

## Illumination

A Bible Message by Bayless Conley

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Thirty-eight years ago my father dropped off my friend and me in the San Gabriel Mountains. This was something that we did often. Both of us were fifteen, and we were going hiking for a couple of days. We had our backpacks, and we hiked in one of the forks of the river, back maybe four miles, and set up a little camp next to the river. We got our fly rods out, and we were fly fishing, catching trout, and having a good time.

That afternoon, one of us discovered a cave. It turned out to be an old miner's cave from maybe 50 years before. There is just something about caves and little boys. We got some stick matches and went in and explored it, and halfway down the shaft, there was an old snag someone had dragged in. I think it must have been 20 years before because it was rotten and slimy and just this big old branch of a tree; and it went up and leaned against a shaft they had cut in the roof of this cave. So I actually put the rest of the matches in my pocket and shimmied up this old slimy snag. I would light a stick match with my thumb and then stuck it in my teeth so I could see as I climbed. The tree ran out, and then I climbed up the side of this thing, and it was just pitch black. I got up, and there was another shaft up above that ran parallel for quite a distance. I explored that with the matches and actually came to another giant shaft, a hole that went down. I could not tell how deep it was. I explored around up there for a while and came back. As I was climbing back down, I reached in for a match, and I had run out of matches. So I had to get down that old slimy snag and down the wall of that shaft in utter darkness. I ended up getting cut, bruised, and banged up, and it was one of the most glorious days of my life, actually. Great fun for boys! But I realized how utterly important the illumination was that those matches provided. I want to talk to you today about illumination and how utterly and completely important it is to our Christian lives, to our walk with God, and in connection with receiving everything God has provided for us.

### ILLUMINATION COMES BEFORE SALVATION

Look at Acts 26, verse 17. Paul is standing before King Agrippa, and he is sharing his testimony about how he met Christ on the Damascus Road. This is one of the things that Jesus told him. Acts 26:17,

17 'I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

Isn't that interesting: "I delivered you from it; now I am sending you to it." **Jesus does that. He delivers us out of certain things, helps us to get strong, helps us to grow, and then He will send us right back to where we came from to help rescue other people.** So, "I delivered you from them; now I am sending you to them." And this is why. Acts 26:18,

18 'to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

**I want you to notice three things he said that he had been sent to them to do.**

**Number one:** To turn them from the power of Satan to God. Literally, to bring them out from under the authority and rule of Satan to God.

**Number two:** To help them receive the forgiveness of sins.

**Number three:** To receive an inheritance among those who are set apart or sanctified by faith

Notice that before he talked about being delivered from the power of Satan, before he spoke of receiving forgiveness, and before he spoke of receiving an inheritance, he said, "I have been sent to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light." **An opening of the eyes and receiving of illumination precedes deliverance from Satan's power, precedes receiving forgiveness, and precedes receiving and walking in our inheritance.** Illumination comes first, though all of these things were accomplished through Christ's sacrifice. On God's side of the ledger, it's a done deal. It's finished. It's complete; but something that is legally ours is quite different from what is experientially ours. **You can have a legal right to something, but that does not mean you will ever taste it or experience it.**

I was re-reading a story just the other day about the California Gold Rush. In 1848 our population in the state increased from 15,000 to 100,000 overnight. It was all started by a man named James Marshall, who was helping to build a mill for a man named Sutter up in the Sacramento area, and he discovered gold. It started the gold rush; but James Marshall died penniless, actually died in the street. They found his body in the street. He had nothing, though he was the man who discovered gold and started the gold rush. In the very spot and the area where he found that gold, millions upon millions of dollars of gold was mined from there and taken out of the rivers and streams. He never filed a claim. He had access to this wealth that was there; but he died penniless.

It makes me think of the world. The Bible says that God was personally present in Christ reconciling and restoring the world to favor with Himself, not counting up against men and holding against them their trespasses, but canceling them. **The world has already been restored to favor with God. Christ has canceled the sin of the world, yet there are people who will go into an eternity without Christ and forfeit the gift of eternal life due to ignorance or due to stubbornness.** Yet it belongs to them. I am convinced that almost all believers live and walk far below their privileges. They do not walk in the things that God has provided for them, and it actually comes back to what we are talking about here.

