

*How to Have a
Time Alone
With God*

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How to Have a Time Alone with God

Introduction

From earliest times God's people have walked with God. *What a wonder to walk with the Creator of each bird and flower and of every vast galaxy!* "Noah walked with God." Before him, "Enoch walked with God." In the Garden of Eden it seems that God would come down to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. We need God. We need His mercy. We need His guidance. He desires our love!

When you're in love, you like to be with that special one! Besides, we *need* to spend time alone with God!

Of all the disciplines or habits you can have, I know of none more valuable than having a daily time alone with God! Would you try to work without breathing? Can you grow without eating?

In our time alone with God there are two main activities: listening and speaking, that is, reading God's Word, and praying. But first, how do we approach God?

Approaching God

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15,16).

We approach God on the basis of His mercy; He loved us enough to give His Son, and He understands our weaknesses. We have access to God on the merits of His Son Jesus and His death for our sins. We cannot approach God on the merits of our own righteousness.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (Titus 3:5).

But turning to God means turning from sin.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded (James 4:8).

The New Testament Christians “turned **to** God **from** idols” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). So we turn from any known sin and trust His mercy in the salvation Jesus provides.

Prayer

Why have we been defeated so much? Often, we failed to pray. **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”** (Matthew 26:41). Why have we missed so many blessings? We did not pray. **“Ye have not because ye ask not”** (James 4:2).

How did Solomon get wisdom? He prayed for it. God liked his prayer and gave him wisdom. We can and should pray for wisdom, too!

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (James 1:5).

How did Jabez get God’s blessing and his borders enlarged? How did he get protected from evil? He prayed. God gave him what he asked for. Besides, God said Jabez was more honorable than his brothers.

And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren... And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it

may not grieve me!” And God granted him that which he requested (1 Chron. 4:9,10).

How did blind Bartimaeus get healed? He asked. Jesus had said, **“What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”** (Luke 18:41).

What do you want Jesus to do for you? **“Ask, and it shall be given you...”** (Matthew 7:7).

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him (Matthew 7:11).

Let's make sure that *each day* we pray and get the wisdom, and blessing, and protection we need!

How should we pray?

Jesus gave these rules in Matthew 6. Praying should:

- Be in secret
- Not be vain repetition
- Follow the pattern of the “Lord’s Prayer”

Jesus said we should not be as the hypocrites who love to pray in public so they can be seen of others.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (Matthew 6:6).

Get alone with God. Jesus did.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed (Mark 1:35).

While there is a place for group praying, as the apostles did, our main praying should be in secret.

What can we pray with confidence, knowing it is the will of God? **“We know not what we should pray for as we ought”** (Romans 8:26). So Jesus gave us a pattern prayer. Every day I use the Lord’s Prayer as an outline for my praying. Using the Lord’s Prayer is not just my choice; it is the Lord’s command. Jesus said, **“After this manner therefore pray ye: ‘Our Father which art in heaven...’”** (Matthew 6:9). In Luke 11:2 He said, **“When ye pray, say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven...’”** We know we should use the Lord’s Prayer *daily* because it says **“give us this day our daily bread.”**

So let’s look at each phrase in the Lord’s Prayer as a pattern for our praying.

Our Father which art in heaven

We come to God as our *Father*. I’m a father. I love my children and like to make them happy by giving them good things. God likes to make you happy by answering your prayers. Jesus said, **“Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”** (John 16:24).

Hallowed be Thy name.

We begin with worship. We approach God with thanks and praise. **“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise”** (Psalm 100:4).

I have been happier since I started obeying this command. (Thankfulness is a big key to happiness.) Each morning before I even get up, I lie in bed reviewing good things from the day before and thanking God for good things I have. Then I sing a few songs of praise. (Not aloud if I’m still in bed. I don’t think God wants me to torment Vicki, my wife!) I begin the day with thanks and praise.

Thy kingdom come.

We pray for the Lord’s return, when He will overthrow Satan’s kingdom. Justice and blessing will cover the earth. We will live in fullness of joy and pleasures forever!

