

Independence Day reminds us how dangerous the world is, and how costly our freedom and security can be. For 227 years our peace and safety has cost us the blood of many patriots and soldiers. ***Constant vigilance is needed to keep our freedom and safety secure nationally.***

One of our great responsibilities as individuals is to protect those we love. One of my great duties as a husband is to protect my wife and children. This duty and responsibility shows up as we lock the doors at night, listen to weather advisories, remind them to buckle up, watch for suspicious characters when we drop them off places, warn them to be careful – all because we love them and want to protect them. ***Constant vigilance is needed to keep our freedom and safety secure physically.***

This was brought home to me vividly this week as Bonnie and I sat on the edge of the great Huron National Forest that stretches across Northern Michigan. This beautiful area has nearly one million acres of trees, with 9 pristine rivers running for 550 miles, crisscrossed by 330 miles of trails. Late Monday night, under those towering oaks and ancient jack pines we watched the stars as our children slept in three tents under one giant oak tree.

Just as we were ready to stop talking and head to bed I switched on my flashlight and made a wide arc across the rolling hillside in front of us, hoping to see a deer grazing on the lush green grass. Instead we both gasped; there in the distance loping across the hillside was a pair of glowing yellow eyes that reflected back at about the size of a half dollar. Bonnie was sure it was some fierce carnivore. So dad was dispatched with a stick and the flashlight to go out and meet the creature and to defend our sleeping and unprotected children.

As parents we saw a danger. As those entrusted with the care and protection of those small lives, we had to act. Lurking in the million acres of dark shadows of the night were creatures that could harm the lives we love so much. After quite a chase I ran the forest monster up a tree, only to turn back to find two more sets of glowing yellow eyes headed out another thicket of trees. After rolling stones, banging sticks and waving my flashlight – those next two were warded off. The good news was that these monsters turned out to be harmless coons on their way to the camp trashcan. But the memory of creatures of the night stalking our children was unforgettable.

As I lay quietly listening to the sounds of the forest that evening my mind turned to something far more dangerous than a Huron national Forest wild animal. Those animals

could only scratch and scare my children. No, I began to think of the spiritual forces of darkness, of creatures far more lethal than any that roamed the forest. What can I do to protect and guard my life and the lives of those I love from dangers that lurk in the spiritual darkness seeking to injure the souls of those loved ones? What does God say we need to do to stay safe and secure here on earth? ***Constant vigilance is needed to keep our freedom and safety secure spiritually.***

A safe, secure, and liberated life is described in God's Word as 'word filled'. As Paul said, a Spirit filled believer has the Word richly dwelling or filling them. But how is that possible? To find out we need to turn our hearts to Psalm 119. There EZRA explains the secret of maintaining a Word Filled Life – the only sure protection in the dark spiritual forests of life into which we -- and our loved ones, must walk each day.

Our focus is that Old Testament Giant of the Faith – EZRA. His testimony is the 119th Psalm. He gives us in these 176 verses the content of his personal HABITS or RESPONSES to the Lord, and his personal resolves or HOPES in the Lord.

Remember, there are 22 stanzas of 8 verses each.

Stanzas begin with "A" and continue with successive Hebrew alphabet lettering.

This is called an acrostic. In the Psalms there are 8 other acrostic Psalms. These are Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 145

To best comprehend the acrostic concept let me read the literal Hebrew translation. In The Psalms Chronologically Arranged the compilers show how the Psalm would look if the English alphabet were used in this way; and here is an example of Theodore Kubler's treatment, in respect of Daleth (ד) in verses 25-32.

v. 25 **Depressed** to the dust is my soul: Quicken Thou me according to Thy word.

v. 26 **Declared** have I (to Thee) my ways, and Thou heardest me: Teach me Thy statutes.

v. 27 **Declare** Thou to me the way of Thy precepts: So shall I talk of Thy

wondrous works.

v. 28 **Dropping** is my soul for heaviness: Strengthen Thou me according to Thy word.

v. 29 **Deceitful** ways remove from me: And grant me Thy law graciously.

v. 30 **Determined** have I upon the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me.

v. 31 **Deliberately** have I stuck unto Thy testimonies: Lord, put me not to shame.

v. 32 **Day by day** I will run the way of Thy commandments, When Thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Ezra's testimony is in two areas: his habits (the "I have's") and hopes (the "I will's"), or to put it differently – his spiritual responses and his Scriptural resolves!

