

The Secret to Happy Devotions

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of daily devotions, focusing on the practices of thanksgiving, singing, praise, and worship in the morning and evening. It highlights the need to approach God with gratitude, express adoration through singing, set a value on God through praise, and demonstrate utter devotion and submission in worship. The speaker encourages a personal, intimate connection with God through these acts of devotion, leading to a joyful and fulfilling Christian life.

Scripture: Psalms 59:16, Psalms 113:3, Psalms 100:4, Psalms 150:6, Job 1:20, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:17, Psalms 68:25, Psalms 149:5, Psalms 57:8, Psalms 92:1, Psalms 113:3, Psalms 100:4, Psalms 150:6, Job 1:20, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:17, Psalms 68:25, Psalms 149:5, Psalms 57:8, Psalms 92:1

Topics: "Daily Devotions", "Intimacy with God"

Description

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Transcript

I want you to turn with me tonight to Psalm 59 and verse 16. A few of the ladies, it wasn't the men, it was the ladies, were wondering what my third message was. If the first was on going to the Word of God in the morning and the second was on going to prayer in the morning, these ladies were desiring to get it out of me, what is the third thing? And they guessed several things and I just stayed quiet or said no.

But we're coming to the third thing here, so it's a series of three messages. But when I spend time in scriptures like this, something always dangerous begins to happen because as I meditate in the scripture and I'm preparing, it's a bit like bread dough, it just keeps growing and growing. And I go, man, in two weeks time when I come back, I could have seven more lessons to add to this.

But as best as I know this part three and the last part of this, we've been looking at daily devotions. I want to help you, encourage you, challenge you. I hope the Spirit of God convicts you, maybe amidst it the devil will condemn you.

All of those things can be going on at the same time. But I really do want to help you and exhort you at the beginning of this year. If you've departed from the altar of prayer, I want to help get you back there.

If you've been neglecting reading the Bible in the morning, I want to get you back there and I want us together. I've been through a horrendous time and it's very easy to be so all over the place that you lose some of this devotion. Not that you desire to, it's just when your emotions, your mind, your circumstances are such, all of this comes under great attack.

Yet I know something, I've got a secret tonight that these things, morning devotion, morning time in the Bible, morning time praying is the secret to the Christian life. It is the backbone of the Christian life. And so we come to part three here tonight and I'll slowly open up and reveal to you what it is tonight.

But this is my title. I didn't have a title. I worked on this, put everything together, still didn't have a title.

It didn't fit, wouldn't look good on a cover of a video. And I just went, what is the title? And suddenly it hit me and there's my title tonight. And it doesn't reveal what the message is.

So this is that the secret to happy devotions, the secret to happy devotions. And I pray because I don't want prayer and the word of God to become a burden, a duty that kills you, a weight that encumbers you. I actually just want to make sure in this third part, I want you to find a joy in it and to know that it's a joy.

Reading from this Psalm 59 verse 16, Psalm 59 and verse 16, but I will sing of thy power. Yay. I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning for thou has been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.

Let's pray. Father, we love you. We bless you.

Lord God, we don't want to do things merely out of ritual or duty or obligations or guilt or condemnation or a thousand other things. But Lord God, we want to find the joy of the Lord first thing in the morning before we see others, before we go to work, before we embark on everything with family and friends. Lord God, that we would find a joy in the presence of the Lord.

Lord God, we know, oh God, that that's the only thing that truly matters in this life. It's not ministry. It's not what men think of us.

But oh God, that we find a resting place for our soul in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We love you. Lord God, I thank you tonight that you saved me.

I thank you tonight that you've forgiven me. I thank you tonight that you blotted out my transgressions. I thank you, oh God, that you've written my name in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I thank you, oh God, that you put your Holy Spirit within me. I thank you, oh God, that you're coming back for me again. Nor good worthy is the lamb this morning.

We want to offer unto you, even at the end of this day, in this Bible study, praise and thanksgiving and adoration, oh God. We want our eyes to be focused upon you in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

And so I'm coming to this third, maybe final part here this morning, here tonight, and my message, the secret to happy devotions. Let me read from George Muller. You see, I've learned a lot from men like Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Watchman Nee, many other men and women.

I have learned from their testimony, from their exhortations, from their example, how to enjoy this time with the Lord. I'm so glad for men like George Muller that taught me about prayer, waiting upon God, even about finance. I learned an awful lot from George Muller.

So I pray this will help you before we go into the scriptures here tonight. This is George Muller, the great man of faith, great man of prayer. But listen to what he says.

This is one of the great men of church history. This is one of the great men of his generation. This is one of the great men of faith and in prayer across our world.

And I want you to listen very carefully. George Muller said, it has recently pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now while preparing the fifth edition of this book, more than 14 years have since passed. The point is this, and listen carefully.

I saw more clearly than ever that the first and great and primary business to which I ought to attend every single day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. Did you just hear what I said? Very few Christians make this the priority, but this great man of God did. The first thing to be concerned about was not much how I might serve the Lord, 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 the truth and seek to see men converted to Christ. I might seek to benefit other Christians. I might seek to relieve the distressed or the poor.