When we pray **“Thy kingdom come,”** we also pray for His kingdom to come *now*. When we were saved we were **“translated into the kingdom of His dear Son”** (Colossians 1:13). So we pray for more people to accept the King. What is it like when God takes over? **“...The kingdom**

of God is... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). So we can pray for ourselves and for others that righteousness, peace, and joy will come!

Thy will be done.

When we pray we must be willing to obey. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”** (Psalm 66:18).

Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1,2).

So God will not listen to us if we do not turn from our sins. In fact, if we refuse to listen to His commands, He cannot stand our prayers.

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination (Proverbs 28:9).

Praying “Thy will be done” is surrendering to His will.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Praying “**give us this day our daily bread**” is a reminder that “**your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things** [food and clothes]” (Matthew 6:32) and is happy to give them to us.

Jesus said to pray, “**Give us this day our daily bread.**” I am to pray for *others*, not just myself. Most mornings I already have enough food in the house for that day. So I should pray for others in need, especially those persecuted for Christ’s sake.

Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body (Hebrews 13:3).

In praying for others, pray for what *you* would want in their situation. “**Love thy neighbor as thyself**” (Matthew 22:39). Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. For example, in praying for those imprisoned for the faith, think of what you would want if you were in prison!

**Forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors.**

We continually need forgiveness, and we can have it as we confess our sins.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

Who will get mercy? Those who name their sins and turn away from them, those who confess and forsake them.

Jesus insisted that we will not be forgiven if we do not forgive those who sin against us.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14,15).

And his lord was wroth [with the unforgiving servant], and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall My

heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses (Matt. 18:34,35).

**Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.**

We need the Lord's help continually so we do not fall into sin. We get help by praying for it. Jesus said, **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”** (Matt. 26:41). The disciples slept instead of praying, so in the time of trial they failed; they all forsook Jesus. Peter cursed, swore, lied, and denied the Lord. So we need to pray daily that God will deliver us from evil!

The word *evil* sometimes means *trouble*. So when I pray “deliver us from evil,” I also pray that God will keep my family and others from sickness and harm, as well as from sin.

What Should We Pray About?

We should pray about everything:

In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6,7).

Prayer is a wonderful way to cast our burdens on the Lord (Psalm 55:22), with all the problems, pressures, responsibilities, and uncertainties of life! And when we do not know what to do, we have the promise (and command):

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (James 1:5).

Some Answers to Prayer

Here are a few examples of how God gives good things to those who ask Him (Matt. 7:11).

Provision I needed a car but didn't have the money to buy one. (At that time I was working for a Gospel organization, but I did not get a salary. I didn't need one: I had food, clothes, and a place to stay.) But now as God was leading me into fulltime evangelism on the road, I would need a car.

I asked God for one. In about three months God gave me one. A man told me he had two cars, and I could have either one I wanted! I certainly did not ask the man for a car or tell him I had prayed for one.

Guidance A mechanic told me I needed two repair jobs on our car, costing several hundred dollars. I was far from home and didn't know if I could trust him. I did not want to pay for unnecessary work, so I asked God to guide me. Here's a prayer I've prayed many times: **“Lead me in a plain path”** (Ps. 27:11).

I was busy that day, so I took the car to another mechanic later and asked him to take care of the two jobs. That evening when I went back to

get the car, this mechanic told me he did not do either one of the jobs because they did not need to be done. He saved me hundreds of dollars!

Since I'm not a mechanic, how do I know he was right? Well, I drove that car another 200,000 miles or so, and I didn't have any major problem with either of the things the first mechanic said needed to be fixed!

Power to Witness As a young man I wanted to make disciples like Jesus commanded. We had a children's Bible club of about 25 or 30. As we invited others we soon had 40 or 50 kids! I found I did not have what it took to keep order and get the message across to that many squirming kids! I needed the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, **"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"** (Luke 11:13).

As we brought in more children, we would have 70 or 80. What was good enough for 40 or 50 wasn't enough now! I needed a fresh anointing. I asked God to fill me with His Spirit again. Jesus said, **"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"** God gave me what I needed.