One of the first things we notice as we look into this Psalm is the intensely personal nature of these verses seen in the overwhelming use of the 1st person pronoun "I".

These 176 verses have in all 176 mentioned God.

In 173 God's word is mentioned.

He refers to himself 325 times as "I", "me", and "my".

A Word-Filled Life is a Life with Habits of Scriptural Responses

First, Ezra shares in Psalm 119 a list of his Habits or SPIRITUAL RESPONSES he had cultivated toward the Lord. There are at least 10 of them.

1. **He wanted the Lord.** [Psalm 119:10](#) With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
2. **He wanted the Word.** [Psalm 119:11](#) Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Have you ever had a treasure so precious, or a possession so fragile, or a favorite cereal, drink, cookie, etc. that you wanted so badly -- that you hid it away so that no one else could take it from you?)

3. **He loved God's ways.** [Psalm 119:14](#) I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
4. **He obeyed the Word.** [Psalm 119:22](#) Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.
5. **He talked about God.** [Psalm 119:26](#) I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.
6. **He followed the pathway of God.** [Psalm 119:30](#) I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. *(Did you know your pathway either gets clearer and better, or darker and harder -- ever day we follow that pathway? [Proverbs 4:18-19](#) But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.)*
7. **He was stuck to the Word.** [Psalm 119:31](#) I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.
8. **He was excited about God!** [Psalm 119:35](#) Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. (Do you know what one of my constant prayers is? That everyone who goes out on Saturday night and get fried by all the garbage in the movies would feel so miserable on the Lord's Day that they would start figuring out that to watch things that so diametrically oppose God's Way flattens your spiritual brain waves, deadens your spiritual appetite, and dampens your spiritual fervor. In other words – IT IS NOT WORTH IT!)
9. **He feared disappointing God.** [Psalm 119:39](#) Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good. A teen once demonstrated this heart attitude as his friends suggested that they go to a certain restaurant for a good time. "I'd rather go home, my parents don't approve of that place." "Afraid your father will hurt you?" one of the girls asked sarcastically. "No," he replied, "I'm not afraid my father will hurt me, but I am afraid I might hurt him." He understood the principle that a true child of God, who has experienced the love of God, has no desire to sin against that love.
10. **He longed after the Lord.** [Psalm 119:40](#) Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

A Word-Filled Life is a Life with Habits of Scriptural Resolves

So, First Ezra shares in Psalm 119 a list of his Habits or RESPONSES he had cultivated toward the Lord. Secondly, he records his hopes or RESOLVES

1. [Psalm 119:7](#) I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
2. [Psalm 119:8](#) I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.
3. [Psalm 119:15](#) I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
4. [Psalm 119:16](#) I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.
5. [Psalm 119:32](#) I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.
6. [Psalm 119:45](#) And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.
7. [Psalm 119:46](#) I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.
8. [Psalm 119:47](#) And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

9. **Psalm 119:48** My hands also **will I lift up unto thy** commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes. (Literally 'in my hands I will carry...' God's Word was close at hand).

So how did Ezra do this on a consistent basis? By meditation. Remember Meditation is a soul that thirsts and drinks of God in His Word; that longs for the waters of life and drinks them of God in His Word; that drinks from an ever present oasis in the arid, sun baked, lifeless deserts of life through finding and communing with God in His Word.

Seven times Ezra confesses his secret, it is called meditation (after finding God's Word and eating it – then we digest or meditate upon it). Here is his pathway:

- PURIFYING MEDITATION, look at v.9. **Psalm 119:15** I will meditate on **Your precepts**, And contemplate **Your ways**.
 - ILLUMINATING MEDITATION, look at v. 18. **Psalm 119:23** Princes also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on **Your statutes**.
3. REFRESHING MEDITATION, look at v. 25. **Psalm 119:27** Make me understand the way of **Your precepts**; So shall I meditate on **Your wonderful works**.
 4. TESTIFYING MEDITATION, look at v. 46. **Psalm 119:48** My hands also I will lift up to **Your commandments**, Which I love, And I will meditate on **Your statutes**.
 5. REFINING MEDITATION, look at v.75. **Psalm 119:78** Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; But I will meditate on **Your precepts**.
 6. FOCUSING MEDITATION, look at v. 101. **Psalm 119:99** I have more understanding than all my teachers, For **Your testimonies** are my meditation.
 7. INTERCEDING MEDITATION, look at v.147. **Psalm 119:148** My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on **Your word**.