God said in Hosea 4:6, "my people." Not the world, not pagans, not heathens. **God said, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge."** In Isaiah 5:13 He said, "My people go into captivity because they have no knowledge."

I was in a golf tournament here recently, and I got there and found out they gave me a free golf shirt and free golf balls. They gave me a gift bag and all of the drinks the people wanted on all of these holes were free. They had these big tubs with different beverages, as well, and all the drinks were free. At the end they had a great bar-b-que, all included in the price of the golf. I could have gone thirsty and hungry and missed out on all the other blessings if I had not known that they were included in the price. Yes, salvation is the main deal, just like golf was the main deal that day. But you know what? The Bible says, "Do not forget all His benefits."

Now I want to look for the next few minutes at these three things. At coming out from under the influence of Satan, being delivered from his power, receiving forgiveness, and receiving our inheritance; but realizing that before we can be delivered, before we can receive, we first have to be illuminated. Eyes must be open, from darkness to light, before any of these blessings can be experienced. I am going to take them in a little bit different order. I am going to start with forgiveness.

## Forgiveness.

**Open eyes and illumination precede receiving forgiveness.** Let me quote to you from the Book of Hebrews. This book was written to Jewish Christians who were suffering great persecution due to their choice to follow Christ. Because of the persecution and the hardships they were experiencing, some of them were renouncing Christ and thinking about abandoning their faith in Christ. The Book of Hebrews is encouraging them and showing the superiority of Christ compared to the Old Testament, and the superiority of Christ to angels. At one point, in Hebrews 10:32, as Paul is encouraging them as they are suffering, he talks about their salvation. Listen to the language the writer of Hebrews uses. He said, "But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle of sufferings." He is talking about their conversion experience and refers to it as "being illuminated." Illumination has to come before we can receive salvation. In fact, look at Second Corinthians 4:3-4, some startling verses of Scripture here. 2 Corinthians 4:3,

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

Meaning it's hidden to them. They cannot see it. Why? Verse 4,

4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

This verse tells us that the reason some people who are unsaved is that they are blinded. Why? The god of this age... the little g - o - d, the devil... has blinded them and caused them to not perceive and to understand the light of the gospel. But, friend, **the light has to shine before you can get saved.** That is why the Scripture says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." **Sometimes you have to hear it and hear it and hear it before the light dawns on you.** That is one way it is overcome. In fact, look at the next thing he says in verse 5,

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord...

**The best way to overcome it on our part is to just keep preaching and to keep sharing.** Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of Your word gives light." **If we keep preaching it, eventually it is going to find entrance; and when it does, it brings illumination with it.**

I remember the night that I got saved. There had been a gargantuan struggle going on in my life since the day I first heard the gospel. Some time before that, a little boy in a park told me about Jesus for the first time, and I was struggling and agonizing. I was reading the Bible and asking questions and yelling at God. I didn't realize it; but there was an unseen battle raging over my soul. It literally felt like my life was being pulled apart, until that night sitting in that little mission in Medford, Oregon, when suddenly I was illuminated. Suddenly it dawned on me. I saw it in a flash that Jesus was real, that He was the Son of God, that salvation was real, and that I could start a new life with God. I began to weep as I sat there on that front row in that mission. As far as I know, I was the only one who responded that night; and I cried and I cried and I cried and I cried. I absolutely came undone. I wept like a child until I could not weep any longer. I got saved that night. I remember when it hit me. I remember when the light switch flipped on.