But as we brought in 100 or more children to each of *three* weekly Bible clubs, I needed more help! What was good enough for 70 or 80 was not good enough for over 100 wild kids off the street! I prayed again. Jesus said, **“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”** God gave the power I needed to keep order, to keep their interest, and to get the message across.

In Conflict As we brought in crowds of children to the Bible clubs, we had opposition. The leader of a housing development (who was a pastor!) was opposed to our bringing the children. He told me I could not come back, but I did. He had alcohol on his breath and threatened a fight.

My dad told me not to go back there but to pray that God would move the man away. We prayed. He was not only laid up in the hospital from an auto accident, but he was run out of town by his own church for cursing in the pulpit!

Then another pastor was put in charge of the housing project. He was gracious and helpful. He would encourage the children to come to the Bible club. His own son (a talented musician) came to the Bible clubs and asked the Lord to save him.

Healing We have seen God heal in answer to prayer, sometimes without doctors or medicine.

Normally it is right to use doctors: Jesus said, **“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick”** (Mark 2:17). But Jesus healed many without doctors or medicine, and He hasn’t changed a bit (Heb. 13:8).

If I had had my way, God would have healed my mother of colon cancer. He didn’t. She’s in heaven! But God did take the pain away in answer to prayer. She asked me to pray that God would take away the pain. I prayed. She told me later that just after I prayed, the pain left.

But it came back. She asked me to pray again. It left again. But it came back again. Several times God took away the pain when Dad or I prayed, but it kept coming back.

Finally she asked me to pray that the pain would leave and not come back. In reading the Gospels, I had been reminded that Jesus was moved with compassion for people in pain. I did not have a lot of faith, but Mom said to pray, so I prayed. She said that awful cancer pain never did come back in the last 6 or 7 weeks she lived.

Encouraging Others Sometimes when I have told how God has answered our prayers, others are encouraged to pray. One lady told me that she was so frustrated that she could not sleep

because a neighbor's dog kept barking. She had just heard me preach on answers to prayer. She asked God to hush that dog! Immediately the barking stopped.

After hearing the same message, a man told me how he asked God to cool down the weather. It had been blistering hot, and his job was to get under hot car engines to change the oil. The temperature in that area suddenly dropped about 35 degrees (Fahrenheit) and it turned windy as well!

At the same time he asked God where he could get the chalk supplies for his artistic daughter like he saw me using in my chalk art preaching. The next day another man called me asking how he could get the chalk supplies. I told him I would have the order forms at the revival service that night. When I saw the first man at the church door that night, I hurried to give him the order forms, thinking he was the one who had called. He was shocked and thought, "This man sure is in touch with God!" Actually, God was using my ignorance to answer his prayer.

Another lady told me how God healed her stomach after I had preached on answers to prayer, not because she prayed, but because her young daughter, who was also at church, was encouraged to pray for her.

Praying for Laborers

Praying for laborers is Jesus' prayer request, actually, His command.

The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest (Matt. 9:37,38).

There is a great harvest, a multitude of people who could be rescued from everlasting fire. The problem is that there are so few people *working in the harvest!* The solution is for us to obey this urgent command and pray that laborers will be thrust into the harvest! Sometimes it is good to pray continent by continent or nation by nation, that God would send laborers into His harvest.¹

¹ A book that is especially useful in this regard is *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, United States Center for World Mission, 2001. It gives a wealth of facts on each nation and the progress of the Gospel in each place.

Praying Against the Enemy

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to **“war a good warfare”** (1 Tim. 1:18). Some of the Psalms are prayers against enemies. Since **“we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world”** (Eph. 6:12), we conclude that the enemies that we pray against are mainly the demonic powers.

Make use of the imprecatory Psalms (the Psalms that call for a curse on the enemies of God). Use them especially in times of struggle. God inspired them; they are profitable. **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable...”** (2 Tim. 3:16):

Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered (Psalm 68:1).

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt (Psalm 70:1,2).

Jesus taught us to pray for vengeance on our enemies:

And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily (Luke 18:7,8).