A Word-Filled Life is a Life with Habits of Scriptural Prayers

Finally, mediation freed Ezra to just ask the Lord for each area he needs to live fruitfully for the Lord. Remember Ezra faced a worldly congregation, soaked in all the worldly ways of Babylon and Persia. What was his plan to bring about lasting change in those he served? He started with his own life. He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's Will.

Thirty-three times with eleven phrases, Ezra cries to the Lord.

The secret of his fruitful life was his choice to invite the Lord into every part of his life, and invite Him into every part of his day.

1. Teach me: 12; 26; 33; 66; 68; 108; 124;135.
2. Remove from me: 22.
3. Make me: 27; 35.
4. Give me: 34; 73; 125; 144; 169.
5. Revive me: 37; 40; 88; 107; 149; 154; 156; 159.
6. Help me: 86.

7. Save me: 94; 146.
8. Uphold me: 116; 117.
9. Redeem me: 134; 154.
10. Hear me: 145.
11. Deliver me: 153; 170.

So how do we adopt Ezra's strategy? Here are so elements to practice getting alone with God.

- **START WITH HIM:** Try to spend at least 12 minutes each day in reading God's Word and seeking to find one truth to hold on to all day long.
- **SPEAK WITH HIM:** From that time alone with God, think through your entire day. Ask HIM what would be the best use of your life for this day.
- **STOP WITH HIM:** Try to also get in the habit of a weekly time of evaluation. Just a half hour reflecting on where you are, and where you are headed in life and ministry.
- **STAY WITH HIM:** Finally, try one time of strategic planning each month, to truly reflect on life for a couple of hours. Take a spiritual retreat. Sit with a pad of paper, your calendar, and an open Bible. List your priorities for the next month. Pray over them, change them, decide upon them and then do them!

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With each new year that comes, it is time to rethink our plans and priorities. To help us settle in on what the Lord desires for each of us, we need to refresh our minds with God's plan. One key passage is **Timothy 4:7**.

Paul says we are to discipline our selves towards godliness. What are the disciplines that encourage a godly life? Today we start on that study, *The Disciplines of a Godly Life*. The first and foremost discipline is the Discipline of the Scriptures.

Time alone with God in His Word, the Scriptures, is the great necessity of our spiritual lives. We need to be alone with God daily! We need to find times to get away alone. E. Stanley Jones once described time in the Scriptures as a "time exposure to God." He used the analogy of his life being like a photographic plate which, when exposed to God, progressively bore the image of God in keeping with the length of exposure.

Please open with me to the center of your Bibles and find Psalm 16.11.

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Let me start with the conclusion of my challenge to you from God's Word. This verse thrills my heart because in these few words God says so much. He offers us three incredible and priceless benefits from the discipline of Scripture.

Now with that conclusion in mind, let me explain in an earthly way, what a life arranged by the Lord can be like. It all started in the fall of 1978. I was doing hospital visitation as a ministerial student in Greenville, SC. As I sped down one floor of the hospital to share Scripture and pray with a sick friend I glanced in the room next door. For that instant I caught sight of one of the most forlorn faces I'd ever seen in a hospital bed. After my visit I purposed to stop in and see if there was anything I could do to cheer that sad man next door. I slipped in, stood by his bed, read Scripture and prayed. I found he was one of the loneliest Christians I'd ever met. So since it was Thanksgiving time I said, "What can I do to encourage you?" To my surprise he brightened up and said "If you would bring me a Wendy's ¾ pound triple burger it would mean so much to me for my Thanksgiving Dinner."

Well, I did it. And an hour later I was back on my way to my apartment after my sharing a bit of Christ's love to cheer that man up. He asked me for my name and address so we could keep in touch. I never knew how much that visit was going to end up impacting my life.

To make a long story short that man was a very wealthy heir to a Texas oil field family. He was alone and away from family and the Lord sent me to his room at a moment he desperately needed comfort and hope.

