those times and as you are journaling it. You are capturing your own language of your heart because you will say new things that you have never heard before. I mean they are simple little things like, “Lord, You have joy. You delight in loving me.” Just little things like that, but they mark you. Now the reason I am giving just a simple little example like that is so you do not imagine it has to be some profound brand-new thought no one ever thought.

I do not care if it is new or original; I just want a fresh marking on my heart. I do not care how simple it is. “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” I will go with that, if I can feel it. I want to feel the power of it just a little bit. Well, I want to feel it more if I can!

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.

¹⁰***The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. (Prov. 18:10)***

My favorite facet of pray-reading the Word is the descriptions of Jesus. Of course they are in the Gospels. They are in the Epistles, in the letters of Paul and Peter and James. I love Revelation 1-3. There are thirty distinct descriptions about Jesus in Revelation 1-3, thirty that I have identified. You might come up with a different number the way you categorize them. Revelation 1-2 is a gold mine, as is the Bible, the Gospels, the letters of the Apostles/the Epistles; those are the same as well.

I like to focus on the thirty different facets of Jesus, our Magnificent Obsession, in Revelation 1-3. I use an acronym called, ARK, A-R-K, and I pray through these thirty descriptions. I don't limit it to those three chapters. I use ARK in the Psalms. It works for the Psalms really well too.

Remember the book of Revelation is called what? What is the first verse? The revelation of Jesus. The book of Revelation is not mostly His plan for the end times. The book of Revelation is more about the Man behind the plan. It is a revelation of Jesus, not just His plans. His plans are there, but there is a heart behind the plans. There is a splendor and a glory behind the Man who is planning it.

I like the word ARK. I use that because I think of the ark of the covenant, which is where the presence of God dwelt in the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant. I think of Noah's ark, the ark of safety in the flood. I like little acronyms so that when I am a little stuck, they get me started. I have several of them. The FELLOWSHIP, the TRUST, and the ARK, those are the three I use all the time. The TRUST with the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we looked at that, too.

Just by talking to Jesus in this simple little acronym I can relate to and take refuge in His Name. It says here in Proverbs that the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and they are safe. What I mean by safe—not just safe from somebody harming us physically—but your heart is empowered, emboldened, it is resolute to obey, it is confident in His leadership. The name of the Lord makes your heart have safe responses to Him. You create a whole atmosphere in your inner life that is safe; spiritual safety is in it. It is related to engaging with the Lord around His name.

- 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.

The A stands for agreement. The R stands for revelation or insight. K, keep the prophecy because that is a phrase that Jesus said in the book of Revelation; it is mentioned three times actually. Let's look at this a little bit more.

- 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.

Agreement: A. It is the same thing as when we were agreeing with a truth, “Thank You Jesus. I love You. Thank You that You love me.” It is the acknowledgment; it is the same principle as that. We simply agree with who He is according to a verse.

He says, “I am the Faithful Witness.”

We just pause a moment and say, “Thank You, I agree.” I use “Thank You” and “I agree,” synonymously. I say, “Thank You that You are the Faithful Witness. I agree with who You are. You are the One who always spoke the truth no matter what it cost You. Thank You.” I just take a moment and I do the “thank You” or the agreement, which is synonymous.

- 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.

Then I ask Him, “Show me more.” I use the word “revelation” just so the acronym works, but it is, “Show me more, show me more. You are the Faithful Witness. Show me more about who You are as a Faithful Witness.”

- 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)

*Then K., keep the prophecy. Again, several times in the book of Revelation we are told to keep the prophecy, three different times. To keep the prophecy means **to respond to it in a practical way**. Apply it. Apply the implications of the different verses of the book of Revelation. Apply it to your life in a practical way.*

- 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

*When I think of keeping the prophecy, how do you keep it? You **obey** the commands that are implied; you obey it.*

*You **say** it. There are truths to say that are revealed in that book, and it is the whole Bible actually. When you say and take a stand for what the Lord stands for in that book, it is politically incorrect. I mean it is not going to win you a popularity contest if you say it. A lot of people get really silent about those truths. If it is not clear, that is fine to be silent when you are not clear. But some things are just clear and we find, oh no, our temptation is not to say it.*

*Then we **pray** it. We ask the Lord for strength to say it and obey it and walk it out. So when I think of keeping the prophecy, I think obey it, say it, and pray it. I like little things like that because it helps me remember them. If it is more than two or three—I mean that acronym FELLOWSHIP, ten things—man, that took me a while to get that one!*

Let’s go through a few examples of this. The reason I am giving this to you is that this will really help you engage with Jesus, not just in Revelation, but there is just no place more concentrated than Revelation 1-3. It is just pure revelation of Jesus. It is Jesus revealing Jesus; I mean it is remarkable.

*I will give an example. I will just give one example here and you can read the rest. I have a bit more on the website on this subject if you want to read more on it. I have it in the **Growing in Prayer** book as well.*

- 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)*

So the scripture says, “Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the firstborn from the dead.”

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.

So I say, “You are the faithful witness, I agree. I thank You that You are the faithful witness. I thank You, Jesus, You always tell the truth. I trust what You say because You are reliable. You took a stand for truth and it cost you so much to stand for truth. Thank You for truth. You never back down when it was costly.”

- b. **Revelation:** Holy Spirit, give me more insight into Jesus as the faithful witness.

Then I say, “Lord, reveal more. Show me Yourself 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.

Then I commit to it. Now I am going to keep the prophecy. I want to be a faithful witness. I want to speak the truth. I want to speak up for the truth no matter what it cost. I want to be an extension of that dimension of the grace of God of being a witness of the truth regardless how unpopular it is. That is a practical way to pray that verse.

2. Jesus as the firstborn from the dead

The next example, we will end with this. “You are the firstborn from the dead.” Now being the firstborn from the dead, firstborn means He is in the preeminent position. The firstborn means the heir, the preeminent one. When it says He is the firstborn among the dead, it means He is the preeminent one in the whole realm of the resurrection of all who are raised from dead and everything related to the resurrection. He is the source. He is the Chief. He was the first Man to be raised from the dead with a resurrected body. He is predominant over the whole realm of the spirit in the resurrection. That is what that verse means. I mean it is a big, big statement.

- 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.

I like to pause and say, “Thank You, You are the firstborn. You are the preeminent one over the realm of the resurrection.” There are so many implications to this that I do not want to go into right now. “You are supreme over everything, even death itself.” I like to stop and agree and thank Him for that. I love the feeling of talking to Him, thanking Him related to these truths.

- 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.

Then I say, “Show me more.”

- 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.

I want to respond to it practically in my life. “I want to serve You as the preeminent one. You are the firstborn. You are the preeminent one, not me. My ministry is to make You known, not to make me known.”

*I mean I am happy to use my story to encourage other people to connect to Him, but I do not want to tell my story so people connect to me. I want to tell my story so people think, “Well, if he can, I can. I mean I **know** I can if he can.” That is why you tell your story.*

I say, “Lord. You are the firstborn. I want to lead people to You, Your preeminence...” There are many ways to apply it.

- 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).

Amen. Again this is the most simple truth. I do not know of a truth more essential to your spiritual life. We are going to take just about four or five minutes— put the timer on—we will take five and I would like you to stand and for everybody to participate in this. Get in groups of three to five and just say one point that you want to do different or you are challenged by and why. Just take forty-five seconds a piece.