Shortly after that I had a friend named Steve. I was sharing the gospel with him, and he basically said, “Bayless, get off my back!” I kept talking to him and kept talking to him. I invited him to come out to a concert. There was an old Christian band called Bethlehem playing on the college campus. I said, “Come on out to the conference.” He said, “Bayless, I am not coming.” I said, “Okay, I hope you do.” I went to the concert, and they sang, and the guy shared his testimony, and they shared a bit of the word. He gave an invitation at the end, and one lone figure came out of the back of the hall. It was my friend, Steve. He was sobbing as he walked to the front. The light came on when he was in that concert. He got saved.

Just the last few months I was speaking in another country. A big guy came up to me, and he was crying and said, “I wanted to meet you.” He said, “I was in prison, and I saw the broadcast from your church, and I gave my life to Christ. I got my life turned around, and I am in full-time ministry now, and hundreds of people are coming to Christ.” He kissed me on the cheek, and I started to cry. The light dawned on him sitting in prison.

### **ILLUMINATION COMES FROM HEARING THE WORD**

All right, how does it happen? Well, from hearing. **The entrance of His word gives light. I think it also happens because we are hungry.** Jesus said, “Those who hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God will be filled.” In other words, God will meet them. **If we have a genuine hunger to really know God, to really know the truth, I think God will move heaven and earth to get the truth to us.** But if we are not hungry, you say, “Well, I just want to live my life. I do not want to be bothered with spiritual things and eternal things,” you will be accommodated, as well. I think almost always there is some unseen figure in the background praying. It may have been a praying grandmother, some neighbor, maybe someone who just saw you that has gotten on their knees and prayed and asked God to have mercy on you and to open the eyes of your understanding. Friend, the light has to come on before we are saved.

You just may be here today because you are hungry. You may be listening to me right now because you are hungry. You genuinely want to know the truth. Maybe somebody has been praying for you. Well, right now, you are hearing it, and I want to tell you: **You can be forgiven. There is a God in heaven, who knows your name and knows your story. He loves you, and He has already cancelled your sins. His Son hung on the cross and was judged in your place that you might start a new life.** The slate can be wiped clean, my friend, and you can start over afresh and anew and have a relationship with God. It’s not about ritual; it’s not about ceremony. It’s about genuinely knowing God and walking with Him and talking with Him. Today may just be your day.

### **ILLUMINATION PRECEDES COMING OUT FROM UNDER THE POWER OF SATAN**

The second thing that he talked about was coming out from under the power of Satan and coming to God. That word “power” literally means authority, influence, or control. **Satan’s influence brings oppression. It brings entrenched patterns of sinful behavior. It creates invisible shackles on the minds, hearts, and bodies of men and women that enslaves them, binds them, controls them, and contains them.**

There is an interesting story in the Bible about Samson, a man anointed by God. He was captured by the Philistines, and the first thing they did to Samson was they put out his eyes. Then they put him in shackles. I quote to you Judges 16:21, “Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.” But before the shackles there was blindness.

There is a similar story in Jeremiah 39:7. It talks about how the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem and carried off the king of Judah, Zedekiah, and it says this: "He put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with bronze fetters." What a picture. Both men of God, both at one time anointed by God and used by God, and now they are blind and in chains, enslaved, restrained, and controlled by the enemy. But before the chains went on, the lights went out. **Friend, the only way the enemy can control you is to keep you in the dark; but the moment your eyes are opened, he is in trouble.**

Look at Psalm 18. I'll bet you some of you will know this passage of Scripture. When I first got saved, we used to sing this as a chorus in the little Pentecostal church I was going to. Psalm 18:29,

29 For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall.

30 As for God, His way *is* perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.

Maybe somebody in the house remembers that song. "I can run through a troop and leap over a wall. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He is my strength; He is my shield. He gives power to all. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" What incredible words! They talk about the empowerment of God, the protection of God. But look what precedes it. Look in verse 28, the verse right before that. Psalm 18:28,

28 For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Friend, there is no running against a troop without illumination. There is no leaping over a wall without illumination. **Illumination precedes protection and empowerment.** You don't get verse 29 and verse 30 without verse 28. **We do not find deliverance from the power of the devil without our eyes first being open and turning from darkness to light.** Look in Psalm 27:1,

1 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I *will be* confident.