All of these things are very good. I might another way seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world. And yet, and yet, not being happy in the Lord and not being nourished and strengthened in the inner man day by day, all this, all these things I've mentioned might be attended to in a wrong spirit.

Before this time, my practice had been at least for 10 years previously as a habitual thing to give myself to prayer. You see, tonight you might say, that's the number one, give myself to prayer. He said, but I've done that for 10 years.

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 word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed, and that thus, do you see what he's saying? The first thing was in prayer. He learned, no, give yourself to the word before prayer. And thus by means of the word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into the 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 it as it were into every verse to get a blessing out of it, not for the sake of public ministry of the word, not for the sake of preaching to others, but so that I might meditate upon it and obtain food for my soul. The results 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.

See, you struggle with prayer. Many struggle with prayer. Here is an answer to help you.

So it naturally happened. Spending time in the word led me naturally into prayer. But to meditation it turned almost immediately, more or less, into prayer.

When then I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication or have given thanks, I go on to the next words of the next verse, turning all as I go on into prayer for myself or for others as the word of God 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, intercession mingled with my meditation on the word of God and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and so that by breakfast time, with very rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful, if not a happy state of heart.

Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate with me that which either very soon after or at a later time I have found to become food for others. Though it was not for the sake of public ministry that I did this, but it naturally led there without me even trying. 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 almost all of 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 revival, 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 an hour or even an hour on my knees before being conscious to myself of having derived any comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.

And often after having suffered much from wandering of the mind for the first ten minutes or quarter of an hour or half an hour, I only then began to really 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 about the things that he has already brought before me from his precious word. It often astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point.

In no book did I ever read about it. No public minister ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter.

And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain as day as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man. Now prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time, in any other formal matter, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength and godly desire. And so he goes on.

There's more I could read, but let me just jump against something else he wrote. Above all things, see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. It is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all other things to have your souls truly happy in God himself.

But in what way shall we attain to this settled happiness of soul? How shall we learn to enjoy God? This foreign language to a lot of Christians. How obtain such an all-sufficient, soul-satisfying portion in him that shall enable us to let go the things of this world as vain and worthless in comparison? I answer, this happiness is to be obtained through the study of the holy scriptures. God has therein revealed himself unto us in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Devoted to meditation of the scripture first thing in the morning is a key. Our soul should feed upon the word. We should read it, not for others, but for ourselves.

All the promises, the encouragements, the warnings, the exhortations, the rebukes should be taken home to our own bosoms. Especially let us remember not to neglect any portion of the Bible. It should be read regularly through entirely.

To read favorite portions of scripture to the exclusion of other parts is a habit to be avoided. And he continues. I want to continue here with this thought, the secret to happy devotions.

Here's a man, George Muller, who learned there is a happiness, a joy to be found in reading the Bible and in prayer. He found enjoyment in it, how to enjoy his God. Can you see how reading the Bible could become a duty that kills you? Our prayer, the obligation, not being able to attain, and your feeling, I ought to do these two things, and yet there's no joy, no peace, no satisfaction.

And that's a great danger. I want to make you happy Christians, rejoicing, thankful, glad, gaining benefit from what I'm telling you. And so that's why I'm preaching this message here tonight, the secret to happy devotions.

It says in 1 Peter 2, verse 5, Peter speaking of the church, real Christians, ye also as lively stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. Did you hear that? He says that every single Christian in the New Testament is a priest. You, the church, are a priesthood.

What the priesthood was in the Old Testament, if you select a individual tribe in Israel, now he says every real Christian has become a real priest. If you're born again of the Spirit of God, you have been made a priest unto God. Then he goes further.

What is this holy priesthood meant to do? To offer up spiritual sacrifices. Did you bring your sacrifice tonight? I hope so. I really hope so.

You are a priest sitting here. Did you think I was the priest? Did you come here thinking I'm to do all the ministry? Are you simply going to sit there watching, listening, learning, and think that I'm the one to do all the ministry and you're just learning? Oh no, we are the priesthood, not me, not those who preach and who worship. It is the entire church.

You are the priesthood. You are the minister every time we gather. You're to bring sacrifices of praise unto God, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Then a few verses later in verse 9, listen to what Peter says again. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which have obtained mercy, which did not have mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Revelation 5 and 10 says this, and God has made us unto our God kings and priests that we shall reign on the earth.

Do you know God's plan in the Old Testament was always to have an entire kingdom of priests. That's what the Bible says. Not a tribe, not a few individuals, not someone standing between you and God.

But God's plan was always to raise up the people of God that all of you would be spiritual priests. All of you would stand between men and God acting as a priesthood. You are so blemished in this city thinking

of the Catholic priest.

