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The Art of Receiving

PART II

MAYAN REVELATION NO. 268

Receiving from Nature
Receiving from Books

Receiving from God
Affirmation

Beloved Perfector:

In the previous lesson we considered the Art of Receiving. As you have followed the principles presented there I hope you have knocked some of the bricks out of the wall that separated you from other people. If you have made a start in mastering the Art of Receiving your days have been happier, more satisfying. Continue to think of the spirit of the giver, to speak with sincere appreciation for every gift, and to take delight in all that is given to you. Open the door of your life wider that you may be able to receive friendship and love - from strangers as well as friends, from those of different cultural backgrounds as well as from those who are nearest and dearest to you.

This lesson will offer further instruction in the Art of Receiving. We will first consider some of the gifts that Nature offers: food, sleep, and renewal of the body and mind. Then we will examine the principles that enable us to receive help from books - to receive entertainment, instruction, and inspiration. And finally we will look for ways by which we can claim the divine strength promised to all those who "wait upon the Lord."

Let us now meditate and pray the following prayer and then proceed with the lesson:

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PRAYER

Father, make me more keenly aware of Thy gifts to me, and to all Thy children. Show me how to accept those gifts which will strengthen my body, enlighten my mind, and still my soul. Amen.



RECEIVING FROM NATURE

*M*ODERN man has created congested cities. Noisy streets, polluted air, and a feverish pace tend to make many dwellers in metropolitan areas tense and nervous. Restlessness, and lack of inner peace, are also in evidence in the lives of many people who live in towns and villages. Numerous individuals are constantly weary, and not from strenuous labor. Many feel exhausted at five o'clock, unable to enjoy the evening. Many begin each day with dragging feet.

Perhaps you are one of these; or it may be your interest is in trying to help someone who is failing to live triumphantly. In either case the following instruction will prove helpful.

Primitive men and women lived close to the soil. The rest which comes when a man stretches out upon the grass, every muscle relaxed, was something they experienced without analyzing it. Simple food - enough, but not too much - was what they desired. Thirst was quenched at springs or running streams. The weak and the wounded would lie for hours in the sun, soaking up the healing rays.

Modern man, unfortunately, often does not accept the healing and strengthening power that Nature offers. He is willing to pay dearly for remedies which he hopes may cure his so-called "civilization sickness." Stimulants and tranquilizers, rich foods and beverages, aspirin and sleeping pills are purchased by the millions. ~~These are expensive, and they are poor substitutes for the marvelous gifts Nature offers - gifts that are free to all who will reach out and accept them.~~ In order that this lesson may be kept simple and direct, with emphasis upon growth of the mind and soul, only a few of Nature's gifts will be mentioned here. I am sure you will think of others, and as you do, pick up your pen and list them. Make your own rules for claiming them for yourself.

Nature has been generous in providing a great variety of foods. In spite of this, and even in homes where plenty of food is available, malnutrition frequently occurs because we stuff our bodies with the wrong kinds of food.

We all have been given twenty-four hours in every day, but sometimes we grab our food on the run. We may even forget to give thanks for what we have received. We may flavor our food with worry, courting digestive disturbance and psychosomatic illness.

Are you seeking continued health and vigor? Begin by avoiding the poor eating habits that undermine physical health, and which add to the mental pressures of life.

1. Choose well-balanced meals, that your body may receive the proper nutrients. (If in doubt, consult a chart that lists the requirements of the body, and tells what elements are furnished by various foods.)
2. Eat enough, but not too much. If you are putting on weight, avoid second helpings and snacks between meals. If you are underweight, or losing weight, supplement your accustomed diet. Avoid diet fads, and consult your physician if gain

or loss in weight persists. Remember that continued health and vigor are your aim. These are more important than the satisfaction of your appetite for certain types of food.

3. Give thanks for the food you eat. The habit of saying Grace before meals has been practiced by people of many faiths. It is an acknowledgement that all our food has its source in God.

In any home, the time when Grace is said, or when all heads are bowed in silent prayer, is one which unites the household. When eating alone, whether at home or in a restaurant, a moment of silent thanksgiving not only quiets your mind and prepares you to fully appreciate the meal, but gives you a spiritual tie with God, and with all who praise Him.

4. Let your conversation be cheerful. Let your thoughts center upon that which makes for happiness.

Physiologists have demonstrated that fear and anger pour a harmful secretion into the digestive system, while contentment and a happy mind promote the processes which insure the proper assimilation of food. The environment in which a meal is eaten is as important as the meal itself.

Avoid haste. Direct your conversation into pleasant channels. If you are eating alone, read snatches from good literature, or recall a gay holiday, a pleasant experience, or words which have been a source of inspiration. There is truth in the ancient proverb: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." (Proverbs 17:22)

Adequate rest is also important if we are to maintain a healthy body. Yet we sometimes fail to establish a balance between work and relaxation. At other times we try to rest, but still are tense; we try to sleep, but toss restlessly as sleep eludes us.

