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## MAKING READY THE CHOSEN VESSEL

*“To ascertain the Lord’s will, we ought to use scriptural means. Prayer, the word of God, and his Spirit should be united together. We should go to the Lord repeatedly in prayer, and ask him to teach us by his Spirit through his word. I say, by his Spirit through his word. For if we should think that his Spirit led us to do so and so, because certain facts are so and so, and yet his word is opposed to the step which we are going to take, we should be deceiving ourselves...”*

*“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together,” is a most important exhortation. Even if we should not derive any especial benefit, at the time, so far as we are conscious, yet we may be kept from much harm. And very frequently the beginning of coldness of heart is nourished by keeping away from the meetings of the saints...*

*For I was aware, though I read it [Holy Scripture] but little, that I knew scarcely anything of it. But instead of acting thus, and being led by my ignorance of the word of God to study it more, my difficulty in understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it (for much prayerful reading of the word, gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the delight we have in reading it); and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God. The consequence was, that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge I say; for all true knowledge must be derived, by the Spirit, from the word. And as I neglected the word, I was for nearly four years so ignorant, that I did not clearly know even the fundamental points of our holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the ways of God. For it is the truth that makes us free, (John 8:31, 32,) by delivering us from the slavery of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. The word proves it. The experience of the saints proves it; and also my own experience most decidedly proves it. For when it pleased the Lord in Aug. 1829, to bring me really to the Scriptures, my life and walk became very different. And though even since that I have very much fallen short of what I might and ought to be, yet, by the grace of God, I have been enabled to live much nearer to him than before...”*

Müller, George. *A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Müller*. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.



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The Lord closed the door to the mission field before Müller could go through it. This was the case even though Müller continued to have strong desires to preach Christ in lands to the east. The Lord clearly had other plans, just as He did in restraining Paul from going into Macedonia (Acts 16:7). Has the Lord prevented you from taking in particular paths that you desired to take? Have you come to see how the Lord had other plans?

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During this time while Müller was attempting to discern the Lord's will for him, the Lord began to open up opportunities where he already was. In 1826 he had his first opportunity to preach. Despite being a student of divinity he found that he was woefully unprepared. Why was he not better equipped for this task?

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After having preached someone else's sermon, Müller was invited to preach again later that day. This time he did not have a sermon committed to memory and had to resort to preaching extemporaneously. This forced him to focus on a simple exposition of the text instead of rhetorical eloquence. Not only did he feel greatly assisted by the Spirit in this, the people were greatly benefited. This led him to the conclusion that "*This is the true way to preach.*"

Not only did Müller see that this was the true way to preach, he also began to see the importance of the Word of God in general and that it should be given the priority in one's studies.

How has your relationship to Scripture developed since becoming a Christian? Do you enjoy reading and studying God's Word?

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Müller’s progress in the faith was not a consistent path in the positive direction. There were many missteps along the way. To what does Pierson attribute these “*vacillations in Christian experience*”? What Spiritual Discipline would have best met this need? Which principle of mortification most directly addresses what was lacking in Müller’s life at this point?

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Have you experienced similar “vacillations” in your Christian experience? How might the Spiritual Disciplines have prevented or reduced them?

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Despite his shortcomings, the Lord remained faithful and continued to shape His servant for the task to which he had been called. We are promised in Scripture that the Lord will grow us spiritually. Our sanctification is God’s will (1 Thess. 4:3), Christ’s prayer request (Jn. 17:17-19), and the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16). Such promises ought to give us great comfort that despite our failures, God is at work in us to will and to work

for his good pleasure. Take a few moments to thank the Lord that not only has He saved you by grace but that He is also sanctifying you by grace.

The fact that sanctification is a work of God should in no way make us passive. In fact, it ought to make us all the more active. Having been greatly assisted in his second sermon, more opportunities to preach opened up to Müller. These invitations were gladly accepted and Müller gave himself to the work. Despite his efforts, he saw little fruit from his labors. Müller attributes this fruitlessness to a lack of exercise of the Spiritual Discipline of prayer:

*I now preached frequently, both in the churches of villages and towns, but never had any enjoyment in doing so, except when speaking in a simple way; though the repetition of sermons, which had been committed to memory, brought more praise from my fellow-creatures. But from neither way of preaching did I see any fruit. It may be, that the last day may show the benefit even of these feeble endeavours. One reason why the Lord did not permit me to see fruit, seems to me, that I should have been most probably lifted up by success. It may be also, because I prayed exceedingly little respecting the ministry of the word, and because I walked so little with God, and was so rarely a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use. —*

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

Have there been times of activity in your life where you felt frustrated by a lack of fruitfulness? To what would attribute this lack of fruit?

