

# Manna in the Morning

by Susan Forde

**Dwight D. Eisenhower:** *“To read the Bible is to take a trip to a fair land where the spirit is strengthened and faith renewed.”*<sup>1</sup>

**Subject:** *Daily Bible Reading*

**Theme:** *How to get more out of daily Bible reading*

**Proposition:** *We can get more out of our daily Bible reading as we give God the opportunity to speak to us as we seek a closer relationship with Him*

**Transitional Sentence:** *In the following ways, our Bible reading will be given new life as God speaks to us through His Word.*

## ***Introduction***

We've been talking about drawing closer to God through Christian disciplines, the call to action and our responsibilities to answer God's call to each of us. What we can do to follow His leading as we experience His desire for us to draw closer to Him and experience the hunger, thirst and longing that He has been stirring in us to have a deeper relationship with Him. By being close to Him, we are filled up with His abundance so that we can better minister to Him through worship, minister to each other through love and nurture, and minister to the world through Evangelism. We can't give people what we haven't gotten from God or it will just be coming from our own strength. But with God, He fills us up to overflowing so that we pour out from His blessings and provisions on those around us.

Last week we talked about prayer and the reasons or benefits to pray. I listed a lot of reasons, but what it boiled down to and was pointed out in the prayer from Ps 16 was that through prayer we develop a closeness to God as we choose to make Him our #1, a closeness to God as we recognize and acknowledge His blessings in our lives even in the midst of the trials and sufferings that life contains, and a closeness that will establish such trust that we will know beyond a doubt that God has made our lives secure.

So now through prayer we are drawing closer to God through prayer! Let's take it one step further; are we doing all the talking? Can God get in a word edgewise? He wants to talk to you. Did you know that? He has something to say. Every day He has a message for you. God still speaks to His people today. God speaks through His Word, the Bible. It is the food for our soul. Food is pretty important.

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<sup>1</sup>Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications.

## Exodus 16

Exodus 16 is the story of the Israelite community grumbling because they were hungry. They didn't have any food. They were two months into their new freedom from slavery in Egypt and were complaining to Moses and Aaron and blaming them, "Oh, if we had only died in Egypt! There we had meat and food and now we are starving to death because of you!"

God promised to rain down bread from heaven that the people could gather each day. They went out the first day and saw this bread and said "What is it?" Must have been something else. Moses gave them the rules on gathering that he received from God because God was testing whether they would follow His instructions or not.

Let's look this morning at Exodus 16. I've basically summarized the story for you and I welcome you to read that later on your own, but for the purposes of the message this morning, the verses we'll read together are 4, 21, and 35. Today I am using the NLT, because of all the translations, it best identified and made clear that the manna was real food.

*NLT Exodus 16: 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.*

*21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared.*

*35 So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

Remember how I've been comparing physical and spiritual in these past weeks? God was giving His people a physical provision, but there is a spiritual lesson too, a message about the vital need of spiritual nourishment through our daily time with God. We all struggle with the temptation to spend less time with God, thinking of our busy days. We are tempted to get on with the business of our day. In this passage, the people were forced, so to speak, to gather what they needed before they began their day.

We too should gather as we spend time with God and gather our spiritual food, our manna in the morning. As I read this passage, the parallelism amazed me, a comparison of manna to our daily time with Jesus who called Himself the Bread of life.

God provided miraculously for His people of His abundant provision for their physical needs, and He continues to provide for us also of His abundant provision not only physically, but daily He provides spiritual food for our spiritual needs and growth.

- Jesus is our manna from heaven, our daily bread or food in a spiritual sense.
- In spending time with Him each day, we are eating of His presence to be strengthened and sustained for that day
- We can pick up as much as we need for that day, but it will not be enough for tomorrow

- We need to start our day with God. We need to gather manna in the morning, before our busy day begins. If we start our busy day first, we tend to push our time with God away and we suffer malnutrition. This daily time with God is His provision for our own good! It is God's best for our lives
- If we don't spend time nourishing ourselves I have to wonder, does the message that He had for us that day disappear if we don't gather it up?
- Finally, we will be nourished by His presence in this way until we reach our heavenly Promised Land where we will be forever in His presence and experience the fullness of His abundance

Many of the reasons that answer the question "Why should I pray?" last week also answer the question "Why should I read my Bible?" They are the same: to glorify God, to change (by not conforming any longer to the pattern of this world that is written in Rom 12:2, that is putting away our games, shutting off the TV for a little while, shutting down the computer for a bit and opening our Bibles, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds and able to test and approve what God's will is),

Through the discipline of regular Bible reading we get to know God better, to know His heart, to obtain spiritual food for our souls, to obtain closeness with God as we make Him our #1 and give Him the opportunity to speak to us through His Word.

In addition to that, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. We become more and more free from the world, freer to do what God wants us to do, to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves, freer to be all He wants us to be.

So that was just a summary of the reasons that answer why should we read our Bibles, but this week is going to be more practical as I will outline a couple of tricks to help you get more out of your reading, to find the message that God wants to tell you, to give your Bible reading new life as we allow God to speak to us through His Word.