I often pray against the enemies of God, specifically, the demonic powers behind: Communism, false religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and occult religions, heretical forms of “Christianity” and harmful movements within Christianity, destructive industries such as the pornographic, tobacco, illegal drug, and alcohol industries; and other evil movements such as the abortion, feminist, and homosexual movements.

Often circumstances seem to conspire together to hurt and hinder us. We can pray that the very things that Satan would use to destroy us will bring us blessing. **“Let the wicked fall into their own nets”** (Psalm 141:10). **“Our God turned the curse into a blessing”** (Neh. 13:2).

Often we do not know how to pray in the will of God. **“We know not what we should pray for as we ought”** (Rom. 8:26). The Psalms are a big help in knowing the will of God in our praying. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...”** (Rom. 15:4).

We know these prayers (in Psalms) are according to the will of God because He wrote them.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:21).

Sample Prayers

There are wonderful prayers in the Bible that we can make our own, knowing we are praying in the will of God! Here's one:

O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days (Ps. 90:14).

What a tremendous request! It was a happy day when I discovered this prayer more than 25 years ago. I found that I could be satisfied and happy *every day* as I prayed this prayer! There are many, many other valuable prayers, especially in Psalms, that we can make our own, knowing we are praying in the will of God!

We should pray, not just for ourselves, but **“for all saints”** (Ephesians 6:18), **“for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority”** (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

Several of Paul's prayers for his friends are recorded for our benefit, so we can know how to pray in the will of God. These are prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit. Here's one:

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that

are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

We can help others a lot by praying for them. When Moses lifted up his hands in Exodus 17, the army of Israel in the valley would win. When he let his hands down, the enemy prevailed. So we can help others by our prayers as Moses helped Israel in battle by lifting up his hands. We should **“pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands”** (1 Timothy 2:8). As others are struggling in the valley, we can help them get the victory as we pray for them.

I have heard several cases of how people got special help when someone far away prayed for them. Jonathan Goforth (a hero of mine) went as a missionary to China late in the nineteenth century. He was having a real struggle with the language. The Chinese did not want to hear him preach because they could not understand him well. He was discouraged.

One night as he was preaching, the rules of the language he had been studying suddenly came into focus. He was amazed at how well he could speak. The Chinese were amazed, too!

A few weeks later he found his friends back home had spent that very day in prayer, just for Goforth!

When we pray for others we help them. If we do not pray, we fail them. Samuel said, **“God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you”** (1 Sam. 12:23).

Any Christian can have a tremendous ministry through prayer. Many of us cannot have certain ministries like some others because we don't have their opportunities or gifts, or we do not meet the qualifications of maturity or gender. But we are all on equal footing when we pray. We can come in Jesus name and ask for God's mercy and great blessing for ourselves and for others around the world.

Job got a *special blessing* when he prayed for his friends:

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

I have found that making a list of the ones I pray for has been helpful, not necessarily praying through the whole list each day.

Thanks

One of the most important parts of our time alone with God is giving thanks. The command to give thanks is one of the most frequent commands in the Bible. Ingratitude is a major sin. Two basic sins the heathen are condemned for are, **“they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful”** (Rom. 1:21).

If we fail to thank God for His benefits to us we are sinning. **“Forget not all His benefits”** (Psalm 103:2). If God does ten big things for us, and we thank Him for only one, we have committed nine sins. **“Forget not all His benefits.”**

Taking a little effort to thank God specifically is one of the easiest ways to be happier. Here are some areas to thank God for:

Your Country:

Is there fighting in the streets where you live?

Is food available in the stores?

Do you have freedom to move about?

Do you have paved roads?

Does your government persecute Christians like the Communists do in North Korea or the Muslims do in Sudan?

Your Health:

(Sometimes we complain about our health if one or two things are wrong with us, when there are *fifty* things right with us!)

How many fingers do you have?

How many toes?

Do you have any teeth?

Can you see?

Can you hear?

Can you taste? How would you like to have to stuff food into your body every day as a chore, without any pleasure?!

Do you have hands? Feet? Arms? Legs?