Two weeks later I got a call from him asking when we could go out to dinner. When he arrived it was in an extended limo. We went to a place that had no prices on the menu, and our meal was prepared at our table. That evening he asked if I would join him for a week with his friends on a little trip. Being young and un-entangled in many responsibilities I said sure. That was the start of one of the amazing 10 days of my life as Carl and two friends (both are now pastors of churches) went on a whirlwind trip to England, Holland, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy – all expenses paid.

The point of the story is that Carl made all the arrangements. I never had been to the places he took me. He had, and he arranged everything. We were picked up and chauffeured to sites, museums, restaurants, and plays. It was an unbelievable experience of the world the way the rich and famous travel. But more than that, it was a lesson for me that someone with greater resources, experience and knowledge can do a better job at arranging events than I could.

The Lord wants you to discipline yourself to get in His Scripture each day (daily bread, not by bread alone) so He can arrange, accompany, and authorize your life. Is your life authorized by God? Do you live under His authority? Is He making the arrangements for you to have the best life there can be here on earth? Does He accompany you through every moment of every day – filling your days and nights with joy? That is what the Lord offers us in the Scriptures.

- If you will listen to the Lord speak to you through the Word **you can rest in His arrangements for your life.** “You will show me the path of life”
- If you will listen to the Lord speak to you through the Word **you can enjoy His companionship through life.** “In Your presence is fullness of joy;”

- If you will listen to the Lord speak to you through the Word **you can rest in His authority over your life.** “At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”

Now, that was fun in an earthly sense, but what about an offer like Carl’s -- only **from GOD!** And not just for 10 days -- but for today and forevermore! The Lord God of the Universe wants to Arrange your life, and Accompany you trip through life, and authorize everything needed from now on. Wow, that is the best life there is.

Joseph had a Stress-Filled Life (deserted by all) Psalm 105:17-19 He sent a man before them— Joseph—who was sold as a slave. 18 They hurt his feet with fetters,

He was laid in irons. 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him.

- Spoiled by his dad;
- Hated by his brothers;
- Abused, enslaved, sold, and deported for the financial gain of family members;
- Used, set up, unjustly accused, and imprisoned by his own employer;
- Chained, tormented, and forgotten in jail;
- Vindicated, elevated, and used by God.
- Because his life passed the test of God's Word.

David had a Rough Life (bloody man killed more) Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

- David started killing predators (bears and lions) at a young age;
- David graduated to killing a giant while still a teen;
- David went on to slay “his ten thousands” while in his twenties;
- David was such a swordsman, a slinger, a spearman, and a deadly warrior – that God said he was too much a “man of blood” to build the Temple of God.
- Yet he was the man after God’s own heart.

Paul had a Dangerous Life (beaten more) [Romans 15:4](#) For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

- Paul was stoned, ship wrecked, and sleepless;
- Paul was hunted, hounded, and heckled;
- Paul was imprisoned, impoverished, and
- Paul was bruised, beaten, and banished;
- But he never stopped hoping in God's Word.

Jeremiah had a Tragic Life (weeping prophet wept more) [Jeremiah 15:16](#) Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

But maybe one Biblical figure was the neediest. He is known as the weeping prophet, partly for his compassion, and partly for his condition of sadness.

Jeremiah [\[1\]](#) must have had an incredible childhood. The Scriptures tell us God had chosen him before his birth to be a prophet. His family was notable in their service for the LORD. Life was exciting for the son of a high priest. [Jeremiah 1:1](#) The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, (NASB)

One of the great blessings of Jeremiah's life was that his dad was the one who found the lost book of the Law. How Jeremiah's love for the Word showed through in his life as God's prophet. He was the "son of Hilkiyah" ([Jer. 1:1](#)) and as [2 Kings 22:8](#) records: "And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it." Note also Jeremiah's uncle was Shallum husband of Huldah the prophetess. [Jeremiah 32:7](#) Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. (KJV)

Jeremiah's woes were unimaginable to our relatively peaceful lives. He lived through the death throes of the final generation of the nation of Judah.