But I assure you amongst born again Christians, you also are in danger where you sit back and wait for someone to minister unto you. Rise up saints of God, you have a ministry that you have yet to fulfill. And you know where it begins? It begins in your morning devotion time.

So in the New Testament, we see there is a look back to the Old Testament, what the priest was in the Old Testament, you are to be in the New Testament. All his sacrifices in the Old Testament are a picture for you to learn from. You offer spiritual sacrifices.

They offered physical sacrifices. They were a physical priesthood. You are a spiritual priesthood and that's what the born again experience is.

Let me lay some of this out. And this is my first point. Morning and evening sacrifices.

You'll find all through the Old Testament with the priesthood, all of them were given over to a morning and an evening sacrifice. Listen to what it says in Exodus 29 verse 38. Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar.

All of them ministered at the altar. The altar of sacrifice, the altar of prayer, the altar of God. All of the priests, their life revolved around the altar.

They were given to ministry at the altar. And so he says, thou shalt offer upon the altar, true lambs of the first year, day by day, continually, every single day of their lives. They are to be at that altar offering sacrifices every single day.

The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning, the other lamb thou shalt offer at the evening. Do you see what's happening here? First thing in the morning, you offer that first lamb. Last thing at night, you offer that second lamb.

Morning and evening, every single day. You are a priesthood. What they done physically, you're to do spiritually.

All of the lessons of the Old Testament are for you, the church. You're to learn what a priesthood is. You are a priest tonight if you're washed by the blood of the lamb.

We as a church are a royal priesthood under the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you are going to understand what that means, you need to go into the Old Testament. You need to begin to understand the morning and the evening sacrifice.

Listen, it goes further. The one lamb in the morning, the other in the evening. Then it says a few verses later This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord where I meet with you and I speak to you there.

So you're to keep this going perpetually in every generation. You older generation are to pass it over to a younger generation and every generation is to keep doing this morning and evening, morning and evening, every single day of every single year of every single generation. There is to be a royal priesthood that keep the whole thing alive every morning.

Do you see the importance of just daily devotion? If you lose the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice on a daily basis, you lose the whole impact on generations. Thank God that George Muller passed it on to the following generation. That morning devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ is a wonderful thing.

It goes on to say 1 Chronicles Well, it says where we just read there at the door. In other words, you don't come in to the house of God without this being at the door. It says in 1 Chronicles 23 and 30.

Concerning that priesthood, stand every morning and listen to this. What are you going to do? To thank and praise the Lord and likewise at evening. Now we're getting to what I'm saying here.

I've talked the first week about the Word of God, the second week about prayer. Do you know what I'm coming to now? I'm actually coming to thanksgiving, praise and singing. That is the secret to joy in your morning devotions.

Praise unto God, thanksgiving unto God, and we're going to break this down a bit. But I want you to see the priests. Every morning, every evening, they began to offer up thanks and praise and adoration unto God.

This is what they've done continually. They stood before the Lord each morning and began to praise the Lord. The priesthood of the Old Testament, listen to me tonight.

The priesthood in the Old Testament, every single morning, they didn't wait for a church service on Wednesday night or Sunday morning worship for 30 minutes, and I praise God this week. Every single morning, the priesthood, they got up, stood before the Lord, and they began to praise Him. They began to thank Him.

They began to bring spiritual offerings of their lips unto the Lord. What a dynamic thing that we have here. It says in Leviticus 6 verse 12, and the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it.

It shall not be put out, and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning. Do you see something here? There is a fire burning in God's house. The priesthood are to keep the fire burning.

You know what it says? Put wood on the fire every single morning. You're to make sure the fire keeps burning, but if you don't bring anything to the fire, the fire goes out. If you just stare at the fire and go, well, let's see what God does, you'll be in trouble.

Bring wood to the fire every single morning. Stoke the fire, keep the fire, watch the fire. It's the job of the royal priesthood.

This is a vital thing, an important thing. You want the fire burning in God's house, you're going to have to watch over your morning devotions. You're going to have to rise up every morning to begin to thank God and to praise God.

You see, God's got a plan to keep fire burning in His house. Have you lost your fire? Has your fire gone out? I want to tell you, you were not thanking and praising God first thing in the morning. If you'd been praising Him, thanking Him, keeping your heart happy in the Lord, your fire wouldn't be out.

It's utterly impossible. Look tonight as we come in. You know, as we got in the car, 30-minute drive in with Brother Joshua, we put that old CD on, began to sing and praise God.

We're getting caught up in the Lord. Boy, nobody needs to get us ready when we walk in this door. Then we all begin singing here as Brother Joseph leads us.

We begin to praise and thank and get happy in our souls. Now you're all smiling at me. Praise God.

I thought last week you were frowning at me. Now you're smiling at me. But do you know what? There is a fire burning.

There is a happy condition of the soul that helps to keep the fire burning. It says in Ezra chapter 3 verse 3. I haven't even got to my points really. This is just an introduction.

Ezra chapter 3 verse 3. And they set the altar upon his base, for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. See, the altar had been lost. When Ezra came back, he began preaching the Word of God again.