Is your skin covered with sores?

Can you speak?

Friends:

Did anybody ever tell you how to be saved?

Did anybody teach you to read?

Has anybody ever encouraged you?

Has anybody ever given you anything?

Has anybody ever helped you?

Stuff:

Do you live on the street?

Do you have a bed? Blankets? A pillow?

Do you have running water? Hot water?

Do you have any furniture? A refrigerator? A phone? (I've heard that two thirds of the people on earth have never made a phone call.)

Could you list from memory one half of the clothes that you own?

Do you have any books?

Do you have access to a toilet?

Yesterday's Blessings:

Did anything nice or pleasant happen yesterday?

Bad Things that Have Happened:

Did you know that all things work together for good for those who love God (Rom. 8:28)?

We are to give thanks always for all things (Eph. 5:20).

Spiritual Blessings:

Are you going to the lake of fire forever?

Do you have a home in heaven?

Do you know of any promises God has made?

Are you glad Jesus died on the cross for you?

Do you have a Bible?

Praise

The command to praise the Lord is the most frequent command in the Bible. So failure to praise God is a *grave sin*. Praise is telling the good things about someone or something. There is plenty to praise God for: His greatness, His power, His knowledge and wisdom, His love and mercy, His longsuffering, His holiness, and His mighty works in creation, in sustaining, in salvation, and in the coming judgment!

Songs are a special way we can praise the Lord when we are alone (and throughout the day!) I sing several songs of praise to begin each day. A songbook is a good aid to worship. **“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise”** (Psalm 100:4).

The Word of God

We need God's Word— every word of it! **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”** (Luke 4:4). *All Scripture is profitable, the history, the prophets, the names, the begat's, the hard parts, all of it. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...”* (2 Timothy 3:16).

“But I don't understand the Bible.” Actually you do understand much of it (if you will read it!) Mark Twain supposedly said, “It's not what I don't understand in the Bible that worries me, it's what I *do* understand!” Concentrate on what you do understand, and obey it. The next time that you read it through, you will understand more.

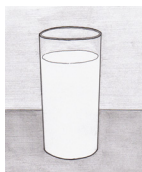
Besides, we have a wonderful prayer we can pray with confidence: **“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”** (Psalm 119:18).

Is there any sacrifice and self discipline in getting alone each day with God? Sure. But not much. Jesus said, **“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”** (Luke 9:23).

Are you too busy serving the Lord to get alone to listen to Him? Martha was very busy serving Jesus. She was frustrated that Mary did not help. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word. So Martha asked Jesus to correct Mary.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:41,42).

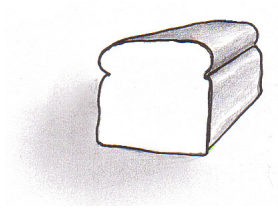
The Bible is like milk.



Could a baby grow without milk? We should desire God's Word as newborn babies desire milk, so that we can grow by it (1 Pet. 2:2). We need a lot. **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly...”** (Col. 3:16).

We need God's word often. How healthy would you be if you ate just a meal or two a week? After a while you would be weak and sickly! Job said, **“I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food”** (Job 23:12). Jeremiah said, **“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart”** (Jer. 15:16).

**The Bible is like
bread.**



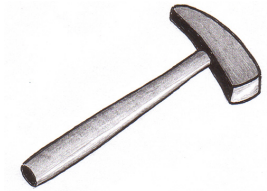
**“Man shall not live by
bread alone, but by
every word of God”
(Luke 4:4).**

**The Bible is powerful,
like a fire, like a hammer.**



**“Is not My Word
like as a fire?” saith
the Lord...**

**‘and like a hammer that
breaketh the rock in
pieces?’” (Jeremiah
23:29).**



The Bible is like a sword.

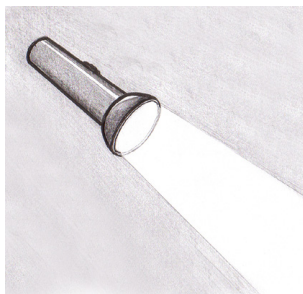


When **“the evil day”** comes we will need **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”** (Eph. 6:13,17).

