

Preparation for Life Work

by George Kulp

A successful Christian life requires an insatiable appetite for God's Word, habitual devotion, and a commitment to mental cultivation and education.

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 11:30, Matthew 5:16, John 5:39, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 4:8, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Biblical Devotion"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the transformation of John Smith's life after encountering God's favor, leading to a deep love for the Word of God, habitual devotion, concern for sinners, and a commitment to mental cultivation. Smith's insatiable appetite for the Scriptures, his extensive knowledge of the Bible, and his dedication to prayer and spiritual growth serve as examples of a life fully surrendered to God's will and guidance.

Transcript

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

"Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of Me."

John Smith was faithful to his opportunities. He was a new creature -- old things had passed away -- old associations and places knew him no more. He had an appetite for the things of God, and a strong attachment for the house of God, and the means of grace. He "loved much," having been "forgiven much."

One of the first and most striking evidences of the Divine change which had taken place in his heart, was an insatiable appetite for the Word of God. His long-neglected Bible was now resorted to, as a source of the highest delight. On the day after he obtained the evidence of the favor of God, he read about thirty chapters. He kept the sacred volume upon the counter of the shop in which he was employed, and at every opportunity flew to it with the most ardent desire and relish. He naturally possessed a very quick and retentive memory, and at this time he learned several of the New Testament epistles. The practice of committing to memory large portions of the Scriptures he continued in after years, and found it productive of great comfort and advantage. His earnest love of God's book remained with him during the whole of his life, and his acquaintance with it was remarkably extensive and perfect.

He also became distinguished for his habitual devotion. This was in his case peculiarly necessary. When his former sensualizing and degrading course of life is considered, and the steadfast alienation of his mind from God, as well as the natural strength of his passions, it is not too much to affirm that he required an extraordinary measure of inward religion. Persons of constitutional equanimity, and generally moral conduct, cannot calculate on the temptations and difficulties which await a babe in Christ of the character of John Smith. The measure of grace which suffices to maintain them in a regular course of consistent, and it may be even eminent, goodness, would have been totally inadequate to a successful encounter with the obstacles which crowded his path. The constant sense of his peril appears to have been exceedingly vivid on his mind. He lived, therefore, in jealous watchfulness, and spent a large portion of his leisure hours in intercourse with Heaven. In retired fields, in woods, and other places of concealment, he was accustomed to wrestle with God, till he was copiously baptized by the Spirit. His very intimate friend, the Rev. William Henry Clarkson, states, that "one day, soon after his conversion, being under temptation, he retired into a cavern where he continued for a considerable time in prayer, till he felt such an overshadowing of the Divine presence as overwhelmed him, and he has been heard to say "that had he not often had such visits from the Lord, he never should have been able to persevere in the Christian warfare."

Another of the qualities which distinguished his subsequent career and now began to manifest itself, was his concern for the condition of sinners. He took every opportunity of visiting and conversing with his former associates on their spiritual welfare. He detailed what God had done for him, he reproved their vices, and entreated them to abandon their sins, assuring them of the readiness of the Savior to receive them. His course was not without success, and he had the happiness of seeing two of his former companions saved and uniting with the church, the first fruits of a mighty harvest.

Having become sensible of the value of mental cultivation, and of his responsibility for the exercise of his intellectual powers, he referred with great regret to the time which had been so entirely lost to improvement of this kind. He began religiously to cultivate his mind as a duty, and as he did this his piety increased, and his mental improvement. Friends interested in him noticing this, made arrangements to send him to school, and accordingly, in May, 1813, he was placed under the care of Mr. James Sigston, of Leeds, being now twenty years of age.

Ignorance and mental imbecility are no auxiliaries to Christianity, though sometimes associated with it. The religion of the New Testament, though it has frequently found a race of men in a state of intellectual prostration, has never left them so. The world at large is indebted to religion for all that exalts man as a thinking being, more than to all other causes combined. When the requisite and promised influence of the Holy Spirit accompanies the lawful use of study, Christianity assumes a higher and more influential character, and those who thus entrust their talents to the Master's use, become vessels of honor to His glory. Mr. Smith applied himself vigorously to his studies that he might be more useful. He attained a perfect acquaintance with his own language, and a gentleman of classical education, who enjoyed his intimacy at a subsequent period, remarked, that of all men he had even known, Mr. Smith possessed the most accurate and extensive syntactical knowledge. He had also a high regard and relish for the best English authors, both in theology and general literature. His taste for poetry was chaste and classical, and he had a feeling of its beauties far superior to that of many more perfectly cultivated minds. He so diligently prosecuted his studies that he was soon deemed qualified to act occasionally as a teacher in the school. In 1814 he became a regular assistant, and then came his call to the ministry.

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