Says, get that altar back in place. Let's get the priesthood back in place. Let's get the fire burning again.

See, that's what the Word of God does. It brings you right back. Have you lost your altar? Get back to your altar again.

Begin to light the fire again. Set that priesthood up to begin to stoke it and to watch over it. And so it says, and they offered burnt offerings thereupon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings.

You want to understand what sacrifice and burnt offerings is spiritually? Read this. And it says, offerings morning and evening. Do you see that? How did they do it when they're restoring everything back? Morning and evening.

This is the morning and evening sacrifice. Then in Ezra chapter 3 verse 11, listen to what they said. What did they do there? And they sang together by course, praising and giving thanks unto the Lord.

Why? Because he is good. For his mercy endureth towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

And so you see them at this morning and evening sacrifice. They thank God. They praise God.

They worship God. They shouted. They used their voices.

Here tonight, I want you to hear this very carefully, that singing, thanking God and praising God are intertwined in scripture, in the Psalms and elsewhere. It's very hard to separate these things. You see, I believe prayer and the word of God is the most vital, not worship, not praise.

Praise is not the most vital thing. But if you're not careful at stoking the fire, your time in the word of God will get very dry and dead. Your time of prayer will wear you out.

But I want to help you. And I want to present this amidst thanksgiving, praise, adoration and worship. You'll be kept alive in this morning devotion.

It says in Psalm 92 verse one, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto thy name. Oh most to show forth thy loving kindness. Notice this in the morning, in the morning and thy faithfulness every night.

And so you see the morning and evening sacrifice. You need to thank God. You need to praise God.

You ought to be doing this daily. Not only saying, I'm going to sit and read the Bible or I'm going to pray about the things I need. You need to build into your Christian life.

I'm going to thank him. But what does that really mean? What does it mean to thank God? I'm going to praise him. What does that mean? I'm going to sing unto him.

You think you know what that means. I'm going to worship him. Do you really know what that means? Most don't, assuredly.

But it says here upon an instrument of 10 strings and upon the psaltery and upon the harp and with the solemn sound, I'm going to praise God. Let me just begin to explain these things and show you for your morning devotion to keep alive in God. The first thing I want you to see here, I know we've already dealt with morning and evening sacrifice, but listen, thanksgiving.

Every single morning when you sit down to read the word of God, as you read the word of God, make sure you mix it with thanksgiving. What is thanksgiving? You should never pray without thanksgiving. I would dare to say, don't even ask for anything unless you begin with thanking God for certain things.

Never come asking for things immediately. Never start your day by saying, there's this, there's this, there's this, there's this. I assure you, you will die in the midst of that.

Begin with thanksgiving. What is thanksgiving? Thanksgiving isn't asking for things. You understand that.

You can't bring thanks unto God. Imagine if you're coming and saying, brother Keith, I just want to thank you for something and I want this and I want that and I want you to do this and I'd like you to give me this. I'm going to hold on.

I thought you were coming to thank me. Oh yes, I am. I'm very thankful and I want you to give me this.

I'll be very thankful when you give me all these things. You've got things back to front before you ask for anything. You see, most misunderstand prayer.

It is not just request. That isn't just what prayer is. Prayer should always begin with thanksgiving.

Real prayer is communion, not asking. I'm going to ask for all the souls to be saved. You know nothing about prayer then.

If you think that's all prayer is, if that's all that makes up your prayer life, you will be an unhappy, barren person who's not in fellowship with God. They could be all good things. Lord, revive the church.

Lord, save souls. Lord, I need this. That is not how you approach God in the mornings.

You come for communion, for fellowship. You're coming to a friend in relationship that is not religious, mechanical. It's not just an obligation.

No one had to beg me to talk to Candice. For 16 years, one of my chief delights was to sit with her and to talk with her. She never had to beg me.

She never made an appointment. She never said, do you think this week we can sit down and chat sometime? I assure you, it was my chief desire. I actually had to put a priority on things.

But some people think prayer is a duty that binds them. It's a burdensome task. It's too hard for them.

An effort to talk to God. That's because you misunderstand what prayer is. You think prayer is merely a list of requests and that will wear you out.

I promise you, you've got to get alone with God. You've got to enjoy God. You've got to get happy in God.

You've got to enter into the presence of God. You've got to begin thanking him. And so there's the first great thing, I believe, of the morning sacrifice.

This thing of approaching God with thanksgiving. It says in Philippians 4 and 6, New Testament to the church. Be careful.

Don't be worried about anything. Don't be burdened on. Don't be there sad and worried and broken with all of these things.

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Do you realize you ought to equal out? Whatever the request is, you ought to be giving thanks. You never make requests without thanksgiving.

It's like the salt on an egg. Don't take the egg unless you have a bit of salt there. So never make a request of God unless you've come with thanksgiving.

What's thanksgiving? Thank you for saving me. Thank you for forgiving my sins. Thank you for having mercy upon me.