Each time Satan came to tempt Jesus, the Lord overcame him with God’s Word: He would say, **“It is written...”** (Mt. 4:4, 7, & 10).

The Bible is like a light.

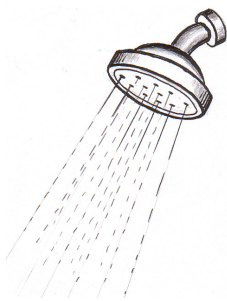
We need light.
We need guidance.
“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119: 105).



I don’t want to be too busy or too lazy to spend a while each day reading and enjoying God’s Word and getting the light and guidance I need! Many times I have

gotten general guidance, and other times, specific guidance, as I have had my daily Bible reading.

The Bible is like water.



How can we stay clean?
**“Now ye are clean through
the Word which I have
spoken unto you”** (John
15:3).

One morning a man said
to a dirty little boy, “How
did you get so dirty this early in the morning?”

His sister told on him, “He went to bed dirty.”

Many Christians go to bed dirty: they fail to spend time reading and meditating on God’s Word each day. They miss the cleansing through the Word.

Just as surely as people can detect an odor from those who don’t bathe, so those around will notice a bad atmosphere around us when we neglect the cleansing of daily meditation on God’s Word to obey it!

The Bible is like a mirror.



Just as we need a mirror for knowing and improving the faults in our appearance, so we need the Bible to discover and correct the faults in our lives. But if we have daily Bible study without obeying what it says, we are just fooling ourselves.

22 But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:22-25).

The Bible is like seed.



We need God's Word so we can be a help to others. We can sow the seed in the hearts of many others. **"The seed is the Word of God"** (Luke 8:11).

Prospering by following God's Word

God promised Joshua prosperity and success if he would pay attention to obey God's Word.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8).

God gave us a similar promise:

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.



3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper (Psalm 1:1-3).

Other Benefits of God's Word

Faith “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Joy “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15:16).

Prayers Answered “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

Strength “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1John 2:14). Who are strong enough to overcome evil? Those with God’s Word abiding in them.

Revival “Quicken [revive] Thou me according to Thy Word” (Psalm 119:25).

Guard Against Error “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

There is a vast ignorance of the Bible among Christians and a multitude of errors in their teaching. This ignorance could be largely corrected if God’s people simply read the Bible. Jesus retorted to the errors of the Pharisees with, “**Have ye never read...?**” (Matt. 21:16 and elsewhere), and said, “**Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures**” (Matt. 22:29).

How to Read the Bible

Read the Bible straight through.

Reading the Bible all the way through consecutively (some each day) is helpful. You get the flow of Scripture. You're sure to read it all. You get the emphasis of Scripture. You'll tend to be more balanced. **"All Scripture is ...profitable"** (2 Tim. 3:16). We need **"every word of God"** (Luke 4:4).

Study it.

Concentrated study is also necessary. Digging deeper, you'll find more. Notice *exactly* what it says, compare other Scriptures, look up words, check commentaries.

Meditate on it.

Thinking over the Word of God helps get it *into* us. We will be blessed if we meditate on God's Word day and night (Psalm 1:2).

Listen to it.

Listening to Bible reading is a good way to get God's Word. For little children and millions of adults around the world who cannot read, listening is the only way to get God's Word. **"Blessed is he**

that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy...” (Rev. 1:3). Bible reading tapes and CD’s are useful, especially when we’re driving or doing jobs that don’t take much thought. **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”** (Rom. 10:17).

Memorize it.

There are several reasons why memorizing Bible passages is so valuable.

- You get the exact words, not just the gist.
- You can meditate on it later, day and night.
- You have it with you in time of need, especially to overcome sin. **“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee”** (Psalm 119:11).
- Sometimes you will not have a Bible when you need it.
- Memorized Scripture is extremely important for preaching, teaching, and witnessing.
- You’re less likely to be deceived by false teachers if you’ve got God’s Word memorized.

Mark it.

