

Meeting God Daily in Prayer

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

I think a lot of you have come quietly into a real relationship with God. A lot of brothers and sisters come to me at the office and they explain that they had no belief in God for years and years and stopped going to their own church completely. Then they started to come to the theater and they have begun to take God more seriously. And so I think there are a lot of us here who are beginning to really grasp the idea that there is a loving Father and that he actually does know us, he does know you and he's interested in you.

I think a lot of us at school have begun to enter into some freedom from that old desire to prove ourselves to our professors, our peers, and our parents. We've begun to really believe that Jesus did die to justify us and God regards us as justified whatever anybody else thinks. I think a lot of us have begun to come into that.

I think a lot of you too have started to come into a real experience of control of your temper -- indeed even freedom from temper, irritability and freedom from sarcasm. And I think a lot of you wonder, "Well, yes I am in a different position from what I used to be." But you never say, "Okay, all those who want to give their lives to Jesus come up front." You never have a Billy Graham kind of appeal or altar call. God guided us loved ones not to do that. God showed us that too many people, especially on campus, can misunderstand that. They can go up and make some kind of outward profession but it doesn't reflect a real change in their lives. And so we purposely don't do that.

What God wanted me to share is what you do to declare to him that you have changed your way of life. Here it is. Every morning pray to him. That's it. Every morning pray to him and read a bit of the Bible. Now, a lot of you who are Christians may say, "Oh, that's just too simple." Loved ones, that's a better declaration that you've changed your way of life than coming up and saying, "I accept Jesus as my Savior."

Start meeting God every morning yourself. Set apart some time every morning before you get out at all, before you even eat breakfast, when you can be quiet with God and you can talk with him about the day. Now brothers and sisters, that's a far better declaration to your Maker that you've changed your way of life than anything else.

Moreover, I'd go further than that. If you're not doing that, whether you're Christians or not, you're just bluffing. If you're not doing that you're just bluffing that you're a Christian. And I think a lot of us are involved in all kinds of big talk about baptism with the Holy Spirit, justification and born of the spirit and we're not doing the ordinary little thing that anybody would do who wanted to be friendly with another person. They'd talk to them. That's just a normal thing to do if you want any kind of relationship with a person. You have to at least speak to them. It's extremely difficult to be a friend of a friend without ever talking to him or her. That's it dear ones, if you want to be real with your maker, or you want to communicate with him, or you want to live with him day-by-day loved ones, you have to set aside some time at the beginning of each day when you pray to him.

I think that's why a lot of you know everything. A lot of you could preach the sermons as well as I could at times. A lot of you know it all, and you've read all the books. But do you see that God

looks down at you each morning and he sees you grabbing the orange juice, grabbing the toast, hitting that road at 60 miles per hour and while you're going down the road saying, "Lord, keep me safe." The Father knows. God is a good, sensible, wise person. He knows that you do not care anything for him because you talk longer than that to an acquaintance let alone to your best friend.

And so brothers and sisters you can't keep on saying, "Oh Lord, I believe in you. Father, I want to give my life to you. Lord Jesus, baptize me with the Holy Spirit." You can't keep on with that kind of stuff if you're not at least spending 15 minutes or half an hour with him each day. In other words, he says, "I hear you, I hear you -- ho-hum, I hear you." God knows.

Loved ones, God isn't mocked. You can't pretend to him. He knows when a person really wants to get to know him and when a person is only professing it to others to try to persuade themselves. A lot of you have real trouble with what does God want me to do in life? Who does he want me to marry? What am I going to do about the state of my finances? And you're asking everybody else about these things and you're saying to everybody else, "Oh, I'm trusting the Lord and I'm asking God." And you don't spend half an hour with him each day let alone really ask him what to do about those things.

Now brothers and sisters, God impressed this upon me strongly last night as I was preparing, that I had to share with you what I once shared in an evening service. A lot of you are having a great deal of frustration in your relationship with God, all of you at various stages. Some of you are old skeptics and agnostics. Some of you are born of the Spirit. Some of you are filled and baptized with the Spirit. Some of you are walking in the Spirit. But a lot of you are having a great deal of frustration, and trouble, and unreality in your life with God because you don't do the one simple thing that the Sunday school teachers taught us to do, pray and read the Bible every day.