I have heard at least a portion of those Scriptures preached many, many times.

- "The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?"
- "I am not afraid of an army. If an army encamps against me, my heart will not fear."
- "If my enemies come against me, they will stumble and fall."

Yes, that is all true, but look how it opened up: "The Lord is my light." Then he said, "The Lord is the strength of my life." Before He is my strength, He is my light. **Before strength comes illumination. Before defeating the enemy comes illumination.** It is so incredibly important.

I remember sitting in my kitchen many years ago. I was living in a little one-room apartment, and I was doing a thorough study throughout the entire Bible of the subject of sickness and disease and healing. I looked at every single case in the gospels where Jesus dealt with the sick. I found every reference to sickness in the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, every single

reference to healing, and I studied them and I read them, and I studied them and I read them, and I was cross-referencing. I came across three verses while I was cross-referencing there, sitting in my kitchen, and suddenly the light came on. It's hard to describe what happened to me. As I was reading, it started off in the Book of Job, and it says in Job 2:7 that Satan smote Job with sore boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet; and at the end of the book it says when Job prayed for his friends, God turned Job's captivity. Then I saw that **God called sickness captivity.**

Then in Luke 13, there was a woman who was bowed over with some arthritic condition for 18 years and could not lift herself up. Jesus, standing in the synagogue, challenged the religious people and said, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound these 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" **Jesus called sickness bondage.**

Then in Acts 10:38, I read how **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit** and with power, who went about doing good and **healing all that were oppressed of the devil**, for God was with Him.

Suddenly, to me, it was as if the Trinity had just spoken to me. I was having a divine commentary on the Scriptures. In the Book of Job, God the Father said sickness was captivity; in the gospels, the Son said it is bondage; then the Holy Spirit, in the Book of Acts, says it is oppression. It was as if this line of demarcation was drawn. I saw causes; I saw sources; I suddenly saw God as a very good God and the devil as a very bad devil. It changed forever how I prayed for the sick.

Let me tell you what happened to me. As I was reading those verses, I looked at them again; I looked at them again; I looked at them again, and I jumped up from that table, that little Formica table, and I started shouting and marching around the kitchen, shouting at the top of my lungs. I was the only one there. I shouted and shouted and shouted. I sat back down, and I read it again. I jumped up and started shouting and shouting again. I was marching around the kitchen, having a little Jericho march and shouting at the top of my lungs, and then I sat down, and I shouted sitting down. All I can tell you, my friend, is suddenly I knew something. It was not just here (in my head). I knew something here (in my heart). I had illumination from God. It was suddenly real to me.

I heard a preacher one time in Oregon at a little meeting. He had been a farmer. It was the only time I ever heard this guy preach. He was not eloquent, but I experienced something in that meeting that I have only encountered a few times in my walk with the Lord in the past 32 or 33 years. There was something so profound on that man's life, something so impacting, that I was just astonished as I sat in that service and listened to this ex-farmer preach the gospel. I could tell he was kind of a shy person, and at the end of the meeting he told his story: how he had been ruled his whole life by fear and poor self-esteem. He said, "I would never even look up. I never looked at anyone in the face to speak to them my whole life. I looked at my feet when I talked to people. I was ashamed and afraid to look up." He said, "It had twisted me on the inside." He said, "I didn't just have a poor self-image. I had no self-image. I was ruled by fear... afraid of people, afraid of everything!" He said, "I wasn't just shy. I was bound until one day I heard someone preaching about who we are and what we have in Christ." He said, "I began to do an intense study, not about anything that I had earned or merited, but about what Christ was offering me freely as a believer and what belonged to every child of God." He emerged from that study as a wildcat of a preacher! The shackles were broken off of him, and he was delivered out from under the power of Satan when illumination came. Now, granted, he was still a work in

progress like the rest of us are, but if we are going to come out from under the influence and authority and control of Satan, illumination has to precede it.

