

Spiritual Exercises for Adventists

“I APPEAL TO YOU, MY FELLOW-LABORERS, TO MEDITATE UPON THE SACRED TRUTHS IMPARTED UNTO YOU. THE HEAVENLY MASTER HAS ENTRUSTED YOU WITH THE MINE OF TRUTH, AND YOU ARE TO WORK OUT ITS TREASURES, TO DISPLAY ITS GEMS, AND UNVEIL ITS ATTRACTIONS, NOT MERELY WHEN GIVING A DISCOURSE, BUT IN YOUR DAILY LIFE YOU ARE TO SHOW THE CONSTRAINING, TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE TRUTH. EVERY FACULTY AND POWER OF OUR NATURE MUST RECEIVE THE IMPRINT OF CHRIST’S SIGNATURE. WE MUST BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE. BY BEHOLDING, WE BECOME CHANGED INTO HIS IMAGE.”

Advent Review and Sabbath Herald
January 21, 1890

Chapter 13

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John 17:21

PRIESTS in every church have a daily routine of prayers and time with God, and maybe this is the best time to be reminded that we absolutely have to do the same thing because we are also priests. Did you know that? The apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 that “we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...” And these words should have their effect upon us.

If we accept our position as a Christian, then we need to acknowledge our position as priests on this earth.

There are so many reasons why we should spend time in study of the Bible and prayer, that many books have been written about it, but this one has specific counsel and in this chapter I will attempt to help you put it into practice.

People attempt to jump over the basic foundation of the Christian life, the daily “Spiritual Exercises” and then wonder why their relationship with God is unhealthy. We are told that,

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“The rules of life that the Lord has given will make men pure and happy and holy. Those only who obey these rules can hear from the lips of Christ the words, ‘come up higher.’ ” ⁽¹⁾

People today fail to perform Spiritual Exercises and then never hear the invitation to “come higher.” They remain stuck in a place where they feel satisfied, and yet they know the Holy Spirit is calling them upward.

“The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this chapter every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christ-like love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless.” ⁽²⁾

1 Cor. 13: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a

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child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

We are also advised in the book *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* on page 98 that we should read Psalm 105 & 106 on a weekly basis.

When we spend time alone the “mind must be restrained, and not allowed to wander. It should be trained to dwell upon the Scriptures, and upon noble, elevating themes. Portions of Scripture, even whole chapters, may be committed to memory, to be repeated when Satan comes in with his temptations. The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is a profitable one for this purpose. Wall the soul in with the restrictions and instructions given by inspiration of the Spirit of God. When Satan would lead the mind to dwell upon earthly and sensual things, he is most effectually resisted with ‘It is written.’”⁽³⁾

Remember— “Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden him; you cannot weary him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of his children.”⁽⁴⁾

Schedule

So, what should we do? We have to start somewhere. I can make suggestions, but this is a personal thing. Some of us can't

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get going in the morning, while others are up bright and early. Each of us is different.

I could give a lecture at this point about the dangers of stimulants like coffee and tea, but it's unnecessary, because users will automatically begin heeding the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy when they begin partaking of the divine nature through Spiritual Exercise. So, it's not our job to monitor the progress of others as though we're policemen. It is not our position to examine the life of our family, and make judgments. If we want to make a difference, then we should encourage them to follow this path of Spiritual Exercise, then the Holy Spirit will do all the pleading that's necessary. We can live with our spiritual family in peace and a relationship without stress. Doesn't that sound good?

But getting back to our main subject, we need to organize our time and make provision for these exercises.

We have many options as we might choose to have large chunks of time set aside or we might choose to have several smaller segments of time throughout the day. This is a personal choice.

Keep in mind that our prayers to God throughout the day are a constant. Our minds should be drawn to Him regularly—even if we have a full-time job and a busy career.

However, there should be a routine that is followed each day and here's a suggestion.

1. Read 1 Corinthians chapter 13. This will set the tone for what follows. Reading the Bible IS prayer as we meditate upon the words. This is not a quick read, but a read that is slow and

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deliberate. We must give the Holy Spirit time to impress upon our minds the emphasis we need for this new day.