Marking your Bible helps you remember and find things again. I use a simple system of marking. I underline commands in blue. Jesus said, **“If ye love Me, keep My commandments”** (John 14:15). At a glance, I can spot all the commands on a page and check if I am keeping them. I underline promises in red. Other things I want to emphasize, I just underline in black.

Review.

Just a few minutes of review at the end of my reading or on the next day is very helpful in remembering and putting the highlights of the passage to use. Am I obeying the commands? Am I trusting the promises? Am I avoiding the sins of the Bible characters? Am I changing my thinking to fit God’s Word?

Our Stance

What should our posture be in the presence of God? Elijah said he stood before the Lord (1 Kings 17:1). The apostles were sitting when the Holy Spirit filled them (Acts 2:2). We are commanded to sing aloud upon our beds (Psalm 149:5). Paul said he bowed the knees to the Father (Eph. 3:14). Joshua fell on his face and worshipped (Josh. 5:14). God told Abraham to walk before Him and be perfect (Gen. 17:1). When the Lord draws us, we run after Him (Song of Sol. 1:4). We are told to lift up our hands and bless the Lord (Psalm 134:2, see also 1 Tim. 2:8), and twice we are commanded to praise the Lord in the dance (Psalm 149:3 and 150:4).

Being Still

There is a time to just be still before God. **“Be still, and know that I am God”** (Psalm 46:10). **“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still”** (Psalm 4:4). Think. Reflect. **“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search”** (Psalm 77:6). **“...I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches”** (Psalm 63:6).

Cautions

If the enemy cannot keep us from having a time alone with God, he may try to push us to the other extreme and burden us with a heavy load—doing too much! Jesus said, **“My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”** (Matt. 11:30).

We should not think of ourselves as spiritual if we go to bed so late and get up so early for devotions that we do not give our wives or husbands the love and affection in bed that God commanded.

The remedy for the grave danger of being seduced by another woman is not only to avoid the other woman, **“remove thy way far from her,”** but also to fully enjoy your own wife’s love, **“let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love”** (Proverbs 5:8,19).

The Word of God forbids us to defraud our spouses of sexual love **“except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”** (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

We can get guidance day by day in this and every area by asking God for wisdom. The Bible does not lay down a set of rules or a schedule for having a quiet time. There are many times we must ask for wisdom to know when to love our neighbor by doing something outward or love him by getting alone with God. But we can come with confidence and get the wisdom we need (James 1:5,6).

Sometimes others will push you to stay up all night once a week or fast some each week (like the Pharisees did). Jesus stayed up all night to pray before He chose His disciples, but the Bible does not say He made a habit of it.

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep (Psalm 127:2).

Of course, for the person who goes to bed at 9 PM, getting up at 5 AM is not so early. For the person who can take a nap in the day, 4 AM is not so early either. Also, different people need different amounts of sleep.

“Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself” (Eccl. 7:16).

The Bible speaks often of fasting. It also speaks often of feasting to the Lord. Normally we should enjoy the good things God has given us.

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God (Eccl. 2:24).

We may fall into the trap of reading the Bible or praying as ends in themselves, that is, trying to establish our own righteousness by these works. Our rest is in Jesus, not in what we accomplish, how much we read or how long we pray.

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3).

If we read or listen to God’s Word without doing what it says, we are just deceiving ourselves. In recent years it has become common to belittle obedience to the Lord and to scorn the fear of the Lord. But **“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”** (Psalm 111:10). Those who try to obey the Lord are sometimes called legalists. Some say that Christianity is a *relationship*, not a list of *do’s* and *don’t’s*, as

though our relationship with Jesus is a relationship between equals! Jesus is *Lord!* The relation to a lord is obedience.

Our relationship to Jesus is also a relationship of *love*. Jesus said, **“If ye love Me, keep My commandments”** (John 14:15), and **“He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me”** (John 14:21). All commands are either *do*’s or *don*’t’s.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:3).

And this is love, that we walk after His commandments (2 John 6).

