



1100 John Street | Hattiesburg, MS 39401  
AntiochMissionaryBaptistChurch.com  
(601) 583-8403

---

Greetings Church Family,

We have arrived at the start of a new year. As Senior Pastor, I wish to begin the year with a 21 day personal devotion and prayer. I am asking the Church to join me in seeking God for his divine wisdom and protection. Below is my response to a few frequently asked questions about the the importance of personal devotion and prayer. **What are personal devotions?**

Personal devotions are purposeful moments dedicated to spending private time with God. The Scripture warns us not to neglect the corporate meetings of God's people (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, I must warn you that your faith will remain shallow and your growth hindered if you only focus on God during public, corporate gatherings. I encourage you to reexamine your faith, if you find that your only desire for God arises from attending Sunday worship only. Ultimately, salvation is more than merely a means of avoiding disaster. It encompasses a personal connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. In any healthy and flourishing relationship, it is essential to dedicate time to it. Refer to it as individual or intimate practices of devotion. Refer to it as a serene moment. Label it however you please. It is important to dedicate time to connect with God – just you and Him.

### **Why are personal devotions important?**

My personal conviction for engaging devotional times with God is that Jesus himself did. There were times when Jesus would get up early in the morning, before daybreak, and steal away to some desolate place to pray (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). And if Jesus – the incarnate, eternal, and only-begotten Son of God – found it necessary to spend private time with God, who are we to think that we can navigate our faith walk without spending time with God? Additionally, dedicating time to God will strengthen your faith, aid in resisting temptation, and offer spiritual insight for living. The spiritual advantages of personal devotions are essential, diverse, and abundant. But James 4:8a may say it best: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you (ESV).”

### **When should I have my devotional time?**

Allow me to respond to that question in two different manners. First, you should have a devotional time daily. Consider the things in your life that you do not go a day without. Eating? Television? Social media? Talking on the phone? Reading the newspaper? Our daily routines encompass a variety of elements, some beneficial and enlightening, while others may not hold the same value. It should not be the case that you engage in numerous activities daily while only dedicating quiet time with God once or twice a week. It is important to set aside a daily quiet time with God in your schedule.

Secondly, you should have your devotional time in the morning. This is not a strict guideline. Many prefer to enjoy their quiet time in the evening. Or during the late hours of the night. That is acceptable. For many of us, it is likely preferable to engage in our quiet time in the morning. Many individuals find themselves feeling more rejuvenated and attentive in the morning. Starting your day with it also ensures that your quiet time does not get pushed aside after a long day. Starting your day by connecting with God appears to be a fitting choice.



---

## What should I do during my devotional time?

I suggest that your devotional time concentrate on two fundamental practices: engaging with the Bible and prayer. By Bible "intake," I refer to a practice that encompasses more than merely reading the Bible. Bible reading ought to take precedence. Develop a strategy to read the entire Bible within a year. Or explore specific books of the Bible. Consider reading a passage from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The decision is yours to make. It is important to consistently engage with the scriptures. This involves meditating on what you read, which means thinking intentionally about scripture to find personal application, as well as memorizing specific passages of scripture.

Similarly, your moments of solitude ought to be dedicated to prayer. It is important to honor God and express gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon you. It is important to confess your sins to God and seek His forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is important to express your needs to him, seek his guidance, and align yourself with his intentions. It is important to pray for others, including family and friends, your church community, those who are lost, the sick, and those who are grieving. Starting a prayer journal would be a great idea. It can be simple and straightforward. One effective approach is to use a notebook to jot down the individuals and matters you are praying for, along with the ways in which God is responding to your prayers. This would significantly enhance your devotions.

Now, there are many other helps I could recommend. But I think it is best that you view most other resources and practices as secondary to prayer and scripture intake. I will make one exception. It might help to also have a hymnal at hand during your devotions to sing to the Lord in your quiet times with him.

In closing, I appeal to you to take several action steps in response to what you have just read. **Make a commitment** to begin engaging in personal devotions. Don't think about having a quiet time. Don't pray about making time for prayer. Don't read on reading the Bible. Just do it! **Make a commit** today to begin a quiet time with God. Start now. There are no obstacles in your way. **Be intentional** in starting a peaceful time with God. **Mark it** on your calendar or schedule. **Adjust** your clock. Have your Bible, pen, and notebook ready. **Avoid** allowing yourself the opportunity to create excuses for not taking action. **Begin immediately!** Be cautious and modest in your ambitions, so you don't create a path to disappointment. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. **START SLOW!**

Be prepared for resistance. The devil will go to great lengths to hinder your personal devotions. The world will tempt you with numerous distractions that can hinder your ability to maintain peace or prioritize it. Your flesh, or the fallen nature of humanity, will oppose the growth of this spiritual discipline. Even your blankets seem to conspire against you when you attempt to rise 20 minutes earlier than usual for your devotional time. **Be aware. Be ready. Be persistent.**

Hold yourself accountable to someone. As with many endeavors, holding yourself accountable to someone may assist you in developing this new discipline. **Communicate** your new commitment to someone who will support you through prayer, offer encouragement, and show genuine interest in your progress. Remember, two are better than one (Eccl. 4:9-12). Don't give up. There might come a day, or perhaps several, when you find yourself longing for your moments of solitude. Do not allow the feeling of failure to lead you to completely surrender. Simply begin again, and pick up where you left off. The Christian life is a series of new beginnings. Be Encouraged!

Blessings,

Eskria Bell Rhodes, MDiv  
Senior Pastor  
Antioch M.B. Church

*"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" Matthew 28:19*