- From an earthly perspective Jeremiah's life was a failure. During his lifetime he watched the decay of God's chosen people, the horrible destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the nation to Babylon.
- He preached for 40 years and saw no visible result among those he served. Instead those countrymen he warned for God sought to kill him if he wouldn't stop preaching doom ([Jer. 11:19-23](#)). He had virtually no converts to show for a lifetime of ministry.
- He had no one to find joy and comfort with as his own family and friends were involved in plots against his (12:60).
- He never had the joy of a godly home because God never allowed him to marry, and thus he suffered incredibly agonizing loneliness (16:20).
- He lived under a constant threat of death as there were plots to kill him in secret so no one would find him (18:20-23).
- He lived with physical pain while he was beaten severely and then bound in wooden stocks (20:1-2).
- He lived with emotional pain as his friends spied on him deceitfully and for revenge (20:10).
- He was consumed with sorrow and shame and even cursed the day he was born (20:14-18).
- His life ended with no relief as he was falsely accused of being a traitor to his own country (37:13-14). Jeremiah was arrested, beaten, thrown into a dungeon, and starved many days (37:15-21). If an Ethiopian Gentile had not interceded on his behalf he would have died there. In the end, tradition tells us he was exiled to Egypt, where he was stoned to death by his own people.

Now look again at Jeremiah 15.16. What kept Jeremiah going through the pits? The Discipline of Scripture!

How can we start cultivating time alone with God? Where do we start?

First, we can get alone with God most readily by *reading* God's Word! This is the voice of God, we must listen. It is amazing that a Christian can imagine that he or she can live a Christian life without regularly reading the Bible, for that is impossible! Our minds are such that we do not retain what we need to know. They need to be refreshed again and again. Some who have been believers for years have never read the Bible through once. There are truths God has for us that we have not inconvenienced ourselves enough to discover. No wonder we are empty. What a difference reading the Word can make in our lives.

Dr. Harry Ironside, a man of little formal education but great power, read the Bible fourteen times by the age of fourteen. His mark is still on Chicago and indeed the entire world. Five pages a day is a good place to begin. Within a year you will have read the entire Bible. We begin to get alone with God only when we take God's Word seriously as more important than our daily meals.

Lt. General William K. Harrison^[2] was the most decorated soldier in the 30th Infantry Division, rated by General Eisenhower as the number one infantry division in World War II.

General Harrison was the first American to enter Belgium, which he did at the head of the Allied forces. He received every decoration for valor except the Congressional Medal of Honor - being honored with the Distinguished Silver Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, and the Purple Heart (he was one of the few generals to be wounded in action). When the Korean War began, he served as Chief of Staff in the United Nations Command - and because of his character and self-

control was ultimately President Eisenhower's choice to head the long and tedious negotiations to end the war.

General Harrison was a soldier's soldier who led a busy, ultra-kinetic life, as also an amazing man of the Word. When he was a twenty-year-old Cadet, he began reading the Old Testament once a year and the New Testament four times. General Harrison did this until the end of his life.

Since it only takes 80 hours to read the entire Bible, this program General Harrison began obligated him to just ½ hour of reading God's Word for each of the days of his life. Let me ask you, do any of us have ½ an hour to give away each day to cultivate the mind of Christ like General Harrison? How about 14 minutes to read God's Word in a year? How about 3 minutes a day for the New Testament in a year?

		HOURS	MINUTES	@ DAY
READ BIBLE		80	4800	13
OLD TESTAMENT	77%	62	3695	10
NEW TESTAMENT	23%	18	1104	3
HARRISON				
OT	1	80	4800	13
NT	4	74	4419	12
MINUTES NEEDED		154	9219	25

Even in the thick of war he maintained his commitment by catching up during the two- and three-day respites for replacement and refitting

which followed battles, so that when the war ended he was right on schedule.

When, at the age of ninety, his failing eyesight no longer permitted his discipline, he had read the Old Testament seventy times and the New Testament 280 times! No wonder his godliness and wisdom were proverbial, and that the Lord used him for eighteen fruitful years to lead Officers Christian Fellowship (OCF).