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At this stage in Müller's pilgrimage he took advantage of some free lodging offered to students of divinity. This lodging was the fruit of another of Christ's servants who had lived a century before Müller, A. H. Francke. Francke had founded an orphanage which operated in total dependence on God.

This would have appeared to be an insignificant and incidental fact in Müller's story if we were not already familiar with his life's work. God ways can often be mysterious and He can be preparing us for future use when we are quite unsuspecting.

Can you discern anyways that God prepared you for future service through experiences that at the time you did not understand?

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Take a few moments again to thank the Lord for the work that He has done in your life and then petition Him for the following requests:

- Greater clarity as to what He would desire you to do
- Protection from that which might distract you from the work He has called you to
- Greater faithfulness in ALL of the Spiritual Disciplines
- Fruit, both in your own life and in the lives of others

*“Before I leave this subject I would only add: If the reader understands very little of the word of God, he ought to read it very much; for the Spirit explains the word by the word. And if he enjoys the reading of the word little, that is just the reason why he should read it much; for the frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them, so that the more we read them, the more we desire to do so. And if the reader should be an unbeliever, I would likewise entreat him to read the Scriptures earnestly, but to ask God previously to give him a blessing. For in doing so, God may make him wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3:16.”*

*Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.*

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## ADVICE CONCERNING BIBLE INTAKE

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*If any one should ask me, how he may read the Scriptures most profitably, I would advise him, that:*

*I. Above all he should seek to have it settled in his own mind, that God alone, by his Spirit, can teach him, and that therefore, as God will be inquired of for blessings, it becomes him to seek God’s blessing previous to reading, and also whilst reading.*

*II. He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind, that although the Holy Spirit is the best and sufficient teacher, yet that this teacher does not always teach immediately when we desire it, and that, therefore, we may have to entreat him again and again for the explanation, of certain passages; but that he will surely teach us at last, if indeed we are seeking for light prayerfully, patiently, and with a view to the glory of God.*

*III. It is of immense importance for the understanding of the word of God, to read it in course, so that we may read every day a portion of the Old and a portion of the New Testament, going on where we previously left off. This is important—1, because it throws light upon the connexion, and a different course, according to which one habitually selects particular chapters, will make it utterly impossible ever to understand much of the*

*Scriptures. 2, Whilst we are in the body, we want a change even in spiritual things, and this change the Lord has graciously provided in the great variety which is to be found in his word. 3, It tends to the glory of God; for the leaving out some chapters here and there, is practically saying, that certain portions are better than others; or, that there are certain parts of revealed truth unprofitable or unnecessary. 4, It may keep us, by the blessing of God, from erroneous views, as in reading thus regularly through the Scriptures, we are led to see the meaning of the whole, and also kept from laying too much stress upon certain favourite views. 5, The Scriptures contain the whole revealed will of God, and therefore we ought to seek to read from time to time through the whole of that revealed will. There are many believers, I fear, in our day, who have not read even once through the whole of the Scriptures; and yet in a few months, by reading only a few chapters every day, they might accomplish it.*

*IV. It is also of the greatest importance to meditate on what we read, so that perhaps a small portion of that which we have read, or, if we have time, the whole may be meditated upon in the course of the day. Or a small portion of a book, or an epistle, or a gospel, through which we go regularly for meditation, may be considered every day, without, however, suffering oneself to be brought into bondage by this plan.*

*Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.*

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## NEXT LESSON

# NEW STEPS AND STAGES OF PREPARATION

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*"I returned to Halle, and now prepared with earnestness for the work of the Lord. I set before me the sufferings which might await me. I counted the cost. And he, who once so fully served Satan, was now willing, constrained by the love of Christ, rather to suffer affliction for the, sake of Jesus, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. I also prayed with a degree of earnestness concerning my future work.*

*Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.*