

The Mornings For God

I am a blessed man to have known, walked, conversed and observed as an ardent student great men of God. When I was younger I was not really aware of just how important and life changing the impact of this exposure would be to me. Today I speak as one who does not exaggerate; I stand on the shoulders of giants. Three men influenced me on how I begin my days; two I knew personally and one I knew by his writings. These men would be Dr. Robert G. Lee, Dr. W. A. Criswell and David Brainerd. Dr. Lee and Dr. Criswell pastored two of the largest churches in the country while preaching nationally and internationally. They had extremely busy schedules, but both gave their mornings to God. On days they were at home, they would not even go into the office until after noon. Dr. Criswell said too much time is spent getting ready for the day and he did not want shaving or getting dressed to interfere with his prayer and study in the Word time. So, he did much of his praying and studying in his pajamas.

In the seventeen hundreds while America was yet in her colonial days, David Brainerd became the first American missionary to the American Indian. Although he did much in evangelism, he is best known for his devotional life. Jonathan Edwards said, "I never knew his equal." John Wesley said, "Let us be followers of him as he was of Christ." Here are two entries in his diary I would like for you to see: April 9. - "Most of my time in morning devotion was spent without sensible sweetness; yet I had one delightful prospect of arriving at the heavenly world."

April 12. - "This morning the Lord was pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon me in secret prayer, and made the season very precious to my soul. Though I have been so depressed of late, respecting my hopes of future serviceableness in the cause of God; yet now I had much encouragement. I was especially assisted to intercede and plead for poor souls, and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and for special grace for myself, to fit me for special services. My faith lifted me above the world, and removed all those mountains over which of late I could not look. I wanted not the favor of man to lean upon; for I knew that Christ's favor was infinitely better, and that it was no matter when nor where, nor how Christ should send me, nor what trials he should still exercise me with, if I might be prepared for his work and will."

The encouraging aspect of these two entries is that here is one of the greatest prayer warriors of all time who did not always have ecstasy when he prayed, but he stayed with it, enjoying the fact that through prayer he had arrived at "...the heavenly world" and through morning prayer he had been lifted above the world's problems and by faith removed the mountains he was facing.

There are three passages of Scripture I would like to share with you that accentuate the importance of giving our mornings to God:

1. Christ is our example.

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isaiah 50:4). Prophetically, these are the words of Jesus. The word "learned" is *lemudim* in Hebrew and has been translated "of a teacher" or "of those who learn" or "of the learned." The learner is the best teacher! One of the words translated from this word is the word "taught." That says the one who has received instruction is the one capable of giving instruction. Our Lord showed us His attitude about learning when He was only twelve and spent not hours, but days sitting at the feet of the elders so that He might learn His Father's business. May we, like Christ be listening to the Father's voice calling to us as He awakens us in the morning.

We can find a strain of truth in our literature that reminds of the importance of mornings. In the early 1900s J.M. Barrie wrote a classic entitled: The Adventures of Peter Pan. In the chapter, Peter Breaks Through we read, "It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. If you could keep awake (but of course you can't) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on."

I want to enter the morning prayer time and by faith put on those "pretty thoughts" with the attitude of a learner.

2. God wants to start the day with us.

In the seventh chapter of Job we see this holy man facing the greatest trials of his life. For him, these troublesome times were beyond imagination. He could not comprehend everything that was happening to him. He said in Job 7:3b through 4, *"...wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day."* Just fourteen verses later Job said, *"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every*

moment?" Job 7: 17, 18. When our hearts are broken and we feel like we just can't go on...listen carefully and you'll hear God's voice. When I awake in the morning before I move and even open my eyes, I listen intently to what God is saying, because according to God's Word, He is there at that very moment.

Returning to Peter Pan's story, in an update on Barrie's classic, Captain Hook: The Adventures of a Notorious Youth by James V. Hart and adapted for the screen has a great statement by Tinkerbell. She is saying to Peter who has broken her heart by growing up, "You know that place between sleep and awake, the place where you can still remember dreaming? That's where I'll always love you, Peter Pan. That's where I'll be waiting." I suggest that we should not be listening for fairies, but may the Lord help us to listen for Him and start our days with Him!

3. Every day is an opportunity to start all over.

It looked like there was no hope for Judah's recovery. The weeping prophet, Jeremiah said, "*...My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD*"(Lamentations 3:18). Our prophet seems to go to bed, discouraged and despondent, but thank God he wakes up the next morning with these words, "*This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness*"(Lamentations 3:21-23). God was saying, I haven't given up on my people; I haven't given up on you! You are still My man with My message.

Everyday is a gift from God. Every time the sun rises, God is telling us we have one more opportunity to make the most of the time He has given us.

I know not everyone is going to be able to give every morning so freely and liberally to God in the same way a pastor can...but all of us should give the first portion of our day, no matter how small to God. I love the mornings. It seems if we can start our days right, the rest of the day will go well and end well.

-Pastor Pope-