Thank you that you'll listen to me. Thank you that you're a gracious God to me. You know where the focus immediately becomes? All about him.

You're simply coming saying, you've already done these things. What do you thank someone for? What they're going to do or what they have done? It's normal to come and say, thank you for what has already been accomplished, already in your life, already in the past. Thank you for answering that prayer.

Thank you for answering that prayer. Thank you for providing. Thank you for keeping me.

You haven't even asked them to do it for the day yet. You're saying, thank you for what you have already done. If you're not thankful, why would God give you more? I can assure you if you're not thankful to me, somewhere along the line, you're going to find something's lost along the way.

Says in Colossians 3:17, and whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him, by Christ. Everything you do, you're to give thanks. This should be in your morning.

This should be in your evening. This should be throughout your day. You shouldn't do anything without giving thanks to God.

Are you going out the door giving thanks that you had a house to come out of? Are you getting into the car? Thank you, Lord, I've got a car. Thank you, Lord, that you'll keep me safe on this road. What are you

doing? Fill your life with thanksgiving.

Can you realize why so many of you are sad, depressed, downcast? I assure you, I was downcast yesterday and the day before, but I'm not. I start getting into that. I can't help but rejoice in him.

It makes my soul happy. It makes me to be glad and to shout aloud. I can't help it when I begin getting into this.

It makes me glad when I begin to thank him and praise him. Colossians 4 and verse 2, continuing prayer and watching the same with thanksgiving. Do you see you're not to have a prayer time in the morning without thanksgiving? You must not.

It's the Bible's teaching. If you have a prayer time and you're not emphasizing, thank him. Thank him.

Acknowledge what he has done. Remember what he has done. Begin to list out, thank you for this.

Thank you for that. Thank you for this. You saved a wretch like me from an eternal hell.

I could have been in hell tonight. I could have been a drunkard tonight. My mind could be destroyed tonight.

I could be an atheist tonight. Thank you God for your grace and your mercy. You want to stay happy in this place of prayer, you better introduce thanksgiving.

Prayer should start with thanksgiving, which is a vital part of prayer. It turns your eyes away from your own situations, your problems, your trials, your temptations, and places your eyes firmly upon the wonderful, gracious, merciful, loving, and almighty God that we call our heavenly father. To merely meet with God with a list of requests every single day would be enough to kill any human being on the face of the earth.

That sort of morning devotion becomes self-centered. It becomes need-centered unless we give God his rightful place by giving him thanks for all things. A vital part of our daily meeting with God in the morning and at night should be a turning of our hearts towards him, and making him the center of all things by thanking him.

By this means we forget about ourselves, our needs, our burdens, our sadness, our cares, and we begin to praise him, adore him, and give him thanks. To restrict praise to 30 minutes on a Sunday morning is a great tragedy. You ought to have your own praise time, your own thanksgiving time, your own singing time throughout the week.

In fact, you ought to have so much more during the week that when you come in on a Sunday, all that is is the overflow of your own personal devotion. Do you sing here in church? You ought to be singing at home. Do you give thanks on Sunday morning? You should have been doing it all week.

Can you see how this would radically change our times together here on a Sunday morning when the fire is burning every morning, when you're checking on the fire before going to bed? Imagine lying in your bed at night and you just start thanking him for everything. Oh, not asking for anything. Thank you for this during the day.

Thank you for this during the day. Thank you for that person I spoke to today. Thank you for keeping me from the evil one today.

Thank you that I didn't have an accident today. Thank you that your angels kept me throughout this day. What a wonderful thing.

That's the first thing that I believe has to be there. As a priest, you bring thanksgiving. Oh, it's not just a duty to read the word or to pray.

It's a duty to bring thanksgiving, but it's a delightful duty. It's a wonderful duty. Do you ever get given a job and you went, man, I love this job.

I love to do this. No one needs to beg me. It's not a burden.

It's not an effort. I love to do this. Secondly, singing.

Not only thanksgiving, but singing. Please introduce singing in your own times. Don't keep singing for a Sunday morning.

There was a book written many years ago. You'll be shocked at the title of it. It was called *Why Catholics Can't Sing*.

That was the title written by a Catholic priest. It's because of the culture of the Catholic church. There's something that Candice told me, says, what you need to understand about the Irish, it's the Catholic church, Protestants and born again Christians, they grew up from children singing, praising God.

It's very easy to sing. That's why I don't have a, I don't even know how to find a note. It just is there because from a child, I was in a singing house.

I grew up amongst people who praise God, who sang, who rejoice, who overflowed with adoration to God. And so it impacted me. So some of you converted Catholics, you need a cure.

You need some singing to be stirred on the altar of fire each morning. Listen to what it says again. The verse we read, Psalm 59, 16.

But I will sing of thy power. Do you see that? You're to sing of his power. Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy.

When? In the morning. This is talking about your own personal devotion, not gathering with other Christians, not meeting on a Wednesday night or a Sunday, but it's actually talking about your own time. You're to sing aloud.