2. Pray. This is a personal prayer and one that can take as much time as is needed. Beginning with praise, and moving into any other topic of our choosing, this prayer is the main component of our exercise. The Lord's prayer can be included to clear the palette, and the 23rd Psalm or other scripture can serve the same purpose as we take our time and cover the topics and review our prayer list with God.

3. Read Scripture & Meditate. This might be a daily reading program where certain texts are covered each day, or it might be random. The point is that we need to open the Word and let it speak to us. Then we should pause periodically and meditate on what we have read; take your time.

Let me remind you that "By beholding we become changed, and as we meditate upon the perfections of our divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of his purity. There will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to be made like Him whom we adore. The more our thoughts are upon Christ, the more we shall speak of him to others, and represent him to the world." ⁽⁵⁾

Studying the Bible without taking time to meditate is truncating the process. This cannot or should not be hurried, and a portion of our study should always include the life of Jesus.

4. Remember to ask God what is His will for you on this new day. It's important to always be prepared to receive instruction from the Holy Spirit. Without this step, we could wither and die on the vine. We must drink nourishment from the vine; we must position ourselves for growth.

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Let me give you a hint as to what will happen as we grow. We will sense our need to read more of the counsel that we have been given. We will read not only the Bible, but also the *Testimonies for the Church*—a set of nine books that are full of advice and nourishment. We will want to read the other writings of Mrs. White because it is of interest to us. It will gently guide you to Jesus Christ on each and every page.

This is something that has to be desired, it can't be pushed onto someone.

As we perform our Spiritual Exercises our attitudes will change and we will desire improvement and desire to know more about our mission and how it's best accomplished. Our zeal for souls will grow, and we will obtain the power of God as we move forward.

So, decide for yourself how to proceed; make your own schedule and pray over it, and struggle, if necessary, to get it going. Remember that any new change like this needs about three weeks before our brains adjust to it.

Also remember that “Religion must be made the great business of life. Everything else should be held subordinate to this.”⁽⁵⁾

Mrs. White even goes so far as to caution us that there is a place in our lives reserved for the Lord, where some parents have placed their children. Nothing—I repeat—nothing can be allowed to take the special place of God in our lives.

Remember the words of Jesus: “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:37.

Patience will be worth it as you initiate this new routine in your personal life.

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Maybe you're thinking that this plan looks attractive, but you still don't know where to begin. You've been told so many times by so many people that all you need to do is give your heart to Jesus and He'll take it from there. And now this counsel is different, so maybe it's wrong.

Others may agree, but I'm not convinced because so many of us are "luke-warm" Christians. We spend so little time with God, that we have no power and little influence for good. So, I think there's more. We need to force ourselves, if necessary, to spend time with God each day. "Giving your heart" requires time with Him. It's the only legalistic thing ever required, and it doesn't matter how good or how bad we are. "It is a mistake to think that you must come to repentance before you can come to Jesus. Come to Christ just as you are, and contemplate His love until your hard heart is broken."⁽⁷⁾ This is the clarion call for us to "just come to Him."

Having described how easy it is, we must also remember to be genuine with God.

"The reason why many find the Christian life so deplorably hard...is they try to attach themselves to Christ without first detaching themselves from these cherished idols."⁽⁸⁾

We come to Jesus as we are and we make a commitment to give up our cherished idols. We may falter and frequently fail, but our overall determination gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. Progress might be slow, but it will ensue.

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When we force ourselves to spend time with Jesus doing our Spiritual Exercises then we'll begin to change. Self-imposed force will no longer be necessary because the time with Him will become sweet and pleasurable and "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in his will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." ⁽⁹⁾

This is a very real submission; not just momentary, but one that involves significant time with Jesus.

So, "Putting it all together" is basically making sure that we spend time with God each and every day, making sure, very sure, that nothing interferes. This is our most important work, and it can be the most enjoyable part of every day.

For support and encouragement feel free to go to MySpiritualExercise.com for daily messages and where you can post your comments.

REFERENCES

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- 4 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 8, 1904.
- 5 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 12, 1888.
- 6 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 15, 1887.
- 7 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 3, 1901.
- 8 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 13, 1887
- 9 *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 312.