And you keep on talking about it but if I ask you, "What's your devotional like life?" you'd think of the best day that you ever had in a devotional life and you'd say, "Yes, I usually spend 20 minutes with God in prayer." And you're not being honest or real. Or, I ask you, "How's it going? Do you pray every day?" And you look back to the last week where you prayed four out of the seven days and you say, "Well, sometimes I miss." You actually missed the previous three weeks and you prayed one day before that.

And so there's a great deal of dishonesty in all of us about it. I think you're not giving God a chance. So here's what I'm saying to you, "If you really are interested in getting in touch with the Maker of the world, and you believe a lot of the things that we've shared here in the theater, will you begin to get up a little earlier than you normally would do?" So if you have to hit that road at seven o'clock and you normally take half an hour to get ready, then instead of getting up at 6:30AM will you get up at 6:00AM?

6AM (or whatever time is quiet in your dorm) gives time to relax before him and wait. You need to be sensible about it. Don't get up while she's banging away at the frying pan and you can't hear anything. Don't get up when there's chaos in the dormitory. Loved ones, there's a beautiful quiet time in all our homes before anybody wakens. Now, that's the time to get up and just have a little time to be quiet before your Maker, to look out at the sky and think, "Lord, that's your sky and you can see me at this moment. And you can see into my mind and you can hear what I'm thinking."

Give yourself a half an hour so that you're not getting into a 15 minute lecture of God. I think a lot of you maybe are giving him 15 minutes at the beginning of each day but it's a 15 minute lecture time. "Lord, I'll tell you what I want to do for my parents, I'll tell you what I want you to do

for me, and I'll tell you what I want you to do for the missionaries in the other part of the world." And the Father never gets a chance to speak and you never listen.

Loved ones, that's why I say leave a half an hour. And if you say to me, "Well brother, how do you get awake?" Loved ones, you have to beat that wakeful business. There's no point in rolling out of bed onto your knees so that it's as much like sleeping as possible. No, then you sink into the guru stuff. That's what happens -- you sink into the guru transcendental meditation. That's what it is because your mind is almost as passive as it was when you were sleeping. Your mind is just floating around there in the unconscious. And what is happening is that while the Holy Spirit will not blast in on you, the spirits of Satan will.

That's why so many of you have trouble with unclean and wandering thoughts in prayer. Because, when you don't get the mind active you slip out onto your knees and you sink into a kind of coma in which your mind goes passive, your feelings get the better of you and your body becomes utterly dominate. And so it's just a dreamlike experience where in fact spirits of Satan get in on you and drag you into spiritism and you're not actually praying at all.

So loved ones, be sensible. Get out, do any kind of exercises, open the window, breathe in, do anything to get the body and the mind working. Do it --- force yourself to it. The Father just beat me over the head on this until I really responded to him and saw - the only way I can do it is to do exercises and get my body operating before I go to prayer at all. But do something like that so that you actually go to prayer using your mind as well as your spirit.

I think it's a help to use the Bible. It's no use this kind of prayer (I'm not knocking the boy), but you remember Malcolm Boyd with the cigarette out of the corner of his mouth saying, "Are you running with me Jesus?" It's interesting but it's not really prayer. "Lord, my mouth feels so sticky this morning and it feels so cold this morning but I'm glad you're with me Lord." No, you can't be wrapped up in self loved ones. Don't get up thinking of how you feel or all concerned with the way your body feels. Prayer is looking out to God.

So it's helpful at times to use a Psalm out of the Bible. Read it and then maybe have a verse and repeat that verse to the Father. And just repeat it to him, "Thou art my rock and my fortress. A very present help in time of trouble. Father I thank you that you are that." Look up and out to him but get out of your own subjective experience.

Now loved ones, honestly if you're really interested in having a relationship with the Maker of the Universe you have to do that at least. And could I speak to the Christians, all you miserable bluffers who think you have a relationship with the Father and you hit it every other day. Dear ones, do you see why God can't do anything in your life? Do you see why you're not giving him a chance? You're not even being as regular and faithful to him as you're being with your employer at work, that's the problem you see.

If you made an appointment with Nixon or the Queen of England, or with somebody important you would be there on the dot. Now, the problem with us all is we're saying, "Father I'll see you in the morning at six o'clock." We don't go. If you don't go either you don't believe that there's a God, so you don't believe you made a promise to anyone, or you believe that that God is not worthy of you being there and he is really some kind of servant that ought to wait upon you.

