

The Heart of a Woman and Prayer

Our relationship with the Lord defines who we are—it is the very heart of who we are. This relationship is developed and established in God’s Holy Scripture and in Persevering Prayer. At the Heart of a Woman is the divine, intimate communion between her and her Beloved through the continual interwoven dialog of Holy Scripture and Meditation and Prayer ... the Lord Speaks, we listen, we ponder, we take it to heart, we pray over it, and pray it back to the Lord ... and so it goes. This is holy, divine communion with the Lord and this is where and how we grow.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD: the renowned evangelist of the Great Awakening (1714-1770) reflecting upon his early days in Christ, recalled, “I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees... This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh light and power from above.” As one who has gone without food devours meat, he described how the Scripture became his “soul’s delight.” Whitefield confessed how his daily devotion to the Scripture became like fire upon the altar of his soul, fueling his love for Christ. Whitefield repeatedly read through Matthew Henry’s Commentary during his devotions and found it rich food for his soul.” Biographer Arnold Dallimore described Whitefield’s early days as a believer, when the only visible light in town would be beaming from his second-story window as he ingested the truths of Holy Writ. Dallimore writes, “We can visualize him at five in the morning in his room over Harris’s bookstore. He is *on his knees* with his Bible, his Greek New Testament, and a volume of Matthew Henry spread before him.” With these books open before his willing heart, Whitefield gazes back and forth from the English Bible, to the Greek, to Henry’s commentary, seeking to discern and digest Scripture’s divine truths.

MATTHEW HENRY (1662–1714) best known for his commentary, highly regarded and widely used for centuries. He is also known for, “A Method for Prayer.” Ligon Duncan, Chancellor/CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary writes, I first “met” this book through the suggestion of one of my seminary professors, Dr. O. Palmer Robertson. A number of us in his Old Testament Biblical Theology course were deeply encouraged by his peculiar power in public prayer (we would get to class early just to make sure we didn’t miss his prayers!). So, we inquired as to what had helped him in prayer. He replied, “the Bible and Matthew Henry’s “A Method for Prayer.” Have you ever heard of anyone making sure they get to class so as not to miss out on the opening prayer? At the heart of Henry’s method is praying in the words of Scripture – that is, praying God’s word back to God.” The old Puritans called this ‘pleading the promises.’ God has made promises to His people. His people respond by redirecting those promises to the Lord in the form of prayer. Henry wrote: “Prayer is that which buckles on all the Christian’s armor.” **His three directives for prayer:**

Directive One: Begin Every Day with God. Citing Ps. 5:3 he wrote, “It is our wisdom to begin every day with God.” Why do we pray? Beeke writes, “God requires us to pray to remind us of His authority over us and His love and compassion toward us.” Henry notes that we must give God His rightful titles and honor as we pray. Begin every day with God.

Directive Two: Spend Every Day with God. Henry cites, Ps. 25:5 *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.* The message is to spend the day *waiting upon the Lord* and finding occasions to pray. Henry said. As James wrote, if you are sad, then pray to God; if you are happy, then sing praises to God. Js. 5:15. That covers all life.

Directive Three: Close Every Day with God *In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.* Ps. 4:8. Henry encouraged us to think that just as we retire from work for a time when we go to bed, so we shall retire for a time in death until the day of

resurrection. Just as we take off our clothes at night, so we will put off this body until we receive a new one the morning of Christ's return.

SUSANNA WESLEY (Mother Of John And Charles Wesley + 17 other children, 10 survived)

Susanna took her relationship to God as seriously as she did her duties as a wife and mother. Early in her life, she vowed that she would never spend more time in leisure entertainment than she did in prayer and Bible study. Amid the most complex and busy years of her life as a mother, she still scheduled two hours each day for fellowship with God and time in His Word, and she adhered to that schedule faithfully. The challenge was finding a place of privacy in a house filled to overflowing with children. Walking through the rural village of Epworth, England, on any given day in the early 1700's if you had peered through the window of the home of the rector of the local church, you might have seen a woman sitting in a chair with her kitchen apron pulled up over her head doing her daily devotions while ten children read, studied, or played all around her. Her sons John and Charles become world-renowned leaders of the global Christian movement. This is her legacy, forged in large part in those diligent hours of intercession under that makeshift apron tent. John Wesley is estimated to have preached to nearly a million people. His powerful, evangelistic services were frequently held in the open air to accommodate audiences in the tens of thousands. Traveling on horseback, he regularly preached three or more times a day, often beginning before daybreak. At the age of seventy he preached, without the assistance of modern amplification, to an estimated 32,000 people.

GEORGE MUELLER (1805–1898) is widely considered one the greatest men of prayer and faith since the days of the New Testament. He led four far-reaching, influential ministries, but we know him best for his orphanages. He cared for 10,024 orphans during his lifetime, and provided educational opportunities establishing 117 schools which offered Christian education to more than 120,000 children. Through *all* this, Müller never made requests for financial support, nor did he go into debt, even though the five homes cost more than £100,000 to build. Many times, he received unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God. He was in constant prayer that God touch the hearts of donors to make provisions for the orphans. One well-documented occasion, George had all of the children sit down and give thanks for breakfast even though there was nothing to eat in the house. As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with fresh bread to feed everyone, and the milkman gave them fresh milk because his cart broke down in front of the orphanage.

Don S. Whitney, Professor of Biblical Spirituality, Associate Dean of the School Of Theology Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of several books including "Pray the Bible" (an excellent book I highly recommend) writes, "How did George Mueller pray? He said that for the first ten years of what he called his "life of faith"—referring not to when he was unknown but to ten years of trust in God and remarkable answers to prayer—he often struggled to get into the spirit of prayer, in other words, to really feel like praying. Until, that is, he made one slight alteration in his method. Here's how he described the change:

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, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with 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 comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then really began to pray.