When the great American poet, Edwin Markham, was eighty-two I heard him say with a twinkle in his eye, "I sleep the sleep of the just - just sleep." Often he worked until midnight at his writing. Then he went to bed and slept until he was fully rested. After a tedious journey the poet relaxed in a chair, dozed for ten minutes, and awakened as alert as a boy.

Markham said his vigor came from plain food, Nature's best drink - water, no stimulants, and sleep like that of a child. He practiced a few simple rules of relaxation which are worth following.

- * Work hard while you work; then, having done your best, relax. If your task is creative, and inspiration comes to you in the middle of the night, wake up long enough to write the idea in a notebook, then brush all further thought of it from your mind.

- * If you are fatigued, and have a free moment, rest wherever you are. A chair will suffice when a bed or couch is not available. If necessary, draw a mental blind to shut out distractions.
- * Remember that you do not face your responsibility alone. God is working with you. Leave your problems in His care every night.

Nature offers us specific gifts: food, water, air, sunlight, and sleep. She also offers us herself. She calls us to leave the jostle of the crowd, and to come into the quiet of a garden. She beckons us to take an afternoon away from hard pavements, and walk in grassy places; to take our eyes from close work, and to see the distant hills. She says, "Leave the four-lane highway, the bumper-to-bumper traffic, and take the woodsy road with low-hanging birches and a smell of pine." She whispers, "Get out of the smog. Walk. Stand tall. Breathe deep."

Nature is offering quiet for the irritated mind, beauty for the smudged soul, and refreshment for the body. They are yours, if you will receive them.

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RECEIVING FROM BOOKS



In an old American sampler these words were stitched:

"A ship is a breath of romance

That carries us far away;

And a book is a ship of fantasy

You can sail on any day."

Do you wish to travel, but lack the time or the means? It is easy to get a glimpse of South America, Asia, or Africa without leaving the comfort of your own home. You can escape the humdrum of daily life through the avenues of a mystery, or a romance - or, if you prefer - through drama, or poetry.

Books open the windows of our minds to science, history, or psychology. Perhaps you know a book that has the information you desire, but you lack the time or determination to ferret it out. Do you long for answers to the deep questions of your heart? They are to be found in the writings of men of every age.

Yes, you know this; but perhaps you are bewildered by the mass of available books. You are thirsty for knowledge and for spiritual truth, but you don't see how to get at it. You are confused by the endless flow of volumes from the presses. Instead of reading books that will contribute to your growth and satisfaction, you sometimes settle for bits of information from the newspaper, or whatever magazine is at hand.

A dog is content when scraps of food are thrown to him, but, as sons and

daughters of the Highest, we are free to pick what will feed our bodies, satisfy our minds, and promote the growth of our souls. As we select the food we eat, so let us select the material that will nourish our spiritual life.

Map out your course of reading for a week or a month. Choose the books with careful thought: some for entertainment, some for mental stimulation, and some for inspiration.

Then budget your reading time. Have a plan, and stick to it. You might find it possible to read while riding on a bus, or while waiting for a friend. Ten minutes of reading during the noon hour can brighten the whole afternoon. If you salvage scraps of time, and use them well, the progress you will make in one year may surprise you. It is desirable, however, to get a quiet hour every day - or at least several times each week - when you can read without interruption.

The wisdom of the ages is hidden between the covers of books. It is available to you if you will take the time, and open your mind to receive it.

The greatest single storehouse of knowledge is the Bible. When you make your reading plan, be sure to give this Book - this treasury of books - an important place.

The Bible has much to offer us, yet we often miss some of its greatest truths because we allow some passage that we read to lose much of its significance. This happens when we do not know the situation out of which it came, or fail to apply its teaching to our own lives.

Take time frequently to learn the background of the passage you are studying. Picture the historical setting, the author, and the people to whom the message was first given.

Then think of the words of the Bible as directions or assurance for you personally. For example, say:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
...Though I walk through the valley of the shadow
of death, I will fear no evil."

Claim for yourself the guidance, and comfort, and power that the Bible offers.

You will find that you get more help from the Bible when you make the effort to store verse after verse in your memory so you can recall them in moments of need.

I remember a time when I could get no relief from intense physical pain. Then I recalled the words of Deuteronomy 33:27, memorized many years before: "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." This assurance carried me triumphantly through very difficult days. The verses you learn will prove to be a vast reservoir in your subconscious mind from which words will rise in hours of trial, often emphasizing the very truth you need most at that particular moment.

Meditate upon what you have read, seeking to comprehend the significance

of words and their relevance to your life. It is not enough just to read, or even to memorize verses. Great values come only when you take the verse or promise with you, recalling it several times during the day, letting it speak to your heart's need.