You're to sing, not hum in your mind, not just to have something rolling in your mind. You ought to use your voice. You can't sing.

You could sing in your heart. You could say, well, I'm just singing in my mind, but you're not singing. You're not singing.

When you sing, you use your voice. You articulate. It's different than speaking.

So singing is a very real thing in the Bible. We can either approach prayer with thanksgiving, or we could do this. We can sing hymns, choruses and songs unto the Lord throughout the day.

So we start with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, I'm not singing. I'm saying, thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. But what do I do with singing? I could use a hymn book.

I used to always have the redemption hymnal with me first thing in the morning, my Bible and my redemption hymnal. And sometimes I would just flick through and read those hymns, and they began to stir my heart. Listen, the word singing is mentioned 117 times in the Old Testament.

You can study this for yourself. Go through every word where it says singing. Some of you have no foundation of faith.

You're not even stirred to sing. You know why? Because you've never done a word study on singing. Go through and read every single verse.

And as you read that, you begin to understand what singing is, what God says about singing. So the word singing is used 117 times in the Old Testament, only twice in the New Testament. And listen, music is to serve the text.

Music is not the important thing. Your voice is, and what you say in singing. So the words you sing are far more important than any instrument.

You can manage without instruments. You can't without singing. It doesn't matter if we had no instrument in this church.

I want a lot more instruments. But listen, we could manage just with singing. It is a God-given thing.

And when we begin to open our lungs, it's a gift from God. You're commanded in the Bible to sing unto God early in the morning. Do you realize that? No one may have told you that before.

Don't wait till later in the day. You are to sing songs, hymns, spiritual songs. You're to begin to sing and to praise God.

What do you do? You show forth His power. You show forth His mercy or His faithfulness by singing. The words of your singing contain truths like that.

So please, don't restrict this to public singing. Throughout the day, we can turn our hearts to thanksgiving, to praising God, and to sing. Do you know what I do when I'm shaving or maybe some other time? I just go and look up Maranatha worship on YouTube.

It's absolutely free. And I'll bring that up. The worship from the 1980s, far better than the 2000s.

I want to tell you, all those old songs, and they just begin to sing, and I go, oh man, I just love this. I'm shaving. I'm worshiping God.

I'm walking around the house. I'm driving in my car, and I'm just listening to all those old songs I sang from a child. I begin to praise them and worship.

You've got so many aids to help you to begin singing. And again, you may not think you're a good singer. You may think, well, I can't sing.

You know what? When you get alone with God in the morning, no one else, I don't need to listen to you. No one else is going to listen to you. You can just sing.

You can begin praising Him and worshiping Him. What a special thing to be in your car and you can sing unto God. You could use the next five minutes or 30 minutes to praise God.

I think those that waste time have done great damage to their spiritual condition. They have all this time. They could listen to the Bible on audio.

They could listen to worship songs. They could do some other thing, but they waste the time. Psalm 57 verse 8, it says, I wake up my glory.

Do you realize the word glory there? Study it for yourself. It means your tongue. When it says, I wake up my glory, it's saying, wake up your tongue.

This verse is talking about first thing in the morning. It also says, wake, sultry and hard. I myself will awake early.

If your tongue awakes, you have to follow. I want to tell you, imagine lying in your bed and you begin to awake tongue, praise you, Lord. I love you, Jesus.

Thank you, heavenly father for sending Jesus. You know what? You're going to start to wake up to praise Him. I want to assure you, it is a wonderful, beautiful thing when you begin to sing unto the Lord.

Listen to what it says in Psalm 68 verse 25. This is the order of things. The singers went before.

The players on instruments followed after them. Do you see the order? Singing comes first. Music, melody, instruments is only a back support to singing real clear words about the character of God.

Then listen to what else it says. Among them were the damsels playing the timbrels. You know, in most churches now, it's the drum beat driving the worship.

People say style of worship doesn't matter. That's not true. That's really not true.

This verse in Psalm 68 actually shows the timbrel or drums shouldn't be driving. That drum beat should never drive worship. If you're listening to worship and it's got a heavy beat, I want to tell you it's out of order.

Have you ever listened to worship and you go, what are they singing? It's noise, it's volume, it's instrument. None of you have ever seen that in churches. I walked into churches and I went, God help me.

The discos were far better than this because they brought in music. They brought in a drum beat and you know what? You can't even hear singing again. But the Bible emphasizes using your voice and singing.

The singers went before and they declared a clear biblical message that's centered on God. That's important. Music that drums that out, there's something wrong with it.

There's something seriously wrong. Says Psalm 149 verse five, let the saints be joyful in glory. Let them sing aloud.

Some of you are going to like this next part. Upon their beds. Here is a verse that actually talks about you.

They're on your bed. It must be nighttime. It must be the evening sacrifice.

Can't be the morning. But here they are. The Lord is saying, saints, get the joy of the Lord in your soul.