### **ILLUMINATION PRECEDES POSSESSING OUR INHERITANCE ON EARTH**

Then the third area that Paul talked about, says, "I've been sent to them, that they might receive an inheritance among those who are sanctified." As I shared recently, **the lion's share of our inheritance is on the other side in heaven**, and I am looking forward to that. Once we get there, it is ours. No more tears; no more trials; no more sickness; no more pain. It is all washed away. The former things will not be remembered. Hallelujah to that! **However, right now we are here, and we do have an inheritance on this side, as well.** There is much that belongs to us in Christ. Yet the New Testament uses the analogy of Israel having to possess their inheritance in the Promised Land. **God said, "I have given it to you. It is yours. It's a done deal. Still, there are going to be giants; there are going to be trials; there will be enemies that will confront you and resist you, but you have to go in and take it, and it's going to take faith to possess your inheritance."** So it is with us until we pass on to the other side. There will be conflict, there will be giants, and there will be trials, but we do have an inheritance. **It has to be taken; it must be possessed.**

Look at Ephesians, chapter 1. Paul is praying for the church at Ephesus here. In chapter 1 and verse 16 he says,

16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:  
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,  
18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened..."

**He is praying that they will receive illumination.** The Amplified Bible says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be flooded with light." What is this about?

...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,  
19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power  
20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

Now Paul is praying for them that they would receive illumination concerning three things: Their calling, their inheritance, and the power that belonged to them in Christ. Those three things.

I cannot tell you how many times I have prayed this prayer for myself and prayed this prayer for others, that God would open my heart and give me illumination and understanding concerning what I am called to do and how what He has given me fits into what He is doing in the world, that I would understand and see the inheritance that I have and what belongs to me in Christ, and that I would understand the greatness of His power that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

He has given Him authority over all things! But, friend, none of it works without illumination. **We will never access our calling, never access our inheritance, never access the power that belongs to us without having the eyes of our heart enlightened and illuminated first.**

Right now we are just talking about the inheritance part. The New Living Testament says it this way: "I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance He has given to His people." We have been given so much in Christ! Forgiveness, peace, healing, authority, friendship with God, fellowship with the saints, wisdom, the promises of guidance, material provision, strength, influence, the privilege of prayer that changes things. But so much of it remains unaccessed and unused because our eyes are still veiled.

I was coming back with some friends from Catalina late one night in a boat, and a dense fog had rolled in. There is just a very small opening into the harbor. The channel opening is quite small, and we could not see it. We had to use radar. Radar showed the position of the boat and showed the opening in the channel. It was very easy to get into the harbor that way. When we came up, there was another boat on the outside of the harbor there, going back and forth, back and forth, looking for the entrance to the harbor, and they could not find it. Either they did not have radar or were not using it. **Sometimes the entrance to the harbor of God's blessing is obscured by the fog of the enemy, and the only way we are going to get into that harbor and experience the things that God has for us there is through illumination.**

## **HOW TO GET ILLUMINATION**

### **Pray**

How do you turn on the radar? The first thing you do is you pray. That is what Paul is doing here for the Ephesians. "I am praying that God would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of your heart would be illuminated concerning these things. So we need to pray.

### **Study the Bible**

Secondly, we need to get into the word of God. I quote to you Acts 20:32. The apostle said this to a group of believers: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified." Paul said, "I am commending you to the word of God." The word will give you an inheritance!

**There is a process, most generally, that causes those things that are promised in His word to become a reality in our life.** They don't just fall on you like ripe fruit out of a tree. Part of that process involves flipping the light switch of His word, even as it says in Psalm 119:105, **"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."** Before inheritance comes illumination, and there is a process that God outlines in His word that I want to share with you as I bring this to a close. But I feel like I need to state this: Though there certainly is a process, God is a sovereign God, is He not? God can do anything He wants anytime He wants to anyone He wants, any way He wants. He is God, and He does not have to explain Himself to me or to you. **Sometimes God, for perhaps reasons known only to Him, interrupts the process and intervenes and circumvents the process; but the shame is when you have Christians who are trying to live from one sovereign intervention to the next, and there is no growth between. They never engage in the process.** Friend, God expects us to grow. He expects us to get involved in the process. He may do something sovereignly, but He may not. If you are living your life, just waiting for the next sovereign thing and taking this attitude, "Well, if God wants me to have it, I guess I will have it; and if He does not want me to have it, I won't." That



takes all of the responsibility from us, doesn't it? It places it all on God, and it requires no growth whatsoever. Friend, that is not God's will. **God's plan is that we get involved in the process.** Here is how it works.

