

Six of the best

We all develop routines. Our duties are great and many - be they in the home or at work. Time is limited. There are only 24 hours in each day. Inevitably therefore, we find ourselves working out how we can get through as many tasks as possible each week. And so we establish routines. Occasionally we may adapt them. Frequently they become a source of comfort to us.

What is true in everyday life is also true of the spiritual life. Christians know they are to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Each of us has to work out how we will express our love for Christ. And so we develop practices. We find the best part of the day to spend time alone with God, listening to him speak through his word, and laying before him our prayers and praises.

In 1810 Brownlow North was born in London. He was the son of a Christian minister and the grandson of a man who in turn was bishop of Lichfield, Worcester and Winchester.

Although appointed Registrar of the diocese of Winchester, Brownlow preferred to shoot and fish and even gamble. He wasted time and money. More significantly he resisted the advice of godly relatives, the promptings of conscience, and the claims of Jesus Christ.

He did that for 45 years. That is until he experienced a seizure which made him think he would soon be dead. He got his son to take him to his bedroom. There he thought and prayed. But he held back from asking God for mercy because at the very point when he knew he ought a female servant was in his room lighting a fire. A brief struggle within him ensued. His pride was challenged. He resisted no longer. In the presence of the maid he cried out to God for mercy. He found it in Jesus Christ.

In the days and months that followed he spent much time in prayer and study. God prepared him for years of fruitful service. He was greatly used during the 1859 Revival, especially in Scotland, and Ulster. Many came to know Jesus Christ through him.

Brownlow North developed a routine for himself. He also provided advice to countless others. Out went time wasted on pleasures, and in came time spent with God through reading the Bible and prayer.

It was not long before he had collected some basic rules for daily living. Here they are.

1. Never neglect daily private prayer; and when you pray, remember that God is present, and the He hears your prayers (*Hebrews 11.6*).

2. Never neglect daily private Bible reading; and when you read, or have it read to you, remember that God is speaking to you and that you are to believe and act upon what He says.

Brownlow North believed that all backsliding begins with the neglect of these two rules (*John 5.39*).

3. Never let a day pass without trying to do something for the Lord Jesus. Every night reflect on what Christ Jesus has done for you; and then ask yourself, "What am I doing for Him"? (*Matthew 5.13-16*).

4. If you are in doubt whether a thing is right or wrong, go to your room and kneel down and ask God's blessing upon it (*Colossians 3.17*). If you cannot do this, it is wrong (*Romans 16.23*).

5. Never take your idea of what it means to be a Christian from Christians, or argue that because such people do so and so, therefore, you may (*2 Corinthians 10.12*). You are to ask yourself, "How would Christ act in my place"? And strive to follow Him (*John 10.27*).

6. Never believe what you feel if it contradicts God's Word. Ask yourself, "Can what I feel be true if God's Word is true"? And if both cannot be true, believe God and make your own heart the liar (*Romans 3.4; 1 John 5.10-11*).

Such practical wisdom has been embraced by many. It is derived from and grounded in God's Word. It is the path to maturity and usefulness as a servant of Jesus Christ.