Begin to shout aloud upon your beds. Imagine being on your bed and just shouting, hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

You'll scare some of your neighbors. Saints, this is in me. I feel this.

I'm walking in this today. It's a reality. I needed this tonight.

You think I'm coming here to preach to you? Oh no. Oh no. I preached myself into a happy state here tonight.

I tell you, I prayed my way through to the joy of the Lord tonight. I'm not preaching at you. I'm preaching to myself here tonight.

I've been preaching to myself. If you could have seen me last night, I'm in the darkest pit you can ever possibly imagine. And I'm saying, could I ever see the light of day again? Get into the word this morning.

Get into prayer this morning. Begin to thank him. You know, first thing this morning I got up, say thank you for saving me.

Thank you for your blood. Thank you for your Holy Spirit. Thank you for your grace upon me.

Thank you I'm not in hell this morning. Third of all, praise. It says in Psalm 100 in verse 4. What's the difference between thanksgiving and praise? What's the difference? Is there a difference? Psalm 100 verse 4, enter into his gates with thanksgiving.

When you enter the gates, where are you going? You're going to the house of the Lord. So as you're approaching the house of the Lord, you're coming in the gates, what do you do? With thanksgiving. Look what they're talking about, the Old Testament priesthood.

As they're coming in through the gates, thank you Lord. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your grace.

Thank you for what you've done for me. Thank you for working in my life. Thank you that I can come before you.

What is the priesthood doing? They're giving thanks as they approach the house of God. And into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him and bless his name.

So notice, thanksgiving and praise are connected. But the Bible teaches thanksgiving should go before praise. Thanksgiving should lead you into praise.

I've already explained what thanksgiving is, but what does praise mean? The word praise is used 248 times in the Old Testament. Over 155 times in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 150 in six verses uses the word praise 13 times in six verses.

It's filled with the word praise. In the New Testament, we read the word praise 26 times. Paul in relation to believers, he says, to the praise of the glory of the Lord.

He's given praise. The word praise is a lovely word. Listen to what it means.

It means to value something, to prize it, to glory in it, to proclaim it, to confess what that something means. If you praise an individual, you tell them what they mean to you. Not just generally, I like you.

You begin to say, I like this about you. I like it when you do this. You begin to pray, you did this.

You begin to praise them. And in fact, you put a value. You begin to say, this is how much you mean to me.

That's what praise is. You know, some people, they're so embarrassed, so awkward. They can't tell you, thank you.

Thank you. This means a lot to me. You need to get over that.

You really need to learn how to do these things, whether in natural secular things or with God himself. The word hallelujah means praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

What have I said? Praise the Lord. Amen means let it be. But when I say hallelujah, someone says, what does that mean? Is that a foreign tongue? It means praise the Lord.

Psalm 150 verse six, let everything that has breath, praise the Lord. And so we begin to see the praise in the Lord. It's not no longer thanking him for what he's done.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Now you're moving into praise. What is praise? Praise is actually setting a value. This is what you mean to me.

This is how much you mean to me. This is why I love you. You begin pouring out devotion unto the Lord.

It says in Psalm 113 verse three, from the rising of the sun, you've got to be there. The rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised. So in the morning, you ought to be praising him.

Lord, I want to tell you what you mean to me. I want to speak out. I want to communicate to you and tell you what you mean to me.

Now, let me let you into a natural carnal secret. When you get a young, loving couple together, and one of them starts saying, you mean an awful lot to me. This is what you mean to me.

This is why I love you. This is why I'm coming looking for you. As you begin to communicate that, that stirs something up in a relationship.

When you get two, begin to tell each other what you mean to me, then you've got trouble. You've got a marriage coming, or that's the way it ought to be. Do you know what praise actually is? It is adoration unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is devoted attention. It is conscious awareness why you love God and telling him why he means so much to you. It is indeed a beautiful thing to tell God how beautiful he is, how loving he is, how much he means to you.

He is beyond description. He is altogether wonderful. Nothing refreshes and strengthens the soul like making much of Christ.

I am utterly devoted to you. You know, I can remember times on my bed at night, going to bed, way when I was a single guy, many years ago, I would be on my bed, and I'd be there talking to the Lord, worshiping, praising, thanking him. I felt like I was going to bust.

I loved him so much. I mean, I thought, honestly, I thought I'd die or something. I thought I'm going to suffocate.

I love you so, so much that I feel something's going to stop, and my heart is going to stop, or something is going to stop. Saints of God, we've lost this awe of God, this love of God, this devotion of God. Do you see how reading the Bible in the morning can become such a dead, stale thing? You know, one of our friends online, she just pointed out, you know, when they're picking the manna, they had to pick it early in the morning.

Isn't that amazing? First thing in the morning, go get your manna. If they try to keep it till later in the day, do you know what happened? It was filled with worms. Don't you come hooking in around here, looking for old manna.

You need to get it early in the morning, eat it early in the morning. There'll be some along tomorrow. Oh, I'm going to keep it for tonight.