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RECEIVING FROM GOD

THE Bible tells us: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31) Rediscover the significance of this truth for your daily life. The first step is to learn to be quiet for a moment - quiet in mind as well as in body - and to listen to what God is saying.

The Gospels portray Jesus as one who had amazing energy. It is incredible that he accomplished so much in the three brief years of his public ministry. Yet there is no evidence that he worked at a feverish pace. He did not rush. He had a rhythm of quietness and activity, of prayer and work.

We read that the Master, in order to be alone with God, "arose a great while before day." He didn't attempt his ministry of teaching and healing without first going away from the crowd to a quiet place. In prayer he received strength for the tasks that were to challenge him.

Paul said, "Study to be quiet." Endeavor to obey that admonition. Study and learn how to silence not only your voice, but your restless mind.

If you are one of the many who are caught up on life's merry-go-round - traveling fast, but getting nowhere - set a new pattern for your life. Do not live in a constant whirl. Establish a balance between rest and activity.

Start your day by waiting upon God. Empty your mind of all fretting thoughts, all worry over what you must accomplish, and open your life to the inflowing of divine forces. Remember that your Heavenly Father has given you the day. He offers guidance and strength to meet every demand that is made upon you.

Perhaps you are saying, "Yes, I know God is my Father. I know He is the giver of all of life. But He seems far away. When I pray I receive no answer. There seems to be a great barrier between me and God, and I don't know how to get through to Him."

This problem is not yours alone. It has troubled many who are in dead earnest about prayer, and who want every day to feel the presence of God. Don't give up. People who clearly understand what God is saying, and have learned how to accept the peace and the power that is promised, say this is accomplished by praying day after day, even when the effort seems futile. So persist in your effort. This is the first step in destroying the barrier that arises sometimes between you and God.

Second, admit your weaknesses and confess your shortcomings, which may manifest themselves in selfishness, or worship of success, or materialism. If

you are a sensitive Christian, any unworthy word or deed can serve to erect a wall between you and God.

Your mistakes and shortcomings may haunt your waking hours, driving you to any form of activity that will make it unnecessary to think. The things you wish you hadn't done, or the things you meant to do but have left undone, may press upon you even when you try to sleep.

There is no use trying to pretend before God to be a noble person if you are not, or to pray words that do not express your heart's desire. Ask for forgiveness, remembering that even before the words are formed by your lips, God is reaching out to grant your request. Accept His forgiveness, and God will seem closer to you. You will be able to receive the peace which He alone can give.

Third, remember that God does not come into any life uninvited. The artist, Hoffman, graphically portrayed this truth in his masterpiece "The Light of the World". No handle can be seen on the door at which Jesus stands knocking. It must be opened from the inside.

That door symbolizes the barrier that may exist between you and God. While desiring earnestly to communicate with God, have you been listening to other calls, and so have not heard His voice? Have you been too busy to open the door and invite Him in?

Usually the biggest stumbling-block to prayer is the desire to run one's own life. It is easy to sing:

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,"

while really trying to get your own way. You may be willing to let God direct part of your life, and yet reserve your time and your money for selfish purposes. You may secretly be saying, "No interference, please!" Completely surrender your life, and you'll knock the very foundation from any barrier between you and God.

Finally, approach God in true humility, somewhat as a small boy would approach the dad whom he admires and loves. Tell Him, if you wish, some of the things you have on your mind. This is natural, and will enable you to listen more attentively to the divine commands.

Don't use all your prayer time in asking for things, or in attempting to tell God how to answer your requests. God is the Great Conductor. He assigns the instruments and the parts. Accept yours - and with His help you can do what is expected of you. Open your mind and heart to the inflowing of His peace. You will be prepared, then, to receive the gift of God's power.

Glenn Clark, in his autobiography A MAN'S REACH, declares: "Every person is a focal point through which the infinite resources of God Himself may flow." As a college student Clark had tired easily. Through prayer he opened his mind more and more to the Divine Will. As he did this he found he was able to receive amazing energy, enough to meet all his needs. This came, he said, when he accepted what was offered by the Creator and Sustainer of all.

His friends noticed that Glenn Clark, who had become a track coach, not only possessed boundless energy, but seemed able to impart his energy to others. Someone looked for an explanation of this remarkable ability. He discovered that Clark wasn't really pouring his strength into others, but was teaching the young men on the track team to open their lives to God, to let Divine Strength flow through them. It isn't surprising that week after week they scored victories both in their personal lives, and for their college.

This experience can be yours. God offers you His gift of power. Open your life to receive it. Peace, too, is available when we meet the Father in prayer, and learn from Him how to accept our divine birthright as sons and daughters of the Highest.

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AFFIRMATION

Desiring to live a rich, full life:

I will accept the gifts of Nature that can bring health and renewed strength.

I will budget my hours so that there will be time every day for reading good books, including the Bible.

I will meet God in prayer and accept His gifts of peace and power.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.