## 1. Information

It begins with information. We have to get information. Proverbs 19:2 says, "It is not good for a soul to be without knowledge." You need to be informed, listening to preaching and teaching, reading, and studying. I am all for being inspired and enjoying a message, and some people just know how to entertain a crowd; but you do not need to be entertained. You need to be informed. I don't care how much you jump up and shout and wave your hanky. If you have not learned something, all you have done is maybe lost a little weight from dancing. Don't get me wrong. I think church ought to be enjoyed. However, **you don't just need to be inspired, you need to be informed.** We need information. That is where it begins. God said, again, "My people perish... they go into captivity... because they have no knowledge."

## 2. Meditation

Then we have to do something with that information, and that is called meditation. Meditation. Psalm 1 talks about the **man who is like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in its season. Whatever he does will prosper.** Here is what it says about him: "**He meditates in the law of the Lord day and night.**" God told Joshua, "Don't let this book of the law depart from your mouth, but meditate in it day and night. Then you will make your way prosperous. Then you will have good success." The Bible word "meditate" has to do with considering, reflecting, pondering, and even speaking aloud.

You know, everyone in the house, everyone listening to me, knows how to meditate. **If you know how to worry, you know how to meditate.** Worry is meditation. It's just meditation on the wrong things. You throw an old bone to a dog and he gnaws on that thing and gnaws that thing, they say he is worrying that bone. That is what you need to do. You need to chew on the word, and chew on it, and chew on it, and think about it. Speak it aloud to yourself over and over and over.

I had a friend, George Stormont. He has been in heaven many years now. He was an old English preacher, and probably when he was about 82 he sat down with our staff. I still remember what he said that day. He said, "I believe the greatest problem in the church today is undigested theology." We have it all up here (in the head), and we have got almost nothing down here (in the heart). Friend, **meditation gets the word from your head to your heart,** and it does you good when it gets in your heart. **That is when faith is born; that is where real faith comes from. It is with the heart man believes, the Scripture says.**

Think about our beloved Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." What is the first thing He makes us do? He makes us lie down in green pastures. Now the pasture is where the sheep feed. That is where they eat. It does not say, "I run through a green pasture, grabbing a bite on my way to my next appointment." No, but He makes me lie down in green pastures. **You have to take time to feed. You have to be still. You cannot rush this.** An interesting thing about sheep, and the way they eat, is that they ruminate. That means they chew the grass or whatever they are feeding on, swallow it, and then they bring it up again, and they start chewing it some more. Rumination is what that's called - chewing the cud, and it's a perfect picture of meditation. I may be reading a chapter of the Bible, and I read it again, and I reflect on it, and I ponder it. Something stands out to me, and I say it aloud... I read, and then I say it

aloud, and I maybe say one of the words again and again. Then I read the chapter again, and I think about it, and then I read it aloud again, and I think about it some more, and I think about it some more. **Friend, it is only through the process of meditation on the information that we have that illumination comes forth.**

My mother, many years ago, bought my youngest son a rock tumbling machine as a gift. We thought it was a wonderful gift until we turned it on and read the instructions. It had to run for two weeks, minimum, and they said if you want real good results, it had to run like four weeks. You would drop these rocks in the rock tumbler and put some like metal grit in there and a little bit of water, and it would go over and over and over. This thing was so loud that our neighbors wanted us to move out of the neighborhood by the time we were done. They actually gave you rocks that look basically like non-descript, dull rocks. That is what you put in the tumbler. The rocks are tumbling round and round and round and round, just like meditation: **You roll the Scriptures over and over. You think about them. You talk about what Jesus said.** It may be a particular verse, a particular theme, a particular subject. You are reading it and thinking about it and pondering. When you take those rocks out of that tumbler after they are done, they shine, and there are colors and nuances in them you did not see before. **When you begin to drop Scriptures in your heart and tumble them around and think about them and think about them, suddenly they begin to shine with illumination and truth that you never saw.** You see things that you never saw. You see, what happens between information and illumination is meditation.