It won't be there, be filled with worms. I'll keep it for tomorrow. Then I won't need to go out and look for new manna.

It'll be filled with worms. Every day, get up and go looking for new, fresh manna. Let me just finish on this one.

I just want to close on this. It's not part of our morning devotions. Worship.

You see, I believe a lot of these terms are misunderstood in the church. We think worship is when they dim the lights down. They move from rowdy, happy songs, shouting in the church to this quiet, delicate, soft worship.

We think the word worship, that's the difference between praise and worship. That's got nothing to do with the Bible. If you study the word worship in the Bible, it is the ultimate end of adoration and praise.

Thanksgiving takes you to praise. Praise needs to move into worship, but the word worship in the Bible isn't to do with singing or saying a certain thing or being in a meeting or music. There's no music and worship in the Bible.

It's not there. Listen, what is the word worship in the Bible? It is an act of devotion towards God at all times and all circumstances. When Job lost his 10 children, it says he fell down on his face and he worshipped God.

That isn't music. That isn't enjoying singing. There's no singing.

Nothing nice about this. Do you know what the word worship means? It means to be utterly submitted and devoted. That's worship.

That's way beyond singing or thanksgiving or praise, but we have destroyed true worship in the church where we think it's a feeling. It's the way the lights go. It's the way the music goes.

That's carnal. That's sensual. That's devilish.

True worship is, I feel like death. My heart's ripped out of me, but I'll worship you. I am devoted to you.

I am submitted to you. The very second Candice breathed her last breath, I fell on my knees. I worshipped the Lord.

Do you think I was happy? Do you think I was singing? Do you think I was glad in my heart? I worshipped him. It's the ultimate act of absolute devotion towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Slay me, burn me, freeze me.

I will worship you. What did Job say? Though thou slay me, still I'll follow you. I'm going to stay in this track.

I'm going to keep following him. The word worship used more than a hundred times in the Bible, meaning to fall down and worship him. Saints, I've just given you the secret to happy devotions.

You need to, with morning and evening devotions, you are priests redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. You are a royal priesthood. You need to keep the fire burning in the morning.

And as you approach on it, bring sacrifices, offer up unto God. What do you offer? Thanksgiving. Begin singing unto him.

Begin praising him. Remember Thanksgiving. Begin to say, thank you for this.

Thank you for that. Thank you for this. Then move to praise and begin saying, I love you.

I'm devoted to you. This is what you mean. Have you ever in your prayer times, I hope this fills your prayer times because it's dynamic, where you're alone in prayer saying, you're a faithful God.

You're a merciful God. You're a kind God. You're my rock.

You're my shield. I'm not asking for anything. Do you see what I'm doing? I'm praising my God.

You are this. You're my rock. You're my shepherd.

You're my lion. You're my lamb. You're my dove.

You're my everything. You're the lover of my soul. You're my redeemer, my sanctifier, my soon coming king.

And I could go through 10,000 things. Saints of God, that isn't asking for something, but that's ministry unto God. And you know what? As you read the Bible, as you pray, and you know, I'm telling you, you ought to pray for souls.

You ought to pray for revival. You ought to ask him, Lord, give me this day my daily bread. But you know what? You mix all of this together and your morning devotions of fire is burning.

And you go back nighttime and say, is that fire still burning? We're coming out of the house there. Turn to Joshua. I said, what happened to the fire? He said, well, I just let it die.

See after tonight, I think he'll be under so much conviction. He'll go in that door. He'll begin stoking that fire.

See if there's any embers left in it. We've been working over these days. He says, I'm watching you do that fire in the mornings.

My fire went out. I need to watch how you make that fire. Saints of God who do you well with those that are happy in their God, who are enjoying their God.

You just say, now show me how you're stoking that fire. I want to learn the secret of it. Why are you happy? Why is it all against you? And you're happy in the Lord, rejoicing in him, thanking him, praising him.

When you ought to be the most depressed man in this meeting tonight, how can you have a shout in your lungs tonight when all hell has come in and you don't have the answers to life's problems? I'm telling you, it'd be good for you to come and inquire of this man or any other mature Christian you see who the fire is burning, all hell's against them. Darkness is around them, but there's a fire kindled. You know why? There's thanksgiving, there's praise, there's singing, and it's reading the word of God.

And I read that word of God to keep my heart happy, to get convicted, and to bring me into that place of prayer. Let's stand together. Father, thank you for the word of God tonight.

Thank you, God. Lord God, I do pray, restore the joy of the Lord. Lord God, in these morning devotions tomorrow morning, I pray for a revolution in this church and even those that listen online.

My God, start a revolution as we begin to thank you, even when there's no feelings, when there's no emotion, when there's no fire, just to begin to thank you and to stir up those embers. My God, I pray, O God, put singing back in these morning devotions that will go from our Bible to singing, Lord God, to praising you, to telling you what you mean to us. You're such a wonderful Savior, and we bless you tonight in Jesus' mighty name.

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