In fact, the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

However, we should distinguish between *our* rules and the principles or commands of *Scripture*. My rule may be reading a certain number of chapters or spending a certain amount of time in devotions each day. Someone may have a rule to

kneel during his prayer time, or to pray through a list. Self discipline is good, but breaking our own rules is not the same as disobeying *God*.

We can set up helpful rules or habits for ourselves, but we do not need to make them binding vows.

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay (Eccl. 5:4,5).

Another danger is letting the good displace the best. Devotional books may be good, but they are a poor substitute for God's Word. They are often filled with opinions. I saw a devotional book I'll call *Having a Quiet Time with God*, by Jane Bookman. After I looked it over, it seemed more like *Having a Quiet Time with Jane*.

In addition to our time alone with God, we need to read the Bible to our families and train them *to obey* God's commands.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deut. 6:6,7).

We need to get God's Word first into our own hearts, then we must teach it to our children and talk about it throughout the day. Whatever is in the heart comes out of the mouth. **“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34).**

Suggestions

Go Outdoors

Sometimes it is helpful to go outside, especially at night or in the early morning, to be alone with God.

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him? (Psalm 8:3,4).

In a forest or field, by a stream or lake, near a mountain or on one, at the beach, at sunrise, or during a storm, we can sense the glory of God by His creation!

Being out under the stars is a special help in worshipping and praising God. To know that the *nearest* star is several light years away,² that our galaxy is one hundred thousand light years across, and that there are *billions* of other galaxies, is to realize some of the wonders of our God!

² Light travels so fast it could go around the earth seven times in one second! A light year is how far it goes in a *year*.

Sometimes I just get down with my face on the ground and say:

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:11).

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork (Psalm 19:1).

Make special use of the Psalms.

Along with whatever else I'm reading in the Bible, I read a Psalm almost every day. The Psalms are warm and devotional. Whatever mood or stage I'm in, I find something that fits my situation within a few chapters. Most of the psalms are prayers. Psalms is the inspired prayer book. You can pray these prayers with the confidence you're praying *in the will of God!*

Meet with God in the morning.

I suppose that for most people, morning is the best time to get alone with God. I should give God my best. For me, morning is the best. I'm fresher then. It's quiet. There are fewer

distractions. Jeremiah 4:3 says, **“Sow not among thorns.”** Jesus said the thorns are

“the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, [that] choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

I keep a little notebook. If a thought of something I must do comes up during my quiet time, I jot it down so I can take care of it later. Then it does not continue to distract me.

If I have my quiet time in the morning, I can prepare for the day. I don't want to face the day on “empty”!

My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up (Psalm 5:3).

Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee (Psalm 143:8).

Seeking God

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God (Psalm 14:2).

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts (Psalm 10:4).

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).

He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and His strength, seek His face continually (1 Chr. 16:10, 11).

Will you seek Him continually? Or are you too proud to seek God? Do you really think you need Him in what you do?

Fellowship with the Lord

I like to spend time with my wife, Vicki, walking, driving, working together, sitting, and lying in bed, talking to her and enjoying her. I hope I can give the Lord some pleasure as Vicki gives me pleasure! That's the reason we are here, *for His pleasure*. **“Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created”** (Rev. 4:11). Let's set aside some time just for Him!

Another way we give Him pleasure is by praising Him. I like it when Vicki says nice things about me! (I like it when anybody says something good about me!) We can bring God pleasure when we recognize His greatness and mercy and proclaim it!

Sometimes when I'm outside looking at the beauty and wonder of God's creation, I enjoy fellowship with Him. Sometimes in a time of trial or pain I draw near to Him. Sometimes when I'm driving or working or lying in bed I am enjoying His fellowship. Most often the fellowship has been during a time set aside for Bible reading and prayer.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord (Psalm 104:34).

Draw me, we will run after Thee. ...I sat down under His shadow with great delight.... I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me (Song of Sol. 1:4; 2:3; 7:10).

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Other Publications of Paul Young

***Saving Faith** Does it involve a change of behaviour?*

Principles of Church Growth

What God Says about Prosperity

Answers to Prayer for Our Family

A Happy Home!

For these or for DVDs of “Small Paul”
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