First I want to share with you and introduce the SOAP format. Anybody familiar with the SOAP format or with Wayne Cordiero's book *The Divine Mentor*? His SOAP format changed my life! The SOAP acrostic stands for: S=Scripture; O=Observation; A=Application and P=Prayer

### **Scripture**

It is a way of journaling that brings the Bible to life. It's almost like you are writing your own little daily devotional. You can use a tool such as read the Bible in a Year or whatever Bible reading plan you use. Start by asking God simply to speak to you and as you read, go in with an attitude of holy expectation that He is going to speak to you. After all, if you are having holy luxury, you can have holy expectations, right? Find the verse that spoke to you in particular, one that one that jumps out at you. Write it down.

### **Observations**

Then write some observation. What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you in a new way. Paraphrase and write this scripture down in your own words, in your journal. Or you can take a more scholarly approach

and write down an observation that is objective, that is dealing with the facts or the context, something that is free of your personal feelings or prejudices.

### **Application**

Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today. 2 Tim 3:16-17 says, “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

### **Prayer**

Finally, you end in prayer. This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

If you don't care for that much writing, I have another option. It's the mediation bookmark that I've brought along. In five easy steps, you will experience the Bible coming alive and God speaking to you.

### **Step 1:**

Is to understand the **perimeter** of the verse. Always read the Bible in context. Think of what the author is saying to the people to whom he is writing back then.

### **Step 2:**

**Paraphrase** the verse.

### **Step 3:**

**Pulverize** the verse.

*Emphasize a different word in separate readings. Give example.*

*Choose one key word in the message of the verse for you.*

*Ask questions about the word and answer them if you can:*

*Who? Where?*

*What? Why?*

*When? How?*

### **Step 4:**

Personalize the verse.

*Apply the verse to real life situation and/or glue the promise to a problem.*

### **Step 5:**

Pray the verse into your life.

*Ask God to make the verse a reality in your life today.*

These are just two of many ways that the Bible can be read with a deeper consideration of what God is speaking to you.

If you are wondering about Bible dictionaries, it is good to have one, but the Spirit of God will teach you if you don't, you just ask God to speak to you and to reveal Himself to you.

But if you'd like access to all kinds of tools and you like computer stuff and online stuff there are web sites available to make your study more beneficial.

[www.bible.christianity.com](http://www.bible.christianity.com)  
[www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)  
[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)  
[www.christiananswers.net/bible](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible)

These are excellent sources and the first one is easy to use and has a cool tab tool where you have access to Bible dictionaries and other resources, like different versions of Bibles, Encyclopedias, Commentaries, Concordances, word studies, devotionals, and parallel Bibles. I started out using Crosswalk and liked that a lot too, but the short time exploring Bible.christianity.com, I found that it was easier to use.

Now if you don't like or have access to online, but you have a computer, you can think about bible study software, some of which is purchased from online and downloaded, a onetime thing, then it's just available of your computer without having to be online. Here's a site that has a free trial version... [www.swordsearcher.com](http://www.swordsearcher.com) or there are other bible study library software that are available when or if you visit the states.

But the whole point is not to make it complicated, but to read your Bible, the Word of God in order to allow Him to speak to you. At the minimum, get a Bible reading plan and just plug along at the days. If you miss a day, don't beat yourself up. Just pick it up the next day. You don't have to try to play catch up, God will speak to you even if you miss part of the story. If you miss a week, same thing, don't beat yourself up, don't try to play catch up, just pick it up and continue on with the day's assigned readings. These plans are set up so that you can read for about 15 minutes or so and you will have read the Bible in a year!

Many people think that the Bible is a book and we should all start at the beginning. Well, Genesis is great and then Exodus is pretty good too, filled with all kinds of familiar Bible stories, but then comes what I call "the wall" to the average and even the above average Bible reader. Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. All of these contain some pretty cool stories, but most people don't get a lot out reading the laws and the material in Numbers. But let me encourage you to not quit! You can scan through and look for the stories using your subtitles, because there are some neat little treasures hidden within these books. Or consider taking a break and going to something else.

Let me tell you something that will make it a lot easier for you. The Bible is not one book like I said most people think. It is sixty six books. There are stories and historical accounts, poetic writings and even romance stories and writings, writings that are prophetic writings, both those that have already come true and some that many still expect to come true, Gospels, letters. There is something for everyone. So find a book within the Bible that you may like based on your interests and read that book. You like history? Read Kings or Chronicles. You like romance?

Read Ruth or Song of Solomon. You like poetic style, read Proverbs or Psalms. You like worship? Psalms is for you. You like war stories? Any of the historical accounts will be interesting. Are you interested in the end times? Try Revelations. Within the Bible you have your own 66 book library.

Do you need a small book? Find the smallest one (Jude or 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> John) and read it. Then you can have a sense of accomplishment and this will encourage you that you can read a bigger one. You really don't have to start at Genesis. You can start at the New Testament.

Ok, that's enough for practical stuff. We are drawing closer to God by taking action through spiritual disciplines. By prayer, or speaking to God, through worship, praise, confession, thanksgiving, along with requests and by Scripture reading, or letting God speak to us, through study, meditation, listening, journaling and finding an application or meaning for our lives today. This action is necessary because it shows God you are seeking Him, hungry for His daily manna, thirsty for His refreshing living water, longing for a closer relationship with God. Be people of action. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. How many are going to give this a try this coming week?