### 3. Illumination

**Illumination is when it becomes real!** It is suddenly alive! The word begins to speak to you! You hear it and you hear it and you hear it and you hear it, and then suddenly you *hear it*, and that is when real faith is born.

### 4. Action

Then the next step in this process is action. It is **the natural, almost unconscious, reaction to illumination.** When something is real to you, you act on it unconsciously. That action might be offering thanks, praise, giving, getting up, moving, doing something. **Faith without action is dead.** So it begins with information. Then there is meditation, and then comes illumination, and then I naturally act.

### 5. Manifestation

Then the last part of the process, and this is God's part, is manifestation. Only God can do that. **The promise is fulfilled.** That is the process.

A lot of people do not even want to get the information. They just say, "Oh, God, help!" And God is merciful, and God helps them. They go, "Oh, this is wonderful!" Then there is no growth, there is no change, there is no engagement in the process, and then they are in a crisis again: "Oh, God, help!" Maybe He will, but maybe He will say, "You need to grow up so that I can use you to help somebody else."

Illumination. If I can take this all the way back to the first thing we talked about, forgiveness. There is nothing more important than that. I just want to tell you, if you are in here today, you can start a new life with God. He loves you; He knows you. I have walked with Jesus for well over 30 years. I was a mess when I came to Him. I have never regretted a single moment of it. It

has not always been easy. I have had some titanic struggles and trials; but He has never left me; He has never forsaken me. I want to tell you: You can know Him today. Bow your heads and close your eyes just for a moment.

I do not think it's coincidental that you are listening to me today. **You are here because you have been hungry. You have been looking for something in your life. Jesus is it. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. The Bible says if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and if you confess Him with your mouth as Lord, that God brings you into a relationship that the Scriptures call salvation.** Friend, it is not about ritual. It is not about performing ceremonies. It is about walking and talking with God. The whole world stood guilty before God. The wages of sin is death, the Bible says. God, in His mercy, sent His Son to take our place. As Christ hung upon that cross, He did it for me. He did it for you. And the price was paid. Our sin was taken care of. On the third day Jesus arose from the grave. **If you will put your trust in Him today, friend, you can know Him. You can be saved. You can receive forgiveness.**

Now I can talk to you all day long and try and talk you into it; but if the light has dawned in your heart already, you know what I am saying is true. I want to ask you to pray a simple prayer, a prayer of putting our trust in Jesus Christ, the Savior. If you have never done it, here is your opportunity, friend.

I want to include, as well, anyone who's here that at one time you were on fire for God, but your heart has grown very, very cold. You know the truth, but your attitude towards it and your lifestyle do not really reflect a relationship with God. You have a destiny, and you know you have a destiny, but you have sort of laid it to the sideline, and you know God is calling you to catch fire once again and to start living for eternity. You have a destiny to fulfill, my brother; you have a destiny to fulfill, my sister. But, really, right now, in your heart, you are a prodigal son; you are a prodigal daughter, and you need to return and come back to God with all that you have. He is not mad at you. He is not angry. He will wash you clean. We are going to pray.

All right, let's pray. Just put one hand on your heart. Say,

**Dear Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me. I believe with all of my heart that Your sacrifice was not in vain, that You accomplished the work of redemption, that You died in my place, that You arose from the grave, victorious over sin, victorious over death, and victorious over the devil. Jesus, I invite You into my life today. Be my Lord and Savior. Teach me Your ways. From this moment forward, my life is Yours, totally and completely. Amen.**