

Dear Family,

I love Christian biography!

The wonderful works which our good God has performed in others is truly inspirational. On the day David took out Goliath, by God's help, every man of Israel that day thought to himself, "Wow! I wish I trusted God like that!" For us, wishes should be holy aspirations, and such aspirations and lively faith are like muscles; they can be built up. It's still very early in the year 2009. Let us plead and plan for holy priorities. Now is the time for "spiritual spring cleaning".

I urge each of you to examine your routine and pursue an *extreme makeover – soul edition*.

William Wilberforce understood the paramount centrality of **vibrant devotions** in the midst of his twenty-plus years of parliament:

*This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion and religious meditation, Scripture-reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. I had better allot **two hours or an hour and a half** in the morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean. But **all may be done through prayer** – almighty prayer, I am ready to say – and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, **pray, pray, pray!***

I say Amen. Let us learn that critical lesson that mild devotions can have the effect of inoculating us from vibrant communion! The state of lethargy in the *visible* church often lulls us into believing we are walking close with God, as we compare ourselves to pious *non-believers!*

E. M. Bounds (everything by him is worth reading) put it this way:

Short devotions are the bane of deep piety. Calmness, grasp, strength, are never the companions of hurry. Short devotions deplete spiritual vigor, arrest spiritual progress, sap spiritual foundation, blight the root and bloom of spiritual life. They are the prolific source of backsliding, the sure indication of a superficial piety; they deceive, blight, rot the seed, and impoverish the soil.

Mr. Bounds continues,

We can habituate ourselves to our beggarly praying until it looks well to us,

at least it keeps up a decent form and quiets conscience – the deadliest of opiates! We can slight our praying, and not realize the peril till the foundations are gone. Hurried devotions make weak faith, feeble convictions, and questionable piety. To be little with God is to be little for God.

Let us commit to pray, to plead, for one another in our devotions, praying for vibrant, joyful, life-altering, world-changing devotions. *Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.* Have you been laboring in vain, or largely in vain?

I urge you to pray for RCRC using Psalms 80, 107, and 118. I am crying out to the God of prayer that this year and beyond at RCRC will be marked by, ***“This is the LORD’s doing and it is marvelous (impossible) in our eyes.”*** Will you join me?

Please pray for this Lord’s day as we anticipate guests. Please **invite someone** and remember it will be **covered dish supper** following. We will celebrate the **Lord’s Supper** as part of our worship; Psalm 51 is always excellent for our preparations.

Thank you all for the brotherly love I see flourishing at RCRC. I see your good works and glorify our Father in Heaven! To further assist us with this, Kevin has produced a **phone directory** for our fellowship that will be available Sunday. He has set a wonderful example of initiative and thoroughness without independence. We can be good stewards of this tool by loving one another as Christ has, and does, love us.

I praise our mercy-loving God for the privilege of your fellowship! With many opportunities and challenges ahead, let us not lose sight of the Edenic nature of our covenant community, and be thankful. God is good and God is too us!

Please pray for me. A wise man stops to sharpen his axe and a wise believer prays for his pastor. Thank you for your prayers.

With much love and fondness,

iBob