General Harrison's story tells us two things: it is possible for the busiest of us, to systematically feed on God's Word. No one could be busier or lead a more demanding life than General Harrison. His life remains a demonstration of a mind programmed with God's Word. His closest associates say that every area of his life (domestic, spiritual, and professional) and each of the great problems he faced was informed by the Scriptures. People marveled at his knowledge of the Bible and the ability to bring its light to every area of life. He lived out the experience of the Psalmist:

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. (119:97-100)

You must remember this: You can never have a Christian mind without reading the Scriptures regularly because you cannot be deeply influenced by that which you do not know. If you are filled with God's Word, your life can then be informed and directed by God - your domestic relationships, your child-rearing, your career, your ethical decisions, your interior morality. The only way to a Christian mind is through God's Word!

Second, time alone in solitude with God comes through *memorization*. Mrs. Barnhouse said of her famous preacher husband:

Someone once asked him how long it had taken him to prepare a certain sermon. His answer was “Thirty years and thirty minutes!” He had immersed himself in the Bible from the time he was fifteen years old, when he memorized the Book of Philippians a verse a day until he knew the entire book by heart, then went on to other passages. He felt it was not enough to learn by rote — it had to be by heart; because you loved and believed it.

Why not begin with a verse — perhaps a verse a week — fifty-two in one year!

Few have lived as stressful and frenetic a life as Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission. But Taylor lived in God’s rest, as his son beautifully attests:

Day and night this was his secret, “just to roll the burden on the Lord.” Frequently those who were wakeful in the little house at Chinkiang might hear, at two or three in the morning, the soft refrain of Mr. Taylor’s favorite hymn [“Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art”]. He had learned that for him, only one life was possible—just that blessed life of resting and rejoicing in the Lord under all circumstances, while He dealt with the difficulties, inward and outward, great and small.

Third, we can learn to be alone with God by *meditating* on it. This is the secret of God’s great warriors. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, conquered immense hardships by daily meditation on God’s Word. Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor record this in his biography:

It was not easy for Mr. Taylor, in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember traveling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow with the poorest of inns at night. Often with only one large room for coolies and travelers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then, after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was poring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God.

Meditating upon the Word brings us immediately into the intimate presence of God, but too few are willing to pay the price.

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither” ([Psalm 1:1–3](#)).

C. T. Studd was one of God's great servants. His life was like his grass hut, there were no doors to shut, he lived with - and for, his beloved pygmy tribes. How did he prepare to teach as many as 5,000 at a time? How did he get ready to disciple the scores of church leaders who came to sit at the foot of his cot every morning, so that he would awake to a sea of black faces and white teeth waiting for him to open the Book of God to them? Simply in his own words, may I read from his diary^[3] dated February 7th, 1886?

"The Lord is so good to give me a large dose of spiritual champagne every morning which brace one up for the day and night. Of late I have

had such glorious times. I generally awake about 3:30 AM and feel quite wide awake, so I have a good read, and then have an hour's sleep before I finally get up.

Studd's family described these times as -

"A Bible is taken down from the shelf, and Bwana is alone with God. What passed between them in those silent hours was known a few hours later to all who had ears to hear."

Studd continues in his diary,

" I find then that what I read is then stamped indelibly upon my heart all through the day; and that it is the very quietest of times, not a foot astir, nor a sound to be heard, saving that of God. If I miss this time I feel like Samson shorn of his hair and so of all his strength. I see more and more how much I have to learn of the Lord. I want to be a workman approved of the Lord, not just with a pass degree as it were. Oh how I wish I had devoted my early life, my whole life to God and His Word. How much I have lost by those early years of self pleasing and running after this world's honors and pleasures."

A modern spiritual Giant was George Mueller. His life may be distilled down to these words he wrote in a diary:

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for more than 14 years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or 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...Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as a habitual thing, to give myself to prayer 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 the meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved and instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.[4]

[1] Sources used are: The Word of God; Baxter, Explore the Book; Scroggie, The Unfolding Drama; Christ in all the Scriptures; The Criswell Study Bible; Walk through the Bible; The Compact Guide to The Bible, Lehman Strauss, CHM, MacArthur, Ashamed of the Gospel, p. 76-77, Sanders, Spiritual Discipleship, P. 129-136.

[2] Hughes, Discipline of a godly man, p. 76-77.

[3] C. T. Studd, Cricketeer and Pioneer, p. 57, 206.

[4] Scroggie, Method in Prayer, pp.17-18.