Now do you see that God will treat you as you treat him? That's it. If you love me you won't just

look through me, you won't just ignore me, you'll treat me in a certain way. You won't treat me as your son, you won't treat me as your brother, you'll treat me in a different way because we have a certain relationship with each other that is different from the relationship that either of us have to anybody else.

Now when you treat me that way and I treat you that way then there's a relationship between us. Do you see it's the same with God? If you don't treat him as your Creator and you don't meet him each day in prayer then he realizes and knows what you really believe. So loved ones I just knew I should share that strongly and firmly with you this morning. I feel that many of you know all the stories, you've been to the Bill Gothard seminars, you've been listening to the preaching, and many of you have made all kind of moves towards God. But, God will take you seriously when you begin to meet him every morning and you begin to meet his mind before you meet other's minds.

Just one other thing. I used to find I could study better late at night and used to have great times until two o'clock in the morning studying for the next day. And probably a lot of us are like that.

And so I said, "Lord, Jesus may have been good in the mornings and many other men may have been good in the mornings but I'm better at night." Eventually God would not take that anymore and he kept showing me places in the New Testament like Mark 1:35, "Jesus got up a great while before day and went into the mountain to pray."

The Bible talks continually about the morning hours, the morning watch. Eventually God showed me, "It's the morning. It's the morning. Before you hit the bitter, miserable critic at your work, before you hit the burnt toast, you come to me and you meet me so that you allow your mind to be filled with my mind and my thoughts and then you go out to the rest of the world."

So dear ones, all I'm really saying is that if you're serious about God you'll do this, you will. If you're not serious about God then I think you'll have to carry on with a dilettante kind of attitude until eventually God persuades you and delivers you from yourself. Any questions dear ones? It's Noon now so maybe a minute of questions. It's not a very complex message is it?

Will it show itself in your life?

Now loved ones, it just becomes obvious immediately. When you don't get to God in the morning you're starting from behind the eight ball throughout that day. You have nothing positive going from you at all. All you have is influence from your environment. Brother I find it just changes your attitude. You hit the day on the run instead of stumbling into the day, stumbling into atmospheres and environments. It just makes a difference.

Husbands and wives, if you have the difficulty that we had getting started to it --- get it going somehow or other. It doesn't matter how you stumble into it. It doesn't matter if you would hate him to hear you praying or if you would hate her to hear you praying, stumble into it somehow. Get it going somehow or other. A possible way, if you don't like him preaching at you, (my wife doesn't like me preaching at her), is to use a book like "My Utmost for His Highest" which is by Oswald Chambers.

"My Utmost for His Highest" has one verse and then a page of a comment. So one of you can read that and read the comment and nobody is preaching at anybody. You're both suffering under Oswald Chambers. So that's one way to do it. Use a book like "My Utmost for His Highest". If some of you have difficulty with reading the Bible and getting something out of it, a book like "Search the

Scriptures” is good. It covers the Bible in three years and gives maybe three questions a day that lead you deeper into the intellectual understanding of the Bible and deeper into its application to your own spiritual life. And a book like that is good, “Search the Scriptures”.

“My Utmost for His Highest” or “Search the Scriptures”, any I think of Stanley Jones’ books “Conversion”, “Abundant Living”, “Mastery”, any of those books are good. They’re just books that take you out of yourself and set your mind on some definite thoughts. If you have difficulty, don’t get into the business of wondering, “What do I do for devotions? I’ll just leaf through the Bible. Wherever the book opens I read.” No, be definite about it and set something up. If you love God then you’ll be concerned to do it in an intelligent way. Let us pray.

Dear Father, I would trust you for my brothers and sisters that you would show us that the most real way of declaring to you that we are serious about you is that we take notice of you each day in life. And that no day passes without our speaking to you and giving you time to let us know what your mind is for us that day. Because Father, we know you put each one of us here on the earth for a definite purpose. We know that it is from you that we are to get our orders and directions each day.

So Father, I trust you to help us to see that a great deal of the vagueness in our own lives about our future is caused by our never spending any time with you and never allowing your mind to become clear to us. Father, we would commit ourselves, those of us who do want to begin to believe in you and begin to take you seriously, we would commit ourselves to giving you that first half hour each day and to plowing on with that as the years pass until our whole lives are lived in the light of your presence and in the glory of your optimistic mind.

We commit ourselves to you for this purpose